Mozzart Bet transforms time-to-market with DevOps Culture Enablement

MOZZART

Headquartered in Serbia, Eastern Europe's leading betting and gambling company, Mozzart Bet, realized that a lack of transparency and collaboration between IT and its legacy technical debt was hindering the business's competitive advantage in the gambling and sports betting market in South-East Europe. Migrating services and products running in pods and on virtual machines to Red Hat OpenShift Virtualization promised to provide a modern architecture to transform not only its technology but also its development culture, with the ultimate focus on real-time data processing. A DevOps Culture and Practice Enablement engagement led by Red Hat experts has aligned the business and IT to improve planning and prioritization. The increased transparency and collaboration have reduced time to market, boosting Mozzart Bet's competitive advantage.

Question: What drove you to advance the DevOps journey at Mozzart Bet?

Cedomir Novakovic, co-CTO, Mozzart Bet: In the years before I became co-CTO, Mozzart Bet's focus was at the product level only. IT was releasing products quickly without prioritizing releases or platform architecture alignment. This lack of prioritization meant the business was not satisfied with IT's pace of operation. IT, meanwhile, was not satisfied with the quality of the development requests coming from the business. We lacked transparency and collaboration.

At the same time, the increasing legacy technical debt was piling the pressure on IT. Something needed to be done. I carried out a gap analysis to assess our status compared to our competitors' tech stack and found that we needed to automate and empower our teams. We needed to improve prioritization, break down siloed ways of working, and address the lack of transparency, lack of ownership, and lack of visibility. Becoming co-CTO was my opportunity to push forward with closing those gaps.

It was my opportunity to transform not only our technology but also our culture.

Question: When and why did you decide to engage Red Hat Consulting?

Novakovic: Around 4 years ago, we adopted IBM Fusion for hardware orchestration, with Red Hat® OpenShift® running on top. This was for a major BI transformation project where the underlying legacy technologies were limiting the value it could deliver to the business. When we later decided to transform our production services, we adopted the same architecture. We engaged Red Hat Consulting not only to provide technical support but also to help us build a DevOps culture at Mozzart Bet.

We needed to help the business understand the challenges IT was facing, and for IT to understand the pressures the business was facing about competitors and everything that's happening in our market. So, when I was discussing our transformation plans with the Red Hat team, they suggested DevOps Culture and Practice Enablement (TL500) to align the business and IT teams around topics such as defining clear goals, improving visibility, establishing ownership, and fostering transparency.

Red Hat Innovators in the Open

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Question: What did the enablement look like?

Novakovic: The enablement engagement lasted 5 days, with on-site sessions for 8 hours a day. A total of 12 people took part: 7 from IT and project management, and the rest from different product lines across the business. One of the company's major shareholders attended sessions on competitive advantage, culture, and automation, expressing her appreciation for the transformation we were trying to achieve.

From a culture and business value perspective, the enablement covered topics such as establishing culture and shared understanding, and using economic prioritization practices and value slicing to build product backlogs that can deliver incremental value. From a technical perspective, a Red Hat expert covered topics such as agile in practice and various product development approaches. The technical streams were particularly beneficial for our people, helping them to understand the complexities our IT team faces.

Question: What made the engagement unique?

Novakovic: The level of interaction was totally different from any other engagement I have attended and I have participated in many different engagements and workshops with many different vendors. I believe that interaction was very, very important.

The interaction and the Red Hat experts' ability to adapt in real time made the engagement a great success. Whatever the question—and we asked many—the Red Hat team provided the answers. They were able to shift focus to another stream as needed, then return and provide the answer. If we wanted additional context about our industry, for instance, they could provide it.

I should also mention the backlog—papers hanging from the walls with to-do lists. The backlogs gave us focus. They gave us a clear picture of how we were moving forward. What are we doing now? What's next? What has been delivered?

Question: What impact did the engagement have?

Novakovic: When someone has been working the same way for many, many years, change is difficult. I only expected our people to start moving a little at a time. But after the engagement, they were so fired up, so enthusiastic, and we are continuing to implement what we learned. Whenever we start a new product, we include impact mapping from day 1 and bring teams together early rather than waiting until midway through the project.

One of the most significant shifts is team leaders providing ongoing, transparent feedback; they no longer just assume the team is doing fine because it's functioning and delivering. Team leaders regularly present their progress to other team leaders to coordinate and collaborate.

This increased transparency and collaboration have improved time-to-market and our competitive advantage. Making the planning more visible has increased the pace of releases: for the first time in 10 years, we released 2 products within just a few weeks.

Question: Where are you today?

Novakovic: We still have a few gaps to close. I have excellent cooperation with my co-CTO Jovica Sabic; together we are bringing transparency at every level. We regularly discuss what is important and identify and share changes to value streams and priorities early, which, in turn, has reduced escalations caused by too many priority changes. Together, we are creating priorities on two streams: software and platform service development.

On the Red Hat OpenShift side, we've built clusters for development, staging, and production. We've integrated Red Hat OpenShift Lightspeed across all those clusters for generative AI and are adding operators and migrating services to each. Those services include back-end services, such as log streaming, monitoring, and authentication, as well as front-end services.

We've built templates for migrating those services, which are currently running in Docker pods and on virtual machines (VMs). They now run side-by-side on Red Hat OpenShift Virtualization. In the next phase, we will move from migrating services to migrating whole products.

Red Hat OpenShift is a strategic platform. All new products we build will run on Red Hat OpenShift. All business intelligence and reporting initiatives are developed for Red Hat OpenShift. And we have defined Red Hat OpenShift as a mandatory platform for any third-party product we adopt.

Question: What's next?

Novakovic: We're currently planning our business goals and product deliveries for next year. Planning is totally different than any year before. It's much more organized, with a better understanding between the IT team and the head of product.

One of our goals for next year is to develop a product end-to-end in collaboration with Red Hat. We would like to see Red Hat's approach, from the initial 'thinking about the product and comparing it to competitors' phase through 'mapping business value' and 'creating timelines and milestones' to technical perspectives such as 'development', 'staging', 'AB testing', and finally 'taking it into production'. We're particularly excited about this engagement because Mozzart Bet and Red Hat are a perfect cultural fit. We think this engagement will be very beneficial for us.

About Mozzart Bet

Founded in 2001, Mozzart is a leader in the field of gambling and sports betting in South-East Europe. With around 1,000 betting shops, the brand is present in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Croatia, Malta, Romania, and Kenya. Of its more than 5,000 professionals, 120 developers and 30 IT engineers support the technology underpinning gaming services, gaming machines, sport betting, online casino, and a news portal.

About Red Hat

Red Hat is the world's leading provider of enterprise open source software solutions, using a community-powered approach to deliver reliable and high-performing Linux, hybrid cloud, container, and Kubernetes technologies. Red Hat helps customers develop cloud-native applications, integrate existing and new IT applications, and automate and manage complex environments. A trusted adviser to the Fortune 500, Red Hat provides award-winning support, training, and consulting services that bring the benefits of open innovation to any industry. Red Hat is a connective hub in a global network of enterprises, partners, and communities, helping organizations grow, transform, and prepare for the digital future.

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