DORA metrics explained: the four measures of software delivery

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The DORA research programme identified a small set of measures that describe how well a team delivers software: two for speed and two for stability. They are useful as a conversation starter, and harmful when used as targets to rank people.

TL;DR The short version

- DORA's four measures describe delivery: deployment frequency and lead time for speed, change failure rate and recovery time for stability.
- In strong teams speed and stability move together, which is why small, frequent, well-tested changes work.
- Use them per service to find bottlenecks and watch trends; never use them as targets to rank people.

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The four measures

- **Deployment frequency:** how often you deploy to production.
- **Lead time for changes:** how long a change takes from commit to production.
- **Change failure rate:** the share of deployments that cause a failure needing a fix.
- **Time to restore service:** how long it takes to recover from a failure.

What they tell you

Speed and stability tend to move together in strong teams, which is why small, frequent, well-tested changes work. The measures show where the pipeline is slow or fragile.

Using them well

- Measure per service or team to find bottlenecks, not to compare people.
- Look at trends, not single readings.
- Pair them with how the team feels about its work.
- Beware gaming: a number made into a target stops measuring what it did.

Improving them

Shorten feedback loops, automate tests and deployment, keep changes small and practise recovery. See speed and stability are not a trade-off.

Related credential: Agile Delivery Practitioner. Explore the exam facts and syllabus.

Sources and further reading

1. DORA. Software delivery performance metrics. dora.dev/guides/dora-metrics.

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