



## Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform Introduced as AnsibleFest Celebrates Power of Collaboration

September 27, 2019

By: [Mary Johnston Turner](#), [Stephen Elliot](#), [Jim Mercer](#)

### IDC's Quick Take

The 2019 edition of AnsibleFest, the annual event for the Ansible open source automation community, featured dozens of user-led sessions by companies such as JPMorgan Chase & Co., Microsoft, Google Cloud Platform, Health Care Service Corporation (HCSC), and the Tennessee Valley Authority. While each presenter spoke of specific use cases, time savings, and efficiency improvements, the unifying message focused on the benefits resulting from building collaborative, enterprisewide centers of excellence and automation communities of practice to promote common automation tools, standards, and best practices that simplify cross-silo operations and streamline end-to-end workflows. Red Hat, the provider of supported Ansible solutions, used the event to [launch the Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform](#) featuring new content packaging, certification, and analytics designed to enable large-scale collaborative enterprise automation strategies.

### Event Highlights

AnsibleFest hit a new high with over 1,500 attendees representing a mix of Red Hat Ansible Automation customers and organizations that rely on self-supported open source editions of Ansible core and the AWX task engine technologies. Many of the most mature organizations described their automation journeys as multiyear evolutions growing virally from the efforts of a few early champions to become a core enabler of enterprisewide digital strategies.

Presenters consistently underlined several common elements supporting their success stories, including:

- Investment in training admin staff on the basics of software programming and development concepts including source control discipline, basic programming skills, and the use of unit and integration testing
- Creation of automation communities of practice and centers of excellence to advocate for automation best practices and promote reuse and sharing while providing a forum for collaborative definition of standards
- Data-driven project prioritization and evaluation; starting the journey by reducing time and complexity associated with painful, time-consuming, repetitive activities delivers value and proof of concept quickly
- Setting incremental goals and expanding collaboratively over time; many organizations described a crawl, walk, run approach, with each phase lasting a year or more
- Demonstrate that automation will not eliminate jobs or render existing staff obsolete by continually expanding responsibilities and investing in training to allow staff to move into new areas as automation streamlines formerly manual activities

Community and Red Hat customer presentations set the stage for the launch of the Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform, which introduces a set of new SaaS solutions for distributing and securing

supported Ansible modules, playbooks, and roles as well as analytics to help optimize automation efficiencies. Available via the **cloud.redhat.com** customer portal, these new capabilities are:

- **Ansible Content Collections** is a new packaging format that streamlines the management and consumption of Ansible content by allowing Red Hat to distribute content more frequently and modularly than it has in the past. Previously, content distribution was packaged as part of Ansible Engine distros that typically arrived only two or three times annually.
- **Automation Hub** is a repository for the distribution and discovery of certified content provided via Ansible Content Collections. Automation Hub provides a fully integrated source control capability for Ansible content that will eliminate the need for external GitHub or other third-party source control platforms if desired by the customer.
- **Automation Analytics** is for improving automation efficiencies across Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform deployments by providing data and dashboards about frequency, success, and speed of automation.

Red Hat also announced Red Hat Ansible Tower 3.6 with updates that allow support for playbooks using Ansible Content Collections content. The company also announced a Tech Preview of increased Tower scalability enabled by the Red Hat OpenShift Kubernetes platform.

The Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform package, which integrates on-premises supported Tower and Engine subscriptions coupled with the new SaaS solutions into a single bundled solution, is scheduled for general availability in November 2019. Existing Red Hat Ansible Tower and Engine customers will be able to activate the SaaS services via **cloud.redhat.com** at no additional charge once they are GA.

## IDC's Point of View

The Ansible open source project was launched in 2012 with the goal of creating a YAML-based, modular, scalable, and agentless infrastructure-as-code automation language that could be used consistently across a broad range of infrastructure and DevOps technologies. Since 2012, a worldwide community of users and contributors has emerged using Ansible to automate configuration, provisioning, and business process workflows spanning computer, cloud, storage, network, security, DevOps, and IoT use cases. Based upon the number of distinct contributors, Ansible ranks as the seventh most popular project on GitHub, ahead of well-known projects such as Kubernetes, which currently ranks at number 8. Ansible users range from small DevOps teams to extensive enterprise teams involving hundreds of internal contributors.

The recent growth of Ansible has been fueled, in part, by the adoption of groups outside of the typical IT DevOps domain. One of Ansible's primary benefits is how easy it is for nonprogrammers to learn and how quickly inexperienced users can achieve productivity. This has opened more points of entry for new users in different domains, allowing Ansible to grow into a general-purpose automation solution capable of automating a wide variety of manual tasks — regardless of the domain. A considerable number of the attendees at this year's AnsibleFest were nonprogrammers from domains such as network, storage, and security administration. During his keynote, Bart Dworak, of Microsoft, indicated that by automating tasks with Ansible, his network engineers were essentially becoming network developers.

Red Hat acquired the commercial start-up Ansible company and its proprietary Tower task engine platform in 2015. Red Hat subsequently open sourced Tower as the AWX project and continued to extend and update supported editions of Red Hat Tower and Ansible Engine, including ongoing

distribution of supported and community-based Ansible modules, which are the fundamental building blocks used to construct Ansible automation instructions known as playbooks and roles.

The new Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform represents a significant architectural evolution designed to improve the scale and complexity of operations that can be supported across the enterprise. Red Hat indicated that the supported Red Hat Ansible Automation Platform will be particularly valuable for organizations that are trying to scale their automation efforts across different teams and departments. By separating the distribution of the Engine execution platform from the distribution of content, Red Hat will be able to accelerate the certification and testing processes for modules, playbooks, and roles and make new supported content available on a continuous basis, rather than waiting for an Engine update. The new architecture takes advantage of SaaS-enabled agility for content distribution and analytics while providing customers with an on-premises automation engine, UI, and role-based access control system.

### **IT Executive Recommendations**

Executives should:

- If the IT organizations have not started the automation journey, identify a team and set of manual processes that should be automated and create a plan and strategy. Companies that don't define roles and processes run the risk of increasing operational expenses, seeing higher levels of application downtime, suffering from slower deployment frequencies, and experiencing less secure services.
- Automation often requires strong leadership and a cultural shift; it requires an organizationwide commitment to self-learning, training, and skills development and a focus on empowering and enabling across silo teams with training and developing a community via collaborative teams to drive discussions and accelerate adoption and continuous improvements.
- Consider the use and investment of automation across teams; recognize that successful projects will require investment into people, process, and technology areas that align with a specific set of metrics and business outcomes.
- Plan to address and solve five common automation challenges with an automation strategy: the identification of manual tasks; the proper tool approach; obtaining the required skills; creating an environment of governance and control across people, process, and technology; and maintaining version control.
- Consider embedding automation across multiple teams and recognize that automated capabilities require a shared approach through team enablement and ownership; individual teams must have ownership to spread automation from one team to multiple teams.
- For large IBM and Red Hat customers, provide feedback to product management teams into how Ansible can be used across the broader IBM environment; there remains a growing interest in how automation can impact and transform mainframe operations in areas such as DevOps.
- Enterprises that aspire to increase the scope and complexity of their automation capabilities should study the success stories shared at AnsibleFest and create a phased strategy to enable comprehensive, cross-silo automation at scale.

**Subscriptions Covered:**

[DevOps Solutions: Software, Infrastructure and Transformation, Enterprise System Management Software](#)

Please contact the IDC Hotline at 800.343.4952, ext.7988 (or +1.508.988.7988) or sales@idc.com for information on applying the price of this document toward the purchase of an IDC or Industry Insights service or for information on additional copies or Web rights. Visit us on the Web at [www.idc.com](http://www.idc.com). To view a list of IDC offices worldwide, visit [www.idc.com/offices](http://www.idc.com/offices). Copyright 2019 IDC. Reproduction is forbidden unless authorized. All rights reserved.