From Sysadmins to (almost) Flying Unicorns

Tales of a culture shift at Sony Interactive Entertainment

Guillaume Hérail
Gilberto Müller
Who we are

Guillaume Héraill
Staff SRE
Joined in 2018
Based in Berlin

Gilberto Müller
SRE Manager
Joined in 2021
Based in Berlin

Future Technology Group
Cloud streaming

Enjoy streaming access to a wide range of PS4 games from the Game Catalog, and hundreds of PS3, PS2 games and more from the Classics Catalog, via your PS5, PS4 and PC.

Play on PC

Stream games from the PlayStation Plus Game Catalog and Classics Catalog to your PC on demand*. Save your progress to the cloud and pick up where you left off on your PS4 or PS5 console, and connect your controller for a true PlayStation experience on PC.

Find out more

*High-speed (at least 5 Mbps) internet connection required. Accessible content varies by subscriber age (18+ required when streaming via PC App). Certain games may not be available to stream.
What we started with

c.a. 2018
Out of the feedback loop

Team A  Team B  Image  SRE  Image
Design  Pre-production  Team B Owned  Production  SRE Owned

Months

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SREs tried to highlight their pain

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Top pain points

- Too much toil
- Out of the loop
- Too many alerts
- Reliability is not taken seriously
- We have no SRE Vision

👉 Glorified Sysadmins 👈
Deep Work

Interruptions
Come here!

Gilberto!

We won't hurt you!

Me
Hiring SRE is hard

(O RLY?)
Linux

Architecture

Software Engineering
Containers  Networking  Storage  Data Engineering

How to change a disk  Provisioning  Assist Datacenter Operations

Linux  Architecture  Software Engineering
Let’s build a "proper Ops" team

We need time, we need help
Interruptions

SRE

Automation

Observability

Resiliency
Technical Operations Support

- Break down complex tasks
- Entry level opportunity
- Diverse backgrounds and culture
- People switching career paths
- We have many coming from the food industry
SRE Academy

• aka “the Unicorn Factory”
• Fast track on the skills and tools needed
• Already have some business domain knowledge
• Already know the team, and the environment

👉 Anyone can become an SRE! 👈
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CFTs

Cross Functional Teams
Before

Team A  Team B
Design

Team B Owned

Pre-production

Image

SRE

SRE Owned

Production
After

Team A

Team B

SRE

Design

Image

Pre-production

Team B Owned

Image

Production

SRE Owned

Months
Jumping on the bandwagon

* Your mileage may vary
2 down

✅ Too much toil
✅ Out of the loop
❌ Too many alerts
❌ Reliability is not taken seriously
❌ We have no SRE Vision
SLOs

“We need data, we need to improve the alerts”
How do you execute on transversal initiatives?
Ask the CFTs to do it
Time split between CFT and Functional Team work

- Functional Team time: 20%
- CFT time: 80%
Assign people dedicated to the effort
Getting there…

✅ Too much toil
✅ Out of the loop
✅ Too many alerts

❌ Reliability is not taken seriously
❌ We have no SRE Vision
Reliability Meetup

“We need to communicate”
People don’t understand what we need

1. We need to understand what Reliability means to non-SREs
2. We need to voice our needs and a definition of Reliability
2 people, talking about Reliability, every month

- Kubernetes Namespace Apocalypse
- How to make on-call the best week ever
It’s pretty successful

2 years and a half

22 meetups
- 46 speakers
- 23 non-SRE

600+ attendees
We have no SRE Vision
Too much toil
Out of the loop
Too many alerts
Reliability is not taken seriously
“Where do you see yourself in 5y?”

“I love this question!” said nobody, ever.
40 SREs, 3 geographies, one always in the dark
3 objectives

- Grow strong ties among Staff SREs
- Brainstorm and define the vision
- Present to Sr Leadership
Work in progress

• Started this year

• Maybe a topic for a future talk?
We have no SRE Vision

Too much toil
Out of the loop
Too many alerts
Reliability is not taken seriously
We have no SRE Vision
Flying yet?
What made it successful

1. Executive Support
2. IC / Management Pairing
3. Fail, iterate
4. Communicate!
Thank you!