

Productization in Shell's Cloud

Following Shell's Enterprise Cloud Platform
transformation journey from project to product

Authors



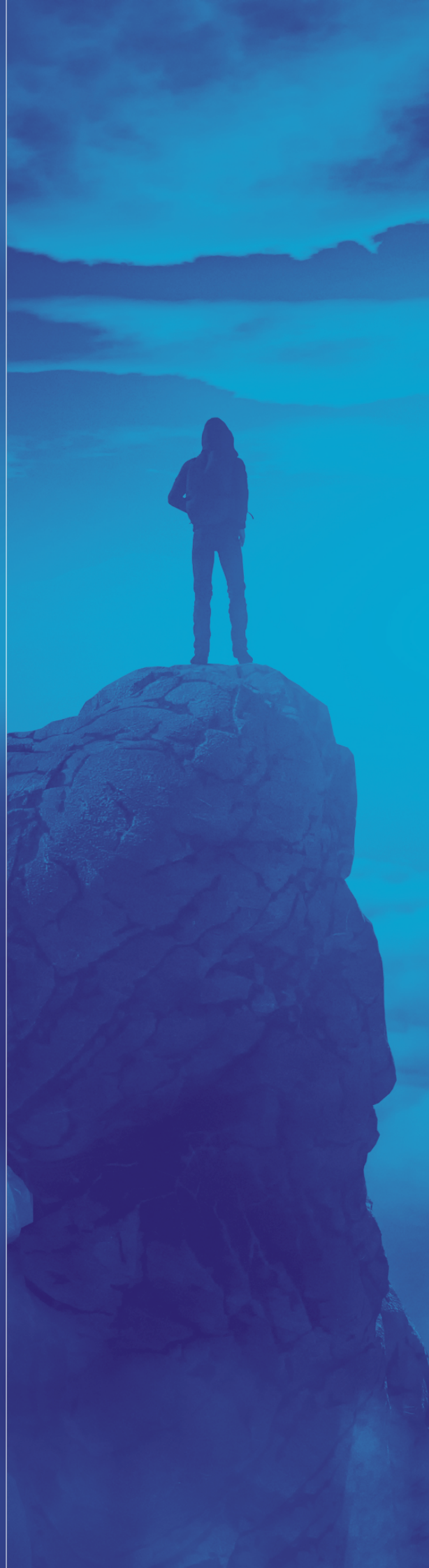
Koen Harbers
Partner at Highberg



Simon Atteveld
Transformation Consultant at Highberg

Special thanks to these contributors from Shell*

SinYee How	Enterprise Portfolio manager
Matt Lingham	Cloud Platform Manager
Cisy Kunthara	Product Manager Cloud Foundations
John van Beers	Release Train Engineer
Nikhil Kher	Transformation Program Manager



Cloud computing is an important part for large scale business operations, and there is considerable demand from big organizations to form a central platform team to help standardize and optimize these operations.

With legacy systems integration, security concerns and significant organizational change, it can be a challenge for large enterprises to transition to a central cloud.

It was clear that Shell required a well-executed cloud implementation strategy.



The Challenge

Ensuring the smooth integration of technology



Shell is at the center of the global energy transition; entering, and shaping new markets as well as developing new technologies. In a shifting energy landscape Shell often joins forces with new entrants to the market differing standards for supportive technology, including cloud-based solutions. To ensure smooth integration of technology,

Shell's Enterprise Cloud Platform (ECP) leadership envisaged a new way to look at its product and services portfolio.

The ECP team not only 'productized' their solution portfolio but transformed their entire operations.

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A key success factor was for Shell to pivot from a technology-centric approach to a set of standardized enterprise capabilities focusing on enabling user needs

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The Approach

Fostering a platform thinking mindset with partners



Sin Yee How, Enterprise Portfolio Manager for Digital Platforms, explained how platform product thinking is fundamental, in transforming Shell's cloud infrastructure services. Drawing a parallel with the automotive industry, she said:

"Leading car manufacturers like Ford used a platform strategy many years ago, standardizing the common car platform elements like the chassis and used it to produce multiple car models."

"Such shared platforms can help drive efficiency for base line elements of the car so the manufacturer can focus on the differentiated elements like the exterior design, its headlights, dashboards and seats etc".

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Enterprise Cloud Platform success is determined by how well IT professionals are perceived as a partner to our colleagues in the business?

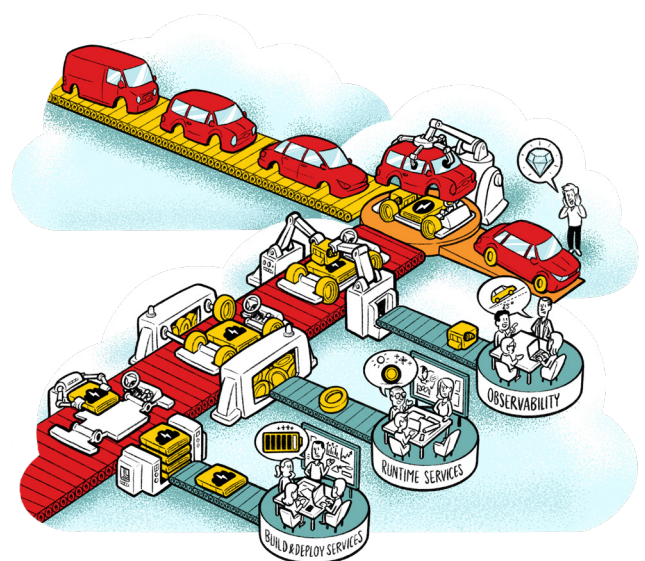
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Sin Yee explained that improvements on this platform can help boost the speed of innovation by auto-matically benefiting many models with a single development, saving costs both in the initial design phase and the ongoing maintenance.

Noting that market-leading cloud providers continuously push new solutions and innovations and the various Shell business product teams demand speed from the cloud platform team, she stressed that agility and efficiency are critical to success.

"By employing platform thinking, our enterprise cloud platform teams improve the developer experience reducing toil and maintaining self-service standards. This approach helps a developer to focus on value-adding features for Shell's hugely diverse digital user base."

However, operating a tech platform also requires new organizational capabilities. On the ECP's key to success, Nikhil Kher, Transformation Program Manager, says: "Apart from technology considerations, the readiness of our businesses to develop or migrate their applications to enterprise cloud, is determined by how IT professionals are perceived as a partner to our colleagues in the business. How well do we engage with them? Do we understand the level of support that is required and can we quickly respond to their evolving demands?"



A platform approach to Cloud Services

The Solution

The operating model for cloud innovation



In this instance, Shell wanted to reach the right balance between insourcing services and expertise and outsourcing to ensure the high levels of knowledge, competence and innovation an emergent cloud space requires. Hence, an overhaul of the

operational framework was required and emphasizing continuous and incremental innovation allowed Shell to embrace a stronger product mindset.

The operating model revised its structure in three ways.

DevOps Teams

The formation of a set of platform products teams running DevOps, managing key functions and services of the platform. Most teams' responsibility is predominantly centred around a user need or function and their multi-disciplinary setup reduces hand-offs between them.

Agile Release Train

An Agile Release Train structure was introduced, grouping DevOps teams within the same product area. This structure helps provide a more collaborative environment and improves alignment to a common product vision and similar service and compliance standards. They are tasked to provide cloud subscriptions to end users, billing them and building the cloud native container solutions and the machine learning platform. Business-change managers form a part of the team to onboard new customers and to improve their experience.

Product Council

Shell decided to form a Product Council to guide investment decisions across the platform. The Council has provided the most notable transformations to help manage the balance of competing stakes like platform innovation, maintainability, and cost-efficiency. Principally, aligning decision-making with key IT and customer stakeholders ensures transparency and focus on the reuse potential in product evolution.



This helped improve quality and gave rise to a substantial productivity increase of 77% after a year of full deployment.

The Results

User and developer centricity – driving value creation



To be responsive means to consistently anticipate new demands.

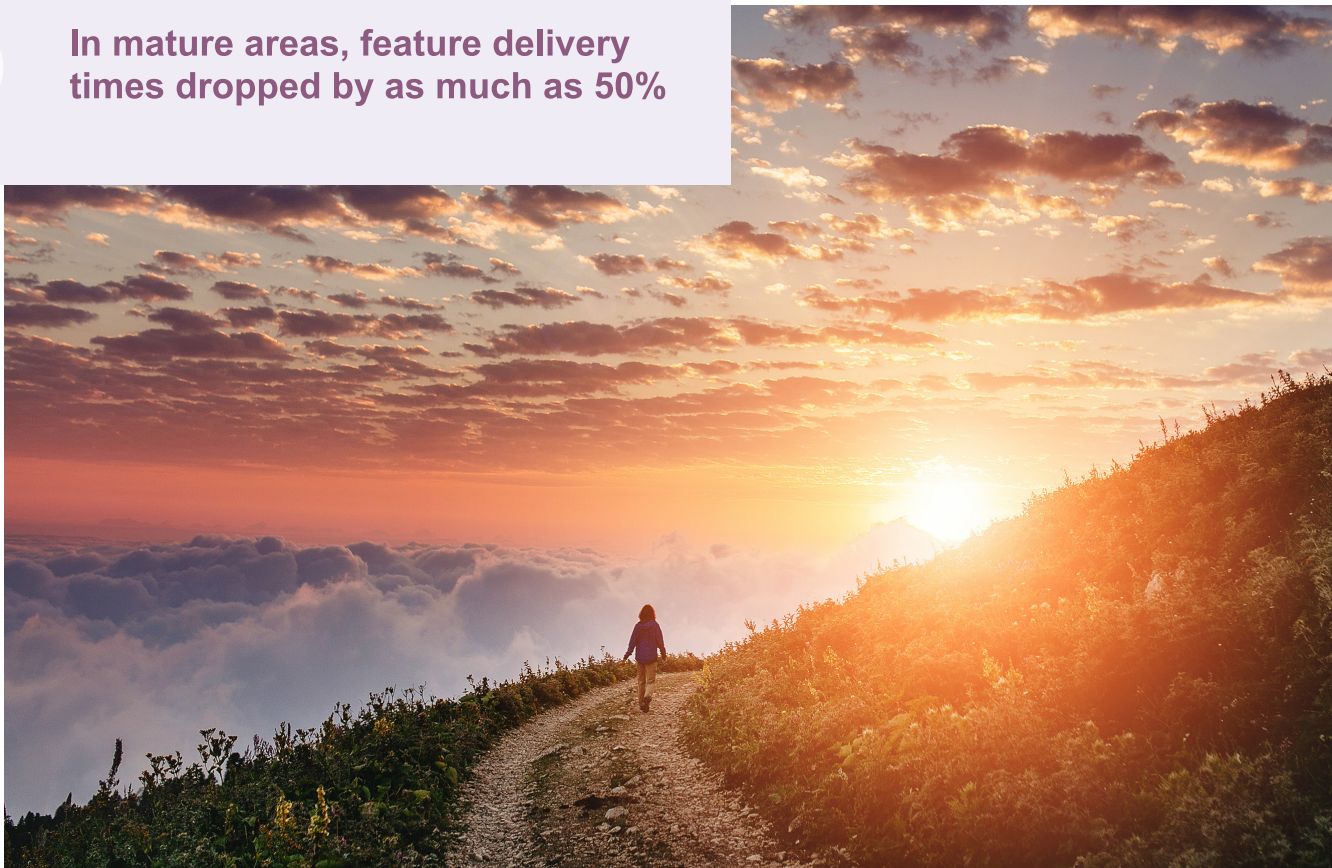
Matt Lingham, the Cloud Platform Manager, emphasizes that it is imperative to recognize business IT domains using enterprise cloud as co-creators. Understanding their future needs for infrastructure technology and services, shapes the cloud platform roadmap.

It is equally critical to ensure a smooth cloud onboarding process, offering a platform that is both interactive and accessible. Developers and users can access a dedicated support portal and the platform teams regularly showcase new features in product demos.

Such user engagements have allowed new themes to emerge. Matt notes that “There is now an energy that drives us to continuously improve our service”.



In mature areas, feature delivery times dropped by as much as 50%



The Future

Partnerships, evolution and unwavering commitment



Shell is among the early adopters to bring a product mindset to IT Platform Operations. The approach has helped improve Shell's enterprise cloud platform team into a trusted partner for colleagues in the business.

As the energy sector rapidly evolves, a shift to customer and product-centric strategies helps navigate new and dynamic ecosystems effectively.

While Sin Yee acknowledged that not all solutions are suited to this productization approach, the bedrock of this transformation towards business agility remains clear. The focus now is fostering cross-departmental collaboration, leadership and a commitment to exploration and learning.

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It's an exciting road ahead for all of us!

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About the authors



Koen Harbers

Partner at Highberg



Simon Atteveld

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Our special thanks go out to everyone at Shell* who shared their experiences so openly.

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