

5 QUESTIONS TO ASSESS TEAMWORK WITHIN IT



Even after a decade of trying, apparently IT still isn't on the same page with other teams, often working around or at odds with one another on [digital transformation](#) initiatives. BMC offers [fresh insights](#) into how IT teams can improve collaboration and alignment across business operations. But what about teamwork and alignment *within* IT teams?

After all, it's hard to convince other stakeholders of the value of collaboration if your own team isn't in good working order. Here are five questions you can ask to evaluate whether your IT team operations are in sync or the source of problems.

(This tutorial is part of our [IT Leadership & Best Practices Guide](#). Use the right-hand menu to navigate.)

1. Are team roles integrated or siloed?

If you answered "siloed", this is your starting point. Silos are a root cause of out-of-sync IT departments. They hinder more agile decision-making and processes, which are must-haves in an era when IT and the business as a whole are constantly under pressure to do more, faster.

The functions these silos typically represent—development, operations, QA, [security](#), and so forth—are still critically important. But these roles need to be more explicitly comingled to improve internal communication and collaboration. Invisible walls must be torn down: developers handing off their code to operations and never thinking about it again; operations existing as a separate team in a different part of the building; security only as a final check before a deployment.

2. Are team members' performance metrics at odds with one another?

Align your teams with shared incentives. You can direct developers and infrastructure engineers and security analysts to work together more closely than before, for example, but that will only go so far if their job performance is measured in conflicting ways. If devs are given incentives to ship code as frequently as possible, but ops or security pros are only measured by uptime or production incidents, they're less likely to be in sync. Give people shared responsibility for your overall goals that are measured in standardized ways, regardless of job title or functional role.

3. Does friction exist in one or more key processes?

Out-of-whack performance metrics can be a source of conflict among teams, but there are plenty of other places to look for friction. Consider your software development and delivery pipeline, for example: Which stages and processes cause the most headaches? Where do things get bogged down by inefficiencies? Odds are that any pain points you discover in asking this question will lead to opportunities to reduce inefficiencies and bring the broader team into closer alignment.

4. Do people point fingers when things go wrong?

When things don't go as planned, do people start playing the blame game? This is a sure-fire sign of an out-of-sync team. Instead of allowing blame to take root, opt for blameless postmortems to capture learning after an IT incident or failure. This practice can also be productive after any significant deployment or project phase, even when things are going well.

5. Above all, are you fostering a healthy team culture?

Out-of-sync IT teams often boil down to a dysfunctional culture born from all of the above issues and more: Too many silos, too much friction between people and processes, and so on. This is why [DevOps](#) culture has flourished. Its iterative focus on people, process, and tools aligns well with the demands placed on modern IT, and research shows it correlates with higher-performing teams.

Whether you label it "DevOps" or not, you can take cues from the culture the term represents. Key questions (and their answers) above speak to this, such as eliminating functional silos and encouraging shared responsibility across roles with better-aligned performance incentives and metrics. Also consider processes and technologies commonly associated with DevOps, such as continuous integration/continuous delivery ([CI/CD](#)) and a "[shift left](#)" mindset for areas like testing and security.

Wrestling with these five questions is a great start to improving your IT team's internal collaboration. When you can resolve these process, structural, and cultural issues, your team will perform better work, make greater contributions to business goals, and employee satisfaction will get a boost along the way.