



AnsibleFest 2018 – A Community Pushing the Boundaries of Automation

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IDC's Quick Take

Red Hat recently hosted its Ansible user conference, [AnsibleFest 2018](#), in Austin, Texas. Ansible has a strong user community and this year's event set a record for attendees. Ansible has found favor with a variety of different teams because of its reliance on human-readable YAML coding and its lightweight agentless architecture. Red Hat made several key announcements regarding Ansible during the conference. The key concentration of the announcements was around enhancing the value customers can glean from the community, expanding the use of Ansible automation within the Red Hat portfolio, and further increasing the scope of Ansible automation into security orchestration.

Event Highlights

Red Hat made three primary announcements at AnsibleFest 2018 regarding new developments within the Ansible automation solution:

- **Ansible Certified Content program.** More than two million customer systems are managed by Red Hat Ansible Tower, and this new certification program will help accelerate user deployment times by providing improved security, reliability, and consistency of the available content. Red Hat Ansible Automation and Red Hat Ansible Tower users will be able to more easily find and access third-party certified modules. All module content within the certification program will undergo the same hardening and evaluation process — whether it originated from Red Hat or a partner.
- **Ansible drives capabilities for security orchestration and automation.** Red Hat is releasing new [Ansible Automation integrations](#) to help customers automate and orchestrate enterprise security solutions. These new modules will integrate and orchestrate security tasks and processes. This will expand Ansible's role within the IT security landscape. The new modules will also automate security capabilities like enterprise firewalls, intrusion detection systems (IDS), and security information and event management (SIEM).
- **Red Hat Satellite 6.4.** This latest version of Red Hat's infrastructure management solution will be available later in October. In this upcoming release, Ansible technology within Red Hat Satellite will provide for remote execution and desired state management, enabling direct access to Ansible for managing Red Hat Enterprise Linux from the Satellite user interface.

IDC's Point of View

Since it was acquired by Red Hat in late 2015, Ansible has exceeded Red Hat's expectations and proven its ability to support the automation needs of a wide range of customers and use cases. This year's AnsibleFest was the largest to date with 25% more attendees and the conference was expanded from one to two full days of content. Ansible Customer TIAA Cref spoke about how quickly it has been able to stand-up Ansible Tower. This is enabling it to build an automation team that is empowering other teams to automate. Aaron Eisler, head of automation at Telstra, presented on using Ansible for NetOps and

noted that the savings the company gets via Ansible automation provides for the, "easiest business case in the world." This is in line with Ansible GM, Justin Nemmers, opening keynote where he emphasized that Ansible is easy to learn enabling customers to realize rapid time to maximum value.

Ansible has already proven it can open doors for Red Hat at companies that are not current customers. As Red Hat builds out its Ansible-powered infrastructure and development platform architecture, the company hopes that customers will make it the de facto standard for all aspects of automation and orchestration throughout the enterprise. Joe Fitzgerald, Red Hat's vice president of management solutions, stressed that Ansible is much more than just configuration management. It has more points of entry than just DevOps and should be considered an enterprise automation solution capable of automating virtually any manual task — regardless of domain. Several of the AnsibleFest sessions covered automation stories outside of DevOps and configuration management. Since its inception, there have been two million Ansible Tower nodes under management and half of those were added in just the past seven months. Red Hat reports seeing roughly 500,000 Ansible downloads a month.

The rapid growth of Ansible adoption has helped grow the community and generate an extensive amount of content. There are currently more than 2,100 modules available for download on the Ansible Galaxy site. This increase in content has made it more difficult for customers to find what they are looking for and there is no systematic approach to get support. Red Hat's certified content is intended to help address this problem and ensure the community continues to thrive. Already 275 modules have been certified and are supported by Red Hat. Even certified content from partners such as F5 and Cisco will be supported by Red Hat. In addition, it is making content easier to navigate by scoring content based upon analytics and feedback from users within the community. IDC sees this move by Red Hat as a means of ensuring that the Ansible community continues to prosper while providing supported content that can help reassure enterprise-level customers as well.

Red Hat is driving Ansible into more domains and expanding the supported use cases for automation across infrastructure, NetOps, ITOps, and DevOps to include a focus on security. It is now releasing new Ansible Automation integrations to help customers automate and orchestrate enterprise security solutions. These new modules will be available on the Galaxy community site and they are designed to help Ansible customers integrate and orchestrate security tasks and processes. The new modules will help automate security capabilities like enterprise firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and security information and event management. The Ansible community has proven to be a force multiplier and has already been contributing content for security automation. The community's interest in security automation kind of pulled Red Hat into focusing on this domain as well. Red Hat's foray into providing Ansible security content makes good sense and appeared to be well-received.

The upcoming 6.4 release of Red Hat Satellite is now in beta and is expected to be available before the end of October 2018. Satellite is Red Hat's solution for managing the life cycle of Red Hat-only infrastructure. This includes things such as patching, subscription management, provisioning new hosts, and configuration management. In this upcoming release, Ansible technology within Red Hat Satellite provides for remote execution and desired state management, enabling direct access to Ansible for managing Red Hat Enterprise Linux from the Satellite user interface. This appears to be in keeping with an ongoing effort to leverage the automation capabilities of Ansible within the Red Hat portfolio. IDC expects Ansible will continue to be an important building block in Red Hat's overall product strategy.

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