

Digital Podcast Show Notes

Episode 48 with Guest: Suresh GP

Hosts: Barclay Rae, Ian Aitchison (on slightly muffled audio this week)

Greetings section

BR: Welcome.

IA: Today's trivia on Thomas Midgely jr - a one man environmental disaster. Inventor of chemicals that caused most environmental damage. And an extraordinary death story.

BR: Today's guest is Suresh GP. What's your background?

SG: Service Management professional, leads Taub Solutions. Provides consultancy to organisation on IT and SM improvement.

Main section

BR: Your current focus is Site Reliability Engineering, tell us about that.

GP: SRE focuses on making sure that systems are reliable, stable, scalable, big focus on Reliability and Resilience.

Reliability : how can you prevent a failure from happening? From reactive to proactive to predictive service management. The sweetspot is predicting and stopping from happening. Can we get to predictive service management? A sophisticated system where they system works for us. Revolutionise traditional L1 L2 L3 model. Can we do self healing and remediation. SRE is focussing on stopping failure before it happens.

IA: Self healing is interesting. Moving to detect something breaking before anyone knows, or event stopping it breaking at all. Detection and Correction before impact.

SG: Yes, we are moving beyond silo teams and into cross functional teams that are not waiting, and focussing on shift left. And reducing toil..

Toil is anything that is manual repeatable, automatable and tactical is Toil. We need to reduce toil and free up time.

Anything we can do to free up time is important.

BR: the goal is to move away from structures to manage issues, and more to a holistic self healing world. But it is not easy to get there. Where I see SRE, it is in pockets and many orgs are struggling to get into this better future.

SG: We all know this is a cultural; shift. We should ask 'why are we doing this like this?' 'can we do things easier than we do'? Is the organisation willing to take that cultural shift and challenge the status quo.

BR: The body of knowledge around this is for those already in that role. What else can be done for the wider organisation awareness?

SG: Start from where you are. Bring in an element of Value Streams. Look at Detect and Correct (not just incident management). The WHY for SRE is to focus on the customer

experience, so start with measuring your customer journey maps and find opportunities and observability to identify blind spots. It's not a sprint it is a marathon.

IA: 'Reliability' is a critical part of SRE. Experience and Uptime is critical. There is a concept that every incident is a learning opportunity to build automation. Is that right?

SG: Experimentation and Learning. People sometimes don't this because they fear failure. We have a 'failure budget' where your SLO (service level objectives) are higher than your SLAs, so I;m giving you a little leeway to do experimentation so even if you fail you should still be above contract levels. You need that capacity to experiment and learn.

IA: Supporting failure in the safe zone

BR: A lot these ideas are well known in DevOps and Agile. Is SRE really a good practical application of DevOps?

GP: DevOps focussed on velocity and stability. Whereas SRE is a class that implements DevOps into post-production. It;s not about uptime anymore, it is about graceful degradation. SRE extends devops, and tries to implement.

I spoke to Netflix, asked what their key performance metric was. They said 'bootup time'. If I dont boot up immediately I will go to another service. This is the most important.

IA: things are so fast now. Our expectation is totally different.

S: slowness is the new low. Everyone is seeing the value of SRE in this new expectation.

BR: Lets talk about the servicedesk first, what is the way into SRE for a servicedesk.

SG: Moving from transitional tiered short. Look at a horizontal service, SRE as a shared function. The second is embedded so I can have SRE embedded in every team. Then you can have a slice and dice model where the teams split the work between themselves. But also swarming model works well. The SRE skills are in demand.

It is also not a question of solving incidents. One of our clients, 20% of SD tickets are replaced with chatbots. We want to reduce the number coming in to free the people up.

BR: Moving to the managed services market. How do we sell this externally? Should MSPs be getting on board with this?

SG: Yes, every SMP wants SREs, its a valuable addition to their service, This is more important for MSPs. They are leading on a lot of this. In next 3 to 5 years, all MSPs should be enabling SRE as a part of their service.

BR: Finally, what are the key activities?

SG: Move from SLAs to SLOs. Work to reduce toil. Test reliability with chaos-engineering. After doing all this, are you sure we are one team with a shared sense of ownership.

IA: What technologies and what people skills?

SG: You need to know something about everything. SM, Agile, Devops, Lean. For technology its a move to Containers, and Terraform, and tools like AppDynamics and Dynatrace. Also personal skills in collaboration and learning and sharing.

BR: Where does this fit into service and support models? Project and Transition and Operation?

SG: Understand what trying to achieve in - for example - Transition. Then look at what SRE can do there. Apply where there is a need.

BR: In operational environment there is maintenance quality and support?

SG: Yes, you are into Problem Management and stopping 'all these incidents' happening again.

BR: Problem Management has suffered from being seen as a process, whereas it is quite strategic. Whereas SRE is quick technical and SRE people matter to be strategic change agents.

SG: That's why we often promote an L3 person into SRE. And we would say focus on small steps and be realistic.

BR: Thanks!

Suresh's Recommended Drink

- Lemonade!

Useful Links

Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sureshgp/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/sureshgp>

Bar Bio

Suresh is an Entrepreneur, a Leader, an Ambassador, a Coach, a Managing Director and a top influencer. He certainly influenced us on the importance of Site Reliability Engineering, which needs a clear mind and a level head. Which is a guaranteed outcome if your drink of choice is a clear - not cloudy - lemonade. With ice. Refreshing and energising... just like a podcast with Suresh!