



Combining operation and development teams into an agile organization

Aflac Life Insurance Japan | Insurance



Business opportunity

Aflac Life Insurance Japan Ltd (Aflac) was for many decades alone in that country in offering supplemental health insurance to support cancer patients undergoing life-sustaining treatments.

In response to rapid demographic shifts in Japan, Aflac needed to add new life insurance services and transform their digital delivery to meet user expectations.

Technical challenge

To maintain business-as usual (BAU), Aflac's IT operations team performed repetitive manual tasks across a complex mix of on-premises and cloud infrastructure. That essential maintenance introduced delays in delivering resources requested by development teams. As organized, Aflac IT could not efficiently deliver new products, and they also struggled to consistently focus on improving customer experiences.

Our solution

Together, Aflac and Kyndryl pursued three key initiatives to enhance agility. First, they transitioned to a squad-based teaming organized around business units, that aligns with "Tribe-Squad-Model" that is in line with Aflac's company wide adoption. For this transformation Kyndryl adopted Site Reliability Engineering (SRE) to improve operational efficiency.

Second, addressed IT process issues by automating data requests and retrieval tasks using Red Hat Ansible. Third, Aflac improved system observability by introducing Datadog, to monitor hybrid IT environment.

Automating operations is never simple. It requires a vision for what the future of operations should look like. Aflac and Kyndryl prioritized automation pain points and established Datadog as a shared monitoring tool between infrastructure and development teams. The team gave training sessions to the entire organization and it increased Datadog's active users by 40%.

“Through the visualization of daily operations via Kyndryl Bridge, Kyndryl’s integrated platform, we aim to standardize and automate routine tasks so that anyone can carry them out. The team will also gain insights through Kyndryl Bridge that enable Aflac to innovate their business.”

- Masaki Takeya, Kyndryl Site Reliability Engineer

The power of partnership

Through its partnership with Red Hat, Kyndryl used Ansible to automate repetitive tasks. Aflac squads are more focused instead on improving experience based on data from the usage scenarios tracked in Datadog.

“To accelerate the creation of new value for Aflac, we will continue to promote the borderless integration of operations and development by engaging in innovative projects with Kyndryl.”

- Satoshi Masaki
General Manager IT Infrastructure Operations Management

What progress looks like

So far, by automating many routine tasks, Aflac squads now focus more on improving digital services based on data from user scenarios that indicate performance lags.

Specific data points on progress include:

- **58%** reduction in manual responses to IT service requests, giving squad members more time for work on tasks with higher business value.
- **64%** fewer IT alerts, indicating reliability of systems as a basis for consistent customer experiences as squads improve them.
- **250** actively monitored user scenarios, providing the actionable data for continuously improvement customer experiences.

Aflac Life Insurance Japan

Founded in 1974, based on a strong desire to alleviate the financial hardship of those undergoing cancer treatment, Aflac was the first insurance company in Japan to offer cancer insurance. In April 2018, with the aim of deepening relationships and expanding shared value with its customers, Aflac transformed from foreign subsidiary into Aflac Life Insurance Japan Ltd., a Japanese corporation.

Meet the team

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