The Business Case: Set Yourself Up for Success in Three Months
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Working in IT for 7,494 days

Worked with SQL Server since 2005 (SQL Server 2000)

Have been doing “DevOps” since 2001

Big on automation and culture….

@theHybridDBA

#MakeStuffGo

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2018-
Today and Week 1
Plan and Pitch

First Month
Initiate Changes in a Proof of Concept (POC)

Months 2-3
Map Process Changes and Land Your POC
Today and Week 1
Plan and Pitch
Standardize team-based development

Automate database deployments

Protect and preserve data

Monitor performance & availability
Standardizing source code only

Pros
• Provides audit trail of development changes
• Manages collaboration of team members
• Standardizes coding practices

Cons
• Manual database code validation, testing, and deployments
• Requires a custom process to prevent environment drift
Automation adds these benefits

- Code validation and static analysis
- Speeds up deployments with continuous delivery
- Prevents environment drift
SQL Provision adds speed & safety

Rapidly refresh development databases with real-world datasets

Easily support dedicated environments that isolate changes made in branches and allow experimentation

Mask sensitive data upon image creation
Should monitoring be in your initial project?

Pros
• Visibility into production health
• SQL Monitor shows when deployments have occurred, making it easy to track customer impact (good and bad) of changes

Cons
• If an external team in your organization already controls monitoring, proposing a change may be tricky
Once scoped, kick off any required security assessments
Elevator pitch template:
“We are doing ______ so that  
_________.”
Think about your company’s values and goals

- Excellent customer experience
- Faster time to market
- Culture of innovation
- More productive use of DBA and developer time
- Great employee retention
- Lower risk of data breaches
“We should standardize database code and automate deployments to reduce feature time to market.”
First Month
Initiate Changes in a Proof of Concept (POC)
In a supported POC, ask for guidance

Crafting executive summary

Industry standards for success criteria

Sample schedules & help keeping the team on track
Elements of a technical project pitch

- Executive Summary
- Business Need
- Solution to be Proven
- Success Criteria and Long Term Gains
- Prerequisites
- Schedule
- Team
- Other Resources
- Risks
Executive Summary

Slightly longer than an elevator pitch
- Why do you need to act?
- What are you going to do?
- What do you expect the result to be?

Write a separate ‘Business Need’ summary to expand on the “why” with specific data
Targeting long term gains

Identify relevant current metrics and measure current duration
Set targets for driving these down within specific time frames
Example metrics:
  • Time spent on deployments
  • Developer code review wait times
  • Time waiting on refresh of a critical environment
Other potential long term gains

- Document database coding patterns for zero and minimal downtime database deployments
- Standardize a release process that raises the visibility of database changes in the wider organization
- Establish measurements for tempo and stability across all application and database code releases and drive improvements in these numbers
Project schedule

Keeps your team moving in sync
Helps key stakeholders understand
• Target project duration
• Key milestones
• Proof of concept schedule and core meetings
Identify and approach potential sponsors

Who might this project resonate with in your organization?

- C-Level
- Executive & Senior Managers
- Department Heads
Key actions for a sponsor

Help build a coalition of managers and peers

Be visible to employees throughout the project

Communicate the ‘why’ of the change to employees

https://www.prosci.com/resources/articles/change-sponsor-checklist
Messages from sponsors

Engage with employees with face-to-face messaging
  • Video and recordings work when in-person isn’t possible, these are more effective than emails alone

Answer questions about the business issues
  • “Why is this change happening?”
  • “What is the risk of not changing?”

https://www.prosci.com/resources/articles/change-management-communication-checklist
The goal of a Proof of Concept is demonstrating that the tools achieve your success criteria
Choose your technical champions

This team will:

• Explore methodologies to standardize database code and choose the best approach for your teams

• Set up a proof of concept (POC), safely outside of production

• Explore and test automation for provisioning, builds (code validation) and change deployment
A rule for any POC

It must be safe for the team to make a big mess during the process
Avoid these anti-patterns

Causes of failed proof-of-concepts
- Not a joint venture
- Key stakeholders not involved
- Think it will be more labor intensive than it is
- Developers leading without manager buy-in
- Too much focus on tech benefit vs business benefit
Months 2-3
Map Process Changes and Land Your POC
A POC doesn’t take 2 months of sustained work

The two-three month timeline applies if:

• Your internal point team has other duties
• You only get a few hours of their time each week

Dedicated resource teams have completed Standardize, Automate & Protect POCs in two weeks
What happens when a build fails, and how do we respond?

When will the risk of changes be assessed? Pull requests? Release artifacts?

How often will deployments to databases be done?

Can security assessments be moved into checklists?

How many changes should be shipped in a single deployment?

What approval processes are best for deployments?
Support practices to map

What team on-call rotations are needed?

How to avoid single-points of failure in the team?

How/when to escalate to subject matter experts?
Shifting change approval left

Shifting change review and approval to earlier in the development cycle speeds you up

First steps: can standard (pre-approved) changes help get you started?

Sponsorship: this is one place where a sponsor who can help you build a coalition will help
Completing your Proof of Concept

- Collate results from POC and implementation plan
- Finalize licensing
- Set target implementation date and schedule first call and support session
- Internal presentations about business benefits
When an executive sponsor has been involved from the start, POC sign-off and completion goes very smoothly.
Any questions?

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