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Reflections on SNACK deployment experience

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SNACK stands for SiNgular Application Configuration Kit and is an Ansible-based software configuration and deployment tool used at NSLS-II, primarily on accelerator side, to provide means of retaining and deploying EPICS IOCs. Despite the solution versatility, rich feature set, and reliable operation as applied to deploy close to two hundred application instances, there is no sufficient traction in using the tool for beamline deployments. Some lessons were learned as a result of this project:

- Investment in training is of paramount importance. For its practical purpose, SNACK required a solid merge of EPICS, DevOps/Ansible, Git knowledge along with strong understanding of system-specific considerations.
- "Advised approaches" don't work well. Even with all the stated profit the solution provides, there are many considerations which on case-by-case basis reduce the feasibility of the approach enough for the adoption threshold to not be reached.
- Uniformity is key. For as long as a single approach is not defined and instilled, there always will be some room for doing things "in-place", "legacy style", or "my own way".

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