

Aleksey Tsalolikhin

Operations Improvement Catalyst / Site Reliability Engineer

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Skills

Configuration Management

CFEngine, Ansible

CI/CD

GitLab CI, Jenkins, Jenkins Job Builder, GitHub Actions, TeamCity

System Administration

UNIX, Linux, AWS, Docker, Oracle Cloud Infrastructure, Kubernetes, Terraform

Programming Languages

Python, Perl, bash, and more

AWS

EC2, S3, IAM, VPC, RDS, CloudWatch, SQS, SNS, Lambda, DynamoDB, and more

Summary

Master generalist UNIX/Linux sysadmin/DevOps/SRE, here to help keep the lights on for our socio-technical society. Proven ability to lead large-scale migrations, modernization efforts, and to translate strategy to results within complex organizations. Strong background in establishing teams, systems and processes in fast-growing organizations. Skilled in automation, CI/CD, Kubernetes and much more.

Certifications

Professional Scrum Master I

2020

Scrum.org

<https://www.credly.com/badges/4139e43a-acd9-4d28-b603-9cded768caf0>

Linux Essentials

2012

Linux Professional Institute (LPI)

<https://cs.lpi.org/caf/Xamman/certification/verify/LPI000268231/4ju9pelfbr>

Experience

Perplexity AI

Remote

Site Reliability Engineer

Feb 2025 - Aug 2025

As the first SRE hire at a fast-growing startup, helped keep the lights on as we scaled the service to hundreds of millions of users. Many improvements for reliability and observability. Introduced Argo CD and Argo Rollouts for progressive delivery of code to reduce risk associated with code deploys.

<https://perplexity.ai>

Teramind

Remote

Senior DevOps Engineer

June 2024 - December 2024

As the sole Operations practitioner:

- Increased reliability by implementing Postgres database replication and backups in an Oracle Cloud Infrastructure environment.

- Increased observability by implementing monitoring and alerting with OCI Monitoring and Grafana.
- Enabled Teramind to ship updates faster by automating the image bake process for the company's virtual appliance (previously a manual process -- one of the images hadn't been updated for over 2 years).
- Transformed manual Linux server builds and application installs into an automated repeatable process with Terraform and Ansible.

<https://www.teramind.co/>

Spokeo

Remote

Senior DevOps Engineer

2020 - 2024

- Opened the door to reducing data build costs by a factor of 100x (tuning Spark parameters and monitoring AWS EMR-on-EC2 utilization).
- Introduced version control for backend database schema changes (Git/Flyway) and linters for Ansible/Terraform to increase code quality.
- Created additional non-prod environments to solve Dev and QA stepping on each other's toes due to lack of environments.
- Debugged Spark/EMR configuration, unblocking a business-critical ETL process involving Spokeo's largest vendor data set.
- Introduced Amazon Linux 2023 to improve security (getting unit tests off an EOL Ubuntu instance running an ancient Jenkins).
- Pioneered a transition from an in-office oral culture to a distributed team with an async (writing-based) culture, with Git commit messages and Jira tickets explaining why changes are being made.
- Eliminated hand-off friction and sped up delivery by championing the reorganization of the Data team from functional silos to cross-functional product-centered Scrum teams; built team agency and self-management as a volunteer Scrum Master on one of these new teams for about a year.

<https://www.spokeo.com/>

Vertical Sysadmin

Burbank, CA

Owner/CEO

2015 - 2020

- As a configuration management expert consultant at a Fortune 10 company, set up a system for automating the management of tens of thousands of Linux servers running hundreds of applications. This system enabled security standards compliance and saved millions of dollars in labor costs and prevented outages.
- Personally developed, sold and delivered training on CFEngine and GitLab.
- Organized the development and delivery of training on Linux command line basics and Git version control.
- Apprenticed a junior systems administrator into a world-class IT Operations professional (now working as a VP of Quality).

<https://www.verticalsysadmin.com>

Deluxe Digital Cinema

Burbank, CA

Director, Production Systems

2013 - 2014

- Established application operations support for a digital cinema booking management and fulfillment system supporting world-wide exhibition.
- Triaged and resolved production issues.
- Created tools to shift support from manual ad-hoc email-based workflows to self-service + ticket system based, significantly increasing speed of service.
- Organized Operations to increase efficiency and production: created job manuals and trained staff; hired and apprenticed an Operations Manager.
- Moved services to DR site with minimal disruption when film lab was shut down in May 2014. Supervised build-out of new primary site and moved services to new primary site.

<https://www.bydeluxe.com/cinema>

Deluxe Digital Cinema

Burbank, CA

Sr. UNIX Systems Administrator/Architect

2008 - 2013

- Implemented server and network infrastructure, and supported development and operations for a digital cinema DRM and booking management system supporting exhibition of movies worldwide (a billion-dollar industry).
- Established source version control, server and database backups, DR site and fail-over procedures, monitoring, documentation, security administration, configuration management, release management, database administration, capacity management and purchasing. The system delivered over 40 million decryption keys so far and has brought in hundreds of millions of dollars in income to Deluxe Digital Cinema, and over a billion dollars of income for the studio clients.
- Single-handed for 4 years, then apprenticed a junior system administrator and mentored a senior one. Led this team of system administrators.
- Supported a neighboring system engineering group handling mastering and distribution of digital cinema via hard drive and satellite; helped them establish their own infrastructure.

<https://www.bydeluxe.com/cinema>

Deluxe Labs

Hollywood, CA

UNIX Systems Administrator

2006 - 2008

- As the sole UNIX system administrator, supported an in-house database server supporting a 24x7 Hollywood **film factory** grossing hundreds of millions of dollars annually.
- Beefed up monitoring of network and server infrastructure.
- Helped set up the infrastructure for Deluxe Digital Cinema.

<https://www.bydeluxe.com/>

EarthLink Pasadena, CA
 Sr. UNIX Systems Administrator 2001 - 2003

- Supported Internet services: mail, news, DNS, authentication, web hosting, mobile, etc., for EarthLink's **five million users**.
- Introduced load balancers in front of EarthLink's portal page (first page the user sees when they dial-up), coordinating with 5 different groups (4 in-house, 1 external) and setting the pattern for successful load balancer rollouts to other services. (This was attempted twice before but failed.)
- Participated in performance analysis and tuning that resulted in reducing the mail server farm from 11 mid-range enterprise servers to 7, reducing infrastructure costs and speeding up the mail service.

<https://www.earthlink.net/>

InsureSuite Beverly Hills -> Glendale, CA
 Systems Administrator 2000 - 2001

- Provided IT Operations (network and servers) for a start-up selling auto insurance online, starting in the owner's garage in Beverly Hills and moving to a mini Data Center in an office building in Glendale.
- When the expected funding fell through, kept the business going by scavenging old desktops from a sister brick-and-mortar company and made Web front-end and Java application server clusters using open source technology (Linux Virtual Server and Apache httpd and Tomcat), horizontally scaling the presentation and application tiers.
- Grooved in another system administrator, and led the work of the system administration section.

EarthLink Pasadena, CA
 Tech Support; Web Hosting Systems Administrator 1995 - 2000

- Started in dial-up tech support; established tech support for Web hosting; led a team of Web hosting tech support reps; led a team of junior Web system administrators; promoted to senior Web systems administrator.
- Helped architect and operate consumer web hosting to scale from thousands to millions of users.
- Helped establish and operate the company's most profitable product line: business Web Hosting.

<https://www.earthlink.net/>

Awards	Employee of the Year, Technology	2012
	Deluxe Digital Cinema	
	Mentor of the Year	2011
	League of Professional Systems	
	CFEngine Community Champion	2011
	CFEngine	
	Mountain Mover	2002

Publications

CFEngine 3.5.1 Agent Promise Attributes [Appendix]. In Diego Zamboni, *Learning CFEngine 3* (pp. 215-229)

October 2013

O'Reilly

<https://www.oreilly.com/library/view/learning-cfengine-3/9781449334536/>

LISA '12: Real World Configuration Management Workshop April 2013

USENIX ;login:

https://www.usenix.org/system/files/login/articles/1304_reports_lisa12_rwc

System Administration of the IBM Watson Supercomputer April 2012

Linux Journal

<https://www.linuxjournal.com/content/system-administration-ibm-watson-su>

Security Monitoring and Enforcement with Cfengine 3

May 2011

Linux Journal

<https://www.linuxjournal.com/article/10924>

Summary, Configuration Management Summit

October 2010

USENIX ;login:

<https://www.usenix.org/system/files/login/articles/73541-ConfigMgt10reports>

Selected Conference Presentations

Time Management for System Administrators; and Power Editing with Vi

Ohio LinuxFest

2024

<https://olfconference.org/2024-olfi-training/sysadmin/>

Linux Professional Institute DevOps Tools Engineer Preparation Session

SoCal Linux Expo

2020

<https://www.socallinuxexpo.org/scale/18x/presentations/linux-professional-i>

Power Editing with Vi

SoCal Linux Expo

2019

<https://www.socallinuxexpo.org/scale/17x/presentations/power-editing-vi>

Setting up CI/CD Pipelines

USENIX LISA

2017, 2018

<https://www.usenix.org/conference/lisa17/training-program/session/setting-c>

Better DevOps Through Communication

Ohio LinuxFest

2016

<https://ohiolinux.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2016sched.pdf>

Introduction to Automating System Administration with CFEngine 3

USENIX Federated Conferences Week

2011

<https://www.usenix.org/legacy/events/fcw11/training/tutonefile.html#f1>

Time Management for Systems Administrators SoCal Linux Expo
2013

<https://www.socallinuxexpo.org/scale11x/presentations/time-management-s>