WHAT'S AN APP OWNER? APPLICATION OWNER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Software applications are a competitive advantage in the digital economy.

Enterprises embracing frameworks like DevOps and Agile are disrupting the market space with innovative software technologies and applications for the enterprise IT and consumer market segments. IT professionals and business executives work to understand how their apps are used, managing, and analyzing data processed and generated by the technologies.

Application ownership is an emerging role that entails three primary tasks:

- Being responsible for the app
- Defining strategies to maximize the business value of applications
- Managing information pertaining to software applications

Let's take a look at the role of application owner.

What does an application owner do?

The role of an Application Owner is not discrete, although most enterprise organizations have

established well-structured and organized roles to perform these tasks. The responsibilities may be assigned to a variety of IT professionals from the domains of IT Operations, cloud architecture, business analysis, and even development professionals.

So, what exactly does an app owner do?

The following job tasks are common among these IT professions when it comes to ownership of an application:

Strategic alignment

Ensure that the application serves its intended purpose and delivers value to the business. The role of an application owner is to guide the software development lifecycle (SDLC) to performance gains

that align with the business vision.

(Read about IT/business alignment.)

Usability & user experience

The application must meet the standards deemed acceptable by all stakeholders, customers, and partners. Application owners guide the development teams to find an optimal tradeoff between:

- Functionality
- Performance
- Dependability
- Cost
- User satisfaction

Information monitoring & managing

In order to maintain high competitive differentiation, the application should be able to access, process, and generate useful information. This information includes the data and IT workloads necessary to both:

- Deliver the intended technology capability.
- Generate insightful knowledge on how the technology is adopted and impacts business performance.

Regulatory compliance

Take the steps necessary to guarantee regulatory compliance. Work with external auditors to ensure a high standard of compliance to stringent global regulations ranging form HIPAA to GDPR as applicable.

(Learn more about compliance & security.)

Security

Provide appropriate operational, management and technical controls that help mitigate and manage security risks facing software apps, network infrastructure, end users, and the business.

Dependability & SLAs

Define the service level agreement (SLA) metrics and requirements that will guarantee highly dependable performance as an optimal tradeoff with:

- Cost
- User experience
- Business value

(Prepare for SLA breaches.)

Drive impact

Here, the application owner supports the business by prioritizing product backlog and helping deliver business outcomes such as user base growth.

Communication, awareness & training

An app owner will ensure that the technical and business decisions are made with confidence of business executives and engineering teams as necessary.

Quality assessment & improvement

Identify areas of improvement and develop a long-term quality improvement program that encompasses the technology and business aspects of the software application.

App owners think about systems

The application owner role has evolved from the traditional project-centric owner approach. In DevOps organizations, the application owner takes a systems-thinking approach focused on the vision intended for the software applications. The modern application owner thinks in terms of the entire product lifecycle instead of the features that must be shipped with a specific technology-centric goal in mind.

A variety of functional and non-functional requirements are also considered as the application owner looks into the entire system associated with the software application.

These requirements are often labeled as Operational Requirements (ORs) and help teams understand exactly why and how the application lifecycle is designed to maximize the likelihood of achieving its business objectives.

Operational requirements of an app

The application owner contributes to the following key operational requirements in the DevOps SDLC program:

- **Documentation.** Contribute to the documentation to empower the engineering teams with the right messaged on application requirements and expectations.
- **Automation and scriptability.** Understand the business value of automation: automate strategically when and where needed. Avoid automating waste processes and encourage practices such as Infrastructure as Code and test automation.
- **Scalability.** Understand how the resources are consumed and deliver business value when scaled. The application should be provisioned with adequate resources to account for traffic spikes and yet, overprovisioning should be avoided to prevent unnecessary cloud expenses.
- **Compatibility and configurations.** Application components and the underlying infrastructure should be able to integrate as the workloads and resources change dynamically. This means that you should avoid hard-coded configurations. Instead, adopt standardized technologies to prevent integration concerns.
- **Dependencies.** Keep track of dependencies and avoid single points of failure. Additionally, the as-a-Service model takes away significant control as the technology capability is simply

procured across the Web from a third-party vendor. It's important to understand and document how such dependencies behave, how IT can maximize visibility and control into them and develop the necessary risk management programs.

Becoming an application owner

The Application Owner role typically requires a four-year Computer Science or relevant college degree and a few years of experience in development, QA, or business analysis.

Uniquely, the role requires applicants to demonstrate expertise in engineering as well as a strong business aptitude.

Related reading

- BMC DevOps Blog
- Application Engineer Roles & Responsibilities
- AppDev Roles & Responsibilities
- Application Mapping: Concepts & Best Practices for the Enterprise
- Managing IT as a Product—Not a Project
- Application Performance Management in DevOps