



KubeCon



CloudNativeCon

Europe 2026

Flipping the Curve:

A Platform Engineer's Guide to Unlocking the Silent 80%

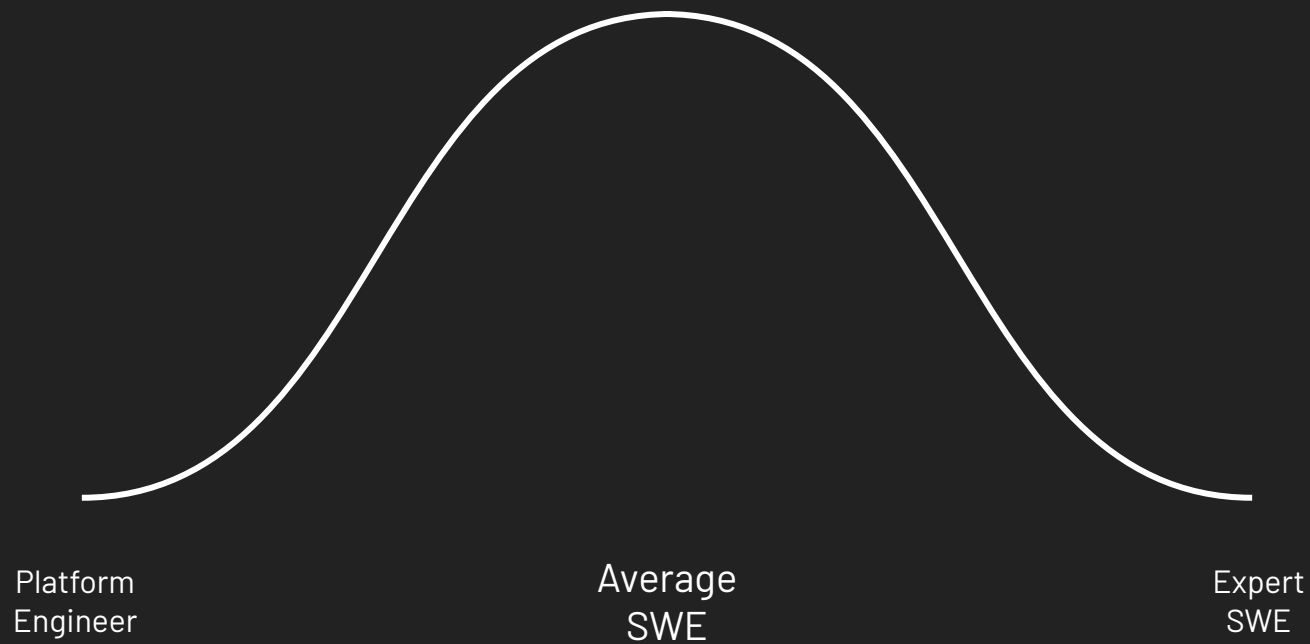


Once upon a time...

Platform
Engineer

Average
SWE

Expert
SWE





Ahhhhh!

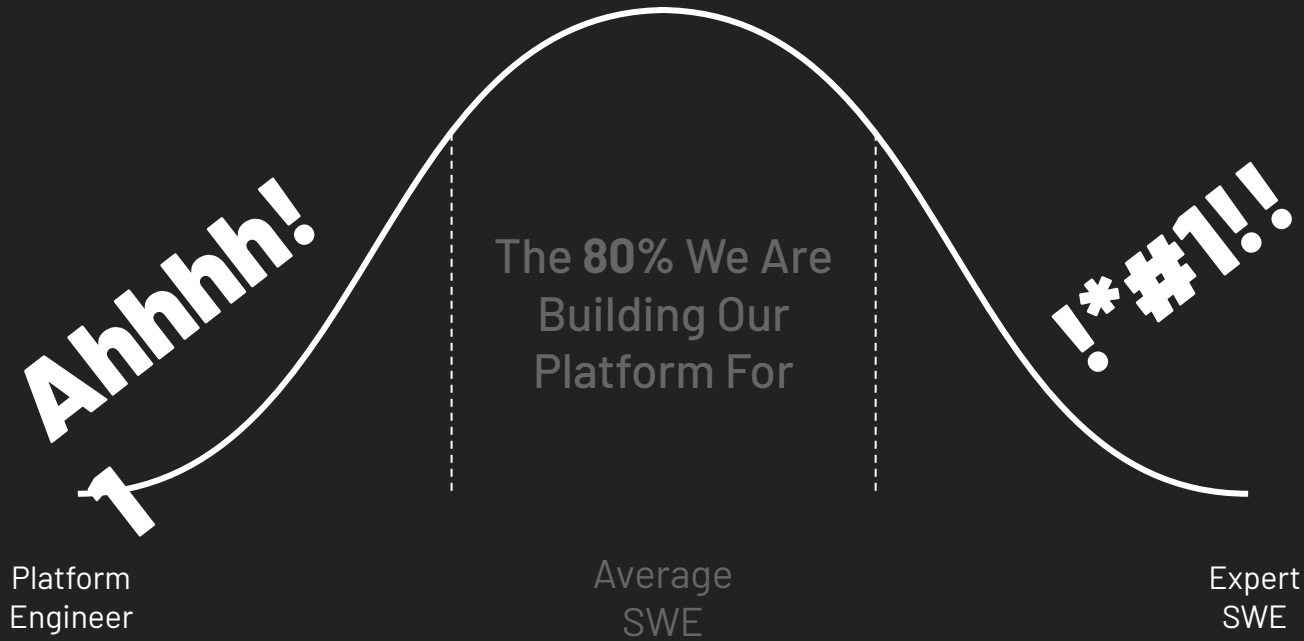
Platform
Engineer

The **80%** We Are
Building Our
Platform For

Average
SWE

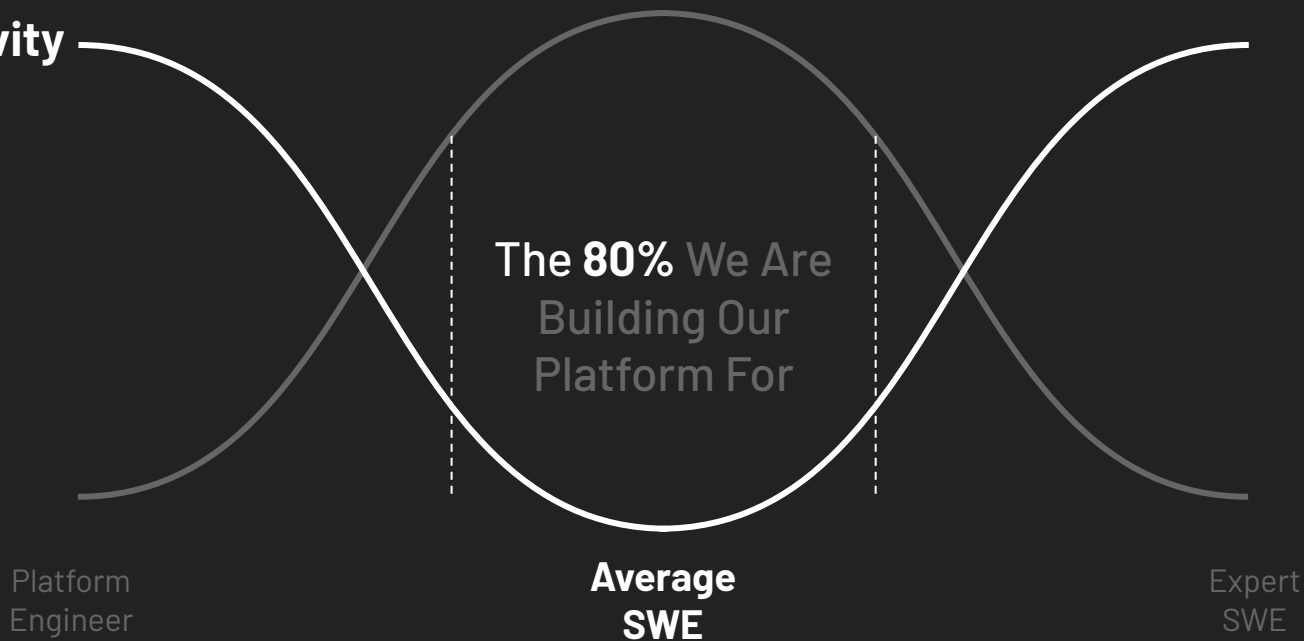
! * # 1 !!

Expert
SWE



Inverse Productivity Curve

Productivity



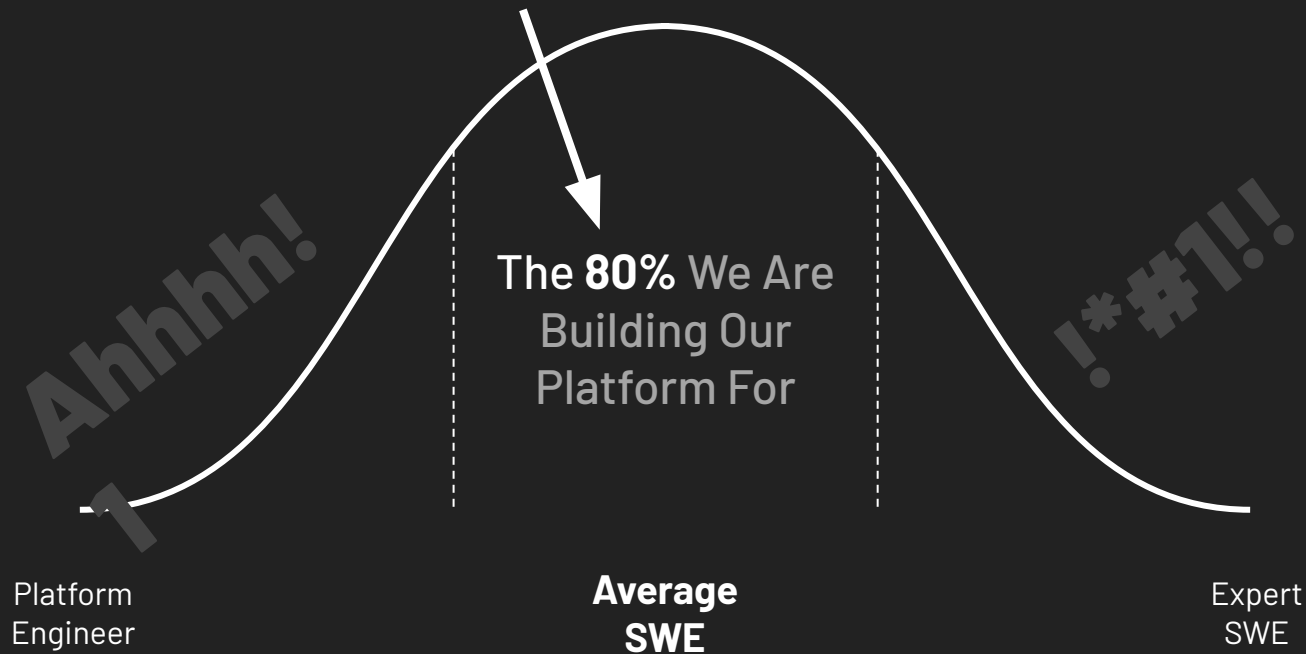
build for the many

not for the the few



Who to talk to?

Who to talk to?



How to talk?

**Exploratory
Interviews**

**Targeted
Interviews**

How to talk?

Exploratory Interviews

- to get an overview

TO
COMING SOON™
Interviews

How to talk?

Exploratory Interviews

- to get an overview
- new to the team or company

TO
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How to talk?

Exploratory Interviews

- to get an overview
- new to the team or company
- uncover blind spots

TO
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How to talk?

Exploratory Interviews

- to get an overview
- new to the team or company
- uncover blind spots
- observe day-to-day work

TO
COMING SOON™
Interviews

How to talk?

Exploratory Interviews

- to get an overview
- new to the team or company
- uncover blind spots
- observe day-to-day work
- every 6-12 month

TO
COMING SOON™
Interviews

How to do...

**Exploratory
Interviews**

How to do...

**Exploratory
Interviews**

screen share

How to do...

Exploratory Interviews

screen share

think out loud

How to do...

Exploratory Interviews

cover the full SDLC

think out loud

screen share

How to do...

Exploratory Interviews

cover the full SDLC

screen share

think out loud

understand the WHY

95% listening; 5% talking

your role is **not to explain**

Surveys



Surveys



send direct messages

Surveys



captive audience surveys

send direct messages

Surveys

create hypotheses
(from user interviews)



captive audience surveys

send direct messages

Case-Study: **Component Stack**

*Infrastructure is not the biggest
pain point right now*

*Component Stack has reduced
complexity sufficiently*



*Users don't change their
infrastructure very often*

*Terraform proficiency across teams is
high enough that another abstraction
layer isn't needed*

*Modifying existing stacks is painful,
complex, or time-consuming*

Case-Study: **Component Stack**

80% say our TF is *easy*

72% modify resources

1x/month or less



Case-Study: Component Stack

```
apiVersion: backstage.io/v1alpha1
kind: Component
metadata:
  name: artist-lookup
  labels:
    my.org/asset-id: A1B2C3D4
spec:
  type: service
  lifecycle: experimental
  owner: team-a
  system: artist-engagement-portal
```



```
module "metadata" {
  source = "???"
  component = "artist-lookup"
}

resource "google_storage_bucket" "default" {
  labels = module.metadata.labels
}
```



```
asset-id: A1B2C3D4

type: service
lifecycle: experimental

owner: team-a

system: artist-engagement-portal
```



Fixing Resource Labels:
Tying Infrastructure Metadata To Backstage With Terraform (1k5.link/london25)

Build-Measure-Learn

~~Build Measure Learn~~
Measure-Learn-Build



Measure



Build



Learn



Measure

serving production traffic <15 min

*users rate experience
9/10 on average*



Build



Learn

0/9 manual steps required

first time right 100%



Learn



Measure



Build

How to iterate?

Exploratory Interviews

- to get an overview
- new to the team or company
- uncover blind spots
- observe day-to-day work
- every 6-12 month

Targeted Interviews

How to iterate?

Exploratory Interviews

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Targeted Interviews

- 2-3 interviews per week

How to iterate?

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Targeted Interviews

- 2-3 interviews per week
- for specific features

How to iterate?

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- 2-3 interviews per week
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- scenario driven

How to iterate?

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Targeted Interviews

- 2-3 interviews per week
- for specific features
- scenario driven
- solve ad-hoc problems to unblock

How to iterate?

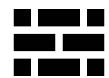
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- to get an overview
- new to the team or company
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- observe day-to-day work
- every 6-12 month

Targeted Interviews

- 2-3 interviews per week
- for specific features
- scenario driven
- solve ad-hoc problems to unblock
- collect experience ratings

what would make
this **a 10/10?**



Build



Measure



Learn

Weekly Cloud Run Scaffolding Tests

Default view

Service Name	Σ Week	Σ Time (...)	# Failure...	# Manual...	Σ Avg. U...	User Test
Ankit informal user test @January 28, 2026	5	20			0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 27, 2026	5				0	☒
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 27, 2026 3	5	23			0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 26, 2026 7	5	26	0	0	0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 23, 2026	4	20	0	0	7	☒
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 22, 2026	4				0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 22, 2026 - Failed ⚠	4				0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 21, 2026	4	662	0	0	0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 20, 2026	4				0	☐
Meriton Ingram Test @January 20, 2026	4	44	1	0	8.67	☒
Mila User Test II @January 19, 2026 - SUCCESS (DNS r	4	31	2	2		
Mila User Test @January 19, 2026 - FAILED ⚠	4	37	3	3		
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 16, 2026	3	0				
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 14, 2026 by @Klaus I	3	24	0	3	6.67	☒
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 14, 2026	3	186	1	3	0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 13, 2026	3	25	0	5	0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 13, 2026	3				0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 13, 2026	3	119	3	6	0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 12, 2026	3	223	3	7	0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 8, 2026	2	84	1	9	0	☐
Weekly Cloud Run Test @January 7, 2026	2	1248	5	9	0	☐



Build



Measure



Learn



~~Build Measure Learn~~
Measure-Learn-Build



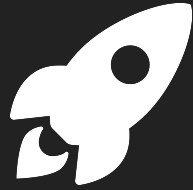
Projects



Products

Startups

find **product** market fit



Startups

find **product** market fit

listen to **customers**



Startups

find **product** market fit

listen to **customers**



iterate incrementally & quickly

Startups

find **product** market fit

listen to **customers**



build
Products

iterate incrementally & quickly

Startups

find **product** market fit

listen to **customers**



build
Products

continuously evolve their products

iterate incrementally & quickly

Platform Teams

find **problems** to solve

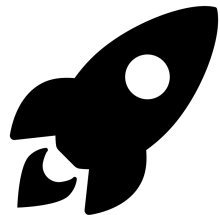
listen to **users**



build
Platforms

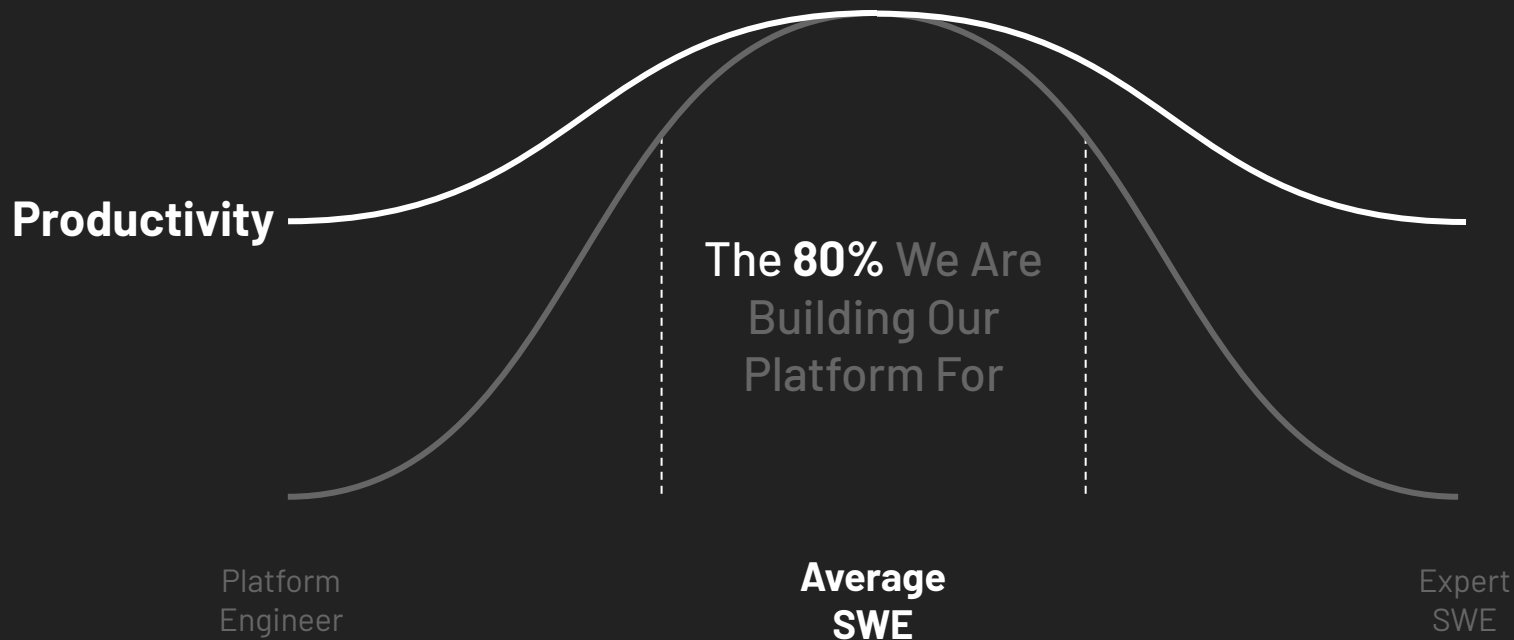
continuously evolve their platform

iterate incrementally & quickly



ship **products**
not ~~projects~~!

Flipping the Productivity Curve



flip the curve

start

building for the many

~~not for the the few~~

Slides, Contact, Resources



1k5.link/amsterdam26