

The Scoop on Technical Support & Development

Change Management, DevOps, and More

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Report summary

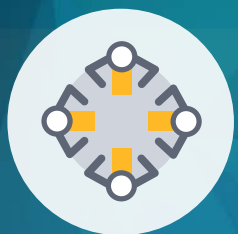
Recent research by HDI reveals a need for technical support to have a closer relationship with development. Support teams want more visibility, communication, and involvement in their organization's software development process. It is challenging for support teams that are not adequately prepared to support customers affected by software development releases.

While support is commonly notified after software is operationalized, the entire organization could benefit from support's continuous visibility and involvement in the development process from beginning to end. The nature of support's role, working first-hand with end users to resolve technological issues, gives them unique insight into the impact on end users from any given release, as well as general end-user needs, issues, and expectations.

This report contains the full summary of responses to an online survey conducted by HDI about collaboration between development and technical support teams. Responses were collected from 328 technical support professionals in December 2015 and January 2016. The research findings represent organizations with fewer than 100 to more than 10,000 internal and/or external end users across more than thirty industries.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- **73%** of support teams are dissatisfied with their current level of involvement with development.
- **32%** do not share knowledge articles between the support and development teams.
- While **89%** of organizations have a change management process implemented, only **49%** of organizations have one that works.
- **10%** of organizations are considering DevOps.



Support's involvement in development

Support's involvement in development is often limited to receiving notifications after software is operationalized. It is much less common for support to be represented in prioritization or predevelopment discussions.

Percentage of support teams involved in development:



74% of support teams are notified when software is operationalized, compared to:

22% involved in prioritizing development sprints, and 37% included in discussions about requirements, needs, or user stories.



Support wants more involvement

73% of support teams are dissatisfied with their current level of involvement with development. Support teams want more involvement, earlier in the process.

What support teams would change about their current level of involvement in development?

“More bidirectional involvement. Support must play a larger role before releases.”

“Prelaunch involvement should include clearly defined client-side needs so support teams can verify compatibility and prepare as well to start getting an initial support strategy outlined.”

“Support teams need to be engaged much sooner—at a minimum, during the test/validation stages. Hand-off from development to support is spotty, there is limited documentation and no defined standards, and sometimes the support teams are as caught by surprise by changes being pushed into production as everyone else is. Too much work in a vacuum—too many silos.”

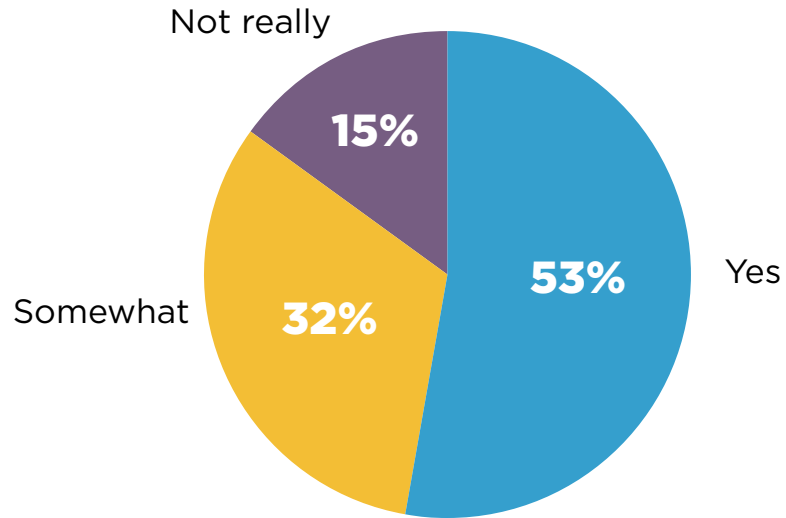
“Support should be more involved in the requirements—gathering and testing process to ensure the final product is compatible with the desktop environment. The service desk should be made aware of the new release during testing so [staff] can be trained.”



Lack of visibility is a challenge

Most support teams are not able to view updates tracked in the development/QA tool. 85% say this lack of visibility creates a challenge for support teams.

Does lack of visibility create a challenge for support?



35%
of support teams
use the same tool
as development

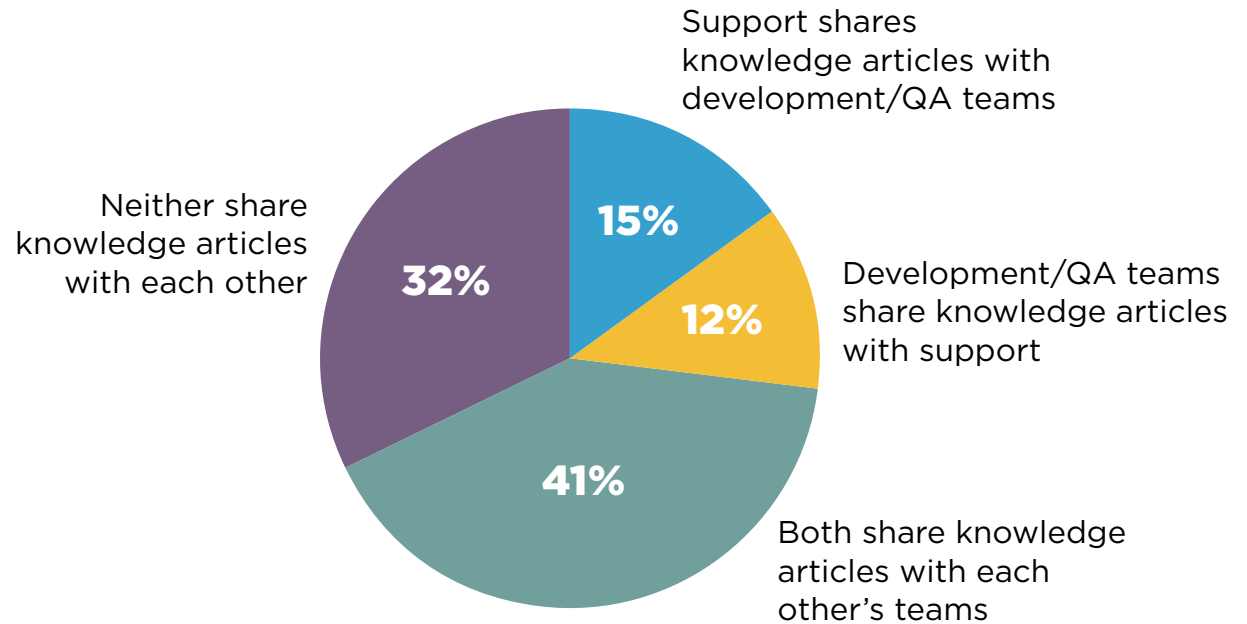
28%
use a tool that
integrates with
development's tool

49%
can view updates
tracked in
development's tool



Knowledge sharing between teams

Do support and development teams share knowledge?



56%

of support teams share knowledge articles with development

53%

of development teams share knowledge articles with support

32%

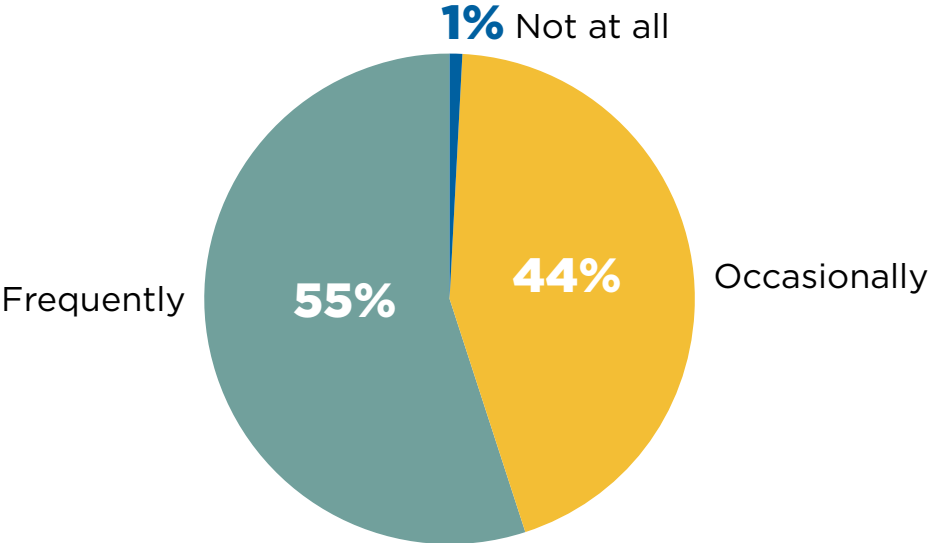
do not share knowledge articles between the two teams



Support is unprepared

99% report that support's lack of preparedness for releases poses a challenge for the team.

How often does this pose a challenge for support?



Yet, only 23% have formal process in place that are always followed to ensure support is prepared for releases

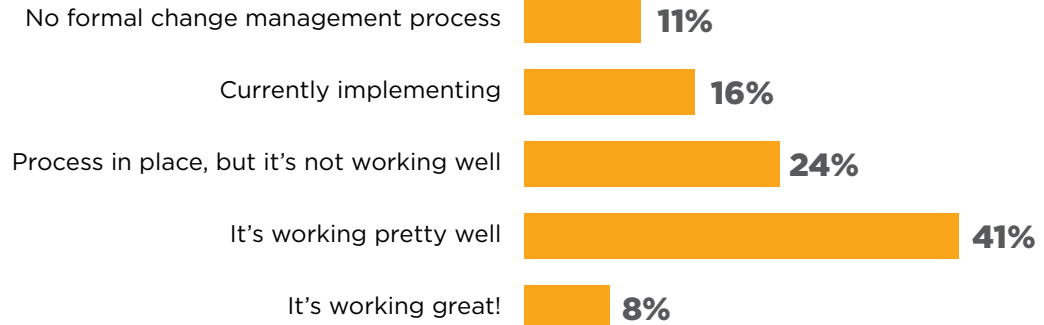
And, only 20% report that their teams are always prepared for releases



The state of change management

While 89% of organizations have a change management process implemented, only 49% of organizations have one that works.

How well is change management working?



One quarter of the organizations have change management in place, but say it is not working well.

- In general, collaboration between support and development is below average for this group: 89% are not satisfied with the current level (compared to 27% overall).

The largest group (41%) is somewhat neutral about their change management process, responding that it is “working pretty well.”

The smallest group (8%) has a change management process that is “working great!” Support teams for this group are more likely to:

- Have representation at Change Advisory Board (CAB) meetings: 75% always have representation.*
- Be satisfied with their level of involvement in development: 56% “wouldn’t change a thing” (compared to 27% overall).
- Be prepared for releases: 54% are “always prepared” (compared to 20% overall).

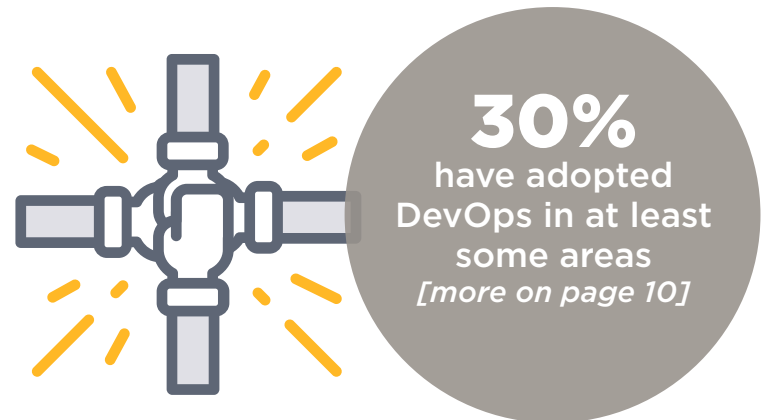
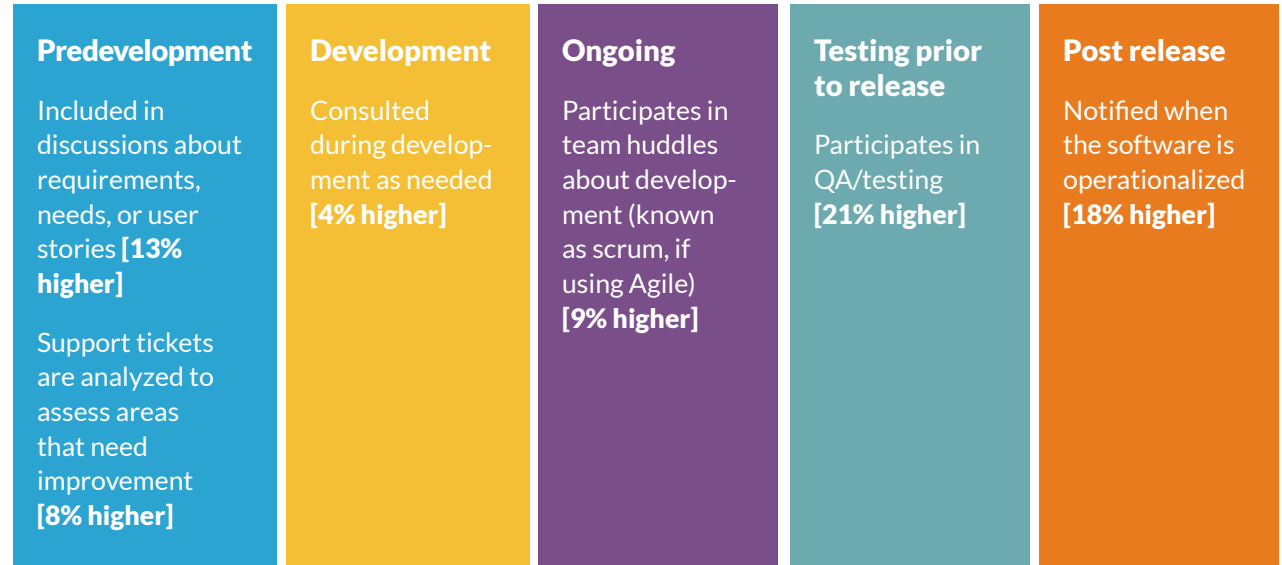
***In organizations that have change management, support is always represented at CAB meetings in 43%; regularly in 18%; as needed in 16%, and not at all (or there is no CAB) in 24%.**



Involvement in development in organizations with successful change management

Support teams in organizations with successful change management are more involved in all stages of development.

The percentage of support teams involved is higher than the overall average for:

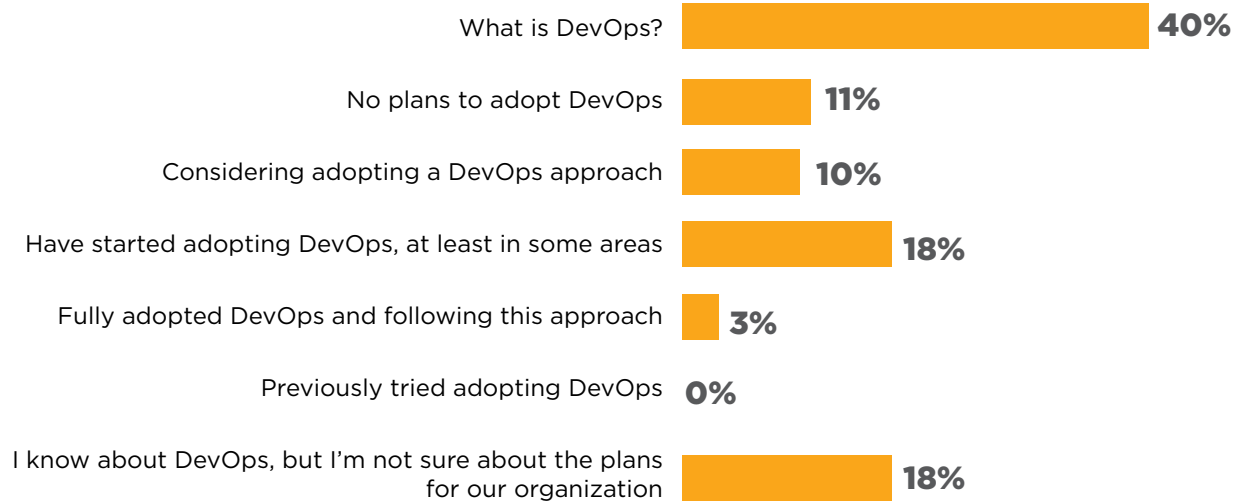




Adoption of DevOps

When an organization adopts DevOps as part of its culture, internal practices and processes are put in place to unify and improve communication between development and operations (including support), allowing for rapid change and improvement while maintaining a level of excellent service for end users.

Has DevOps been adopted?



While 21%
of organizations have adopted DevOps in at least some areas of operations and development, **only 3% have fully adopted it.**

10%
are considering adopting DevOps

40%
of survey takers responded "What is DevOps?"



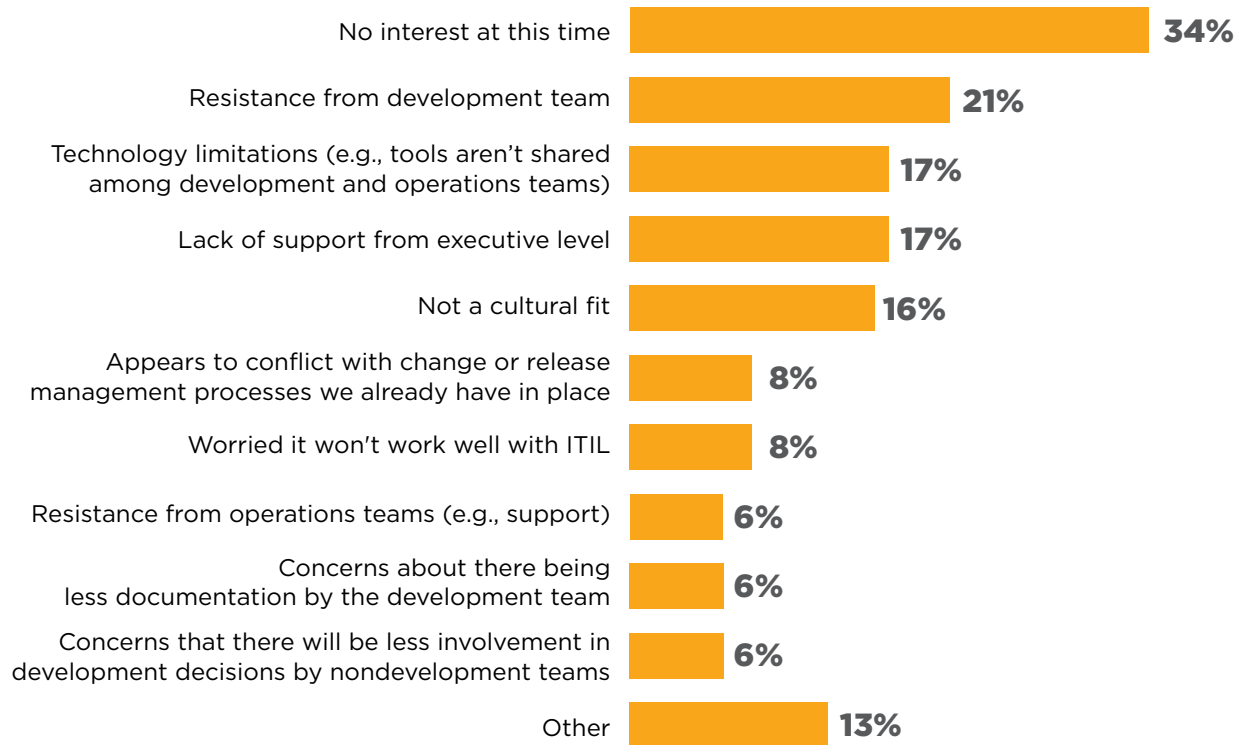
DevOps concerns & challenges

Some organizations that do know what DevOps is haven't adopted it. Why not?

Top reasons, in order of most commonly selected:



Why hasn't DevOps been adopted?

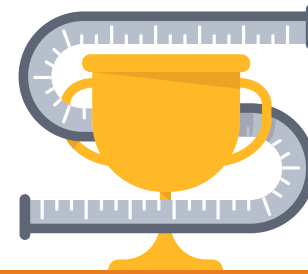




Impact of DevOps on support

Although there aren't many, the organizations in our sample that have fully adopted DevOps have been using it for at least one year, and most of them report that this change in culture has positively impacted support in several ways.

More than half reported a positive impact on the following, in order of rank:



Cycle time for change management

Cycle time for release management

Communication within IT

Support team satisfaction

Support's ability to help end users affected by releases

Conclusion

The common theme of this research is undeniable: support, justifiably, wants more inclusion and visibility earlier in the development process. However, the findings did reveal that support teams in the small group of organizations with successful change management have a healthier level of collaboration with development. But even within that segment, few organizations have fully adopted DevOps into their culture.

DevOps has the potential to address support's desire for more communication, visibility, and involvement with development, yet many organizations are not currently aware of what DevOps is or how it can improve the relationship between development and support teams.

Leaders in support and development have an opportunity to come together to evaluate existing processes, practices, and technology limitations to create a culture that unifies their teams, enabling them to work together to provide agile change as well as stellar customer service.

“We wish we were less involved in the software development process.”
—NO technical support team ever

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