The case study in Chapter 6 is a perfect example of how DevOps can address delays between development and operations when deploying an application. It highlights how a skilled development team, despite having extensive experience with this type of application, faced challenges completing the deployment due to typical business constraints. These constraints include reliance on outdated systems and inefficient workflows. This case study displays the importance of using value stream mapping and continuous improvement to deliver more effective solutions to real-world problems.

The application in question was designed to streamline critical business operations such as logging sales, tracking commissions, and enabling vendor rebates. These features make such tools invaluable for businesses that depend on efficient sales processes. They reduce the reliance on paperwork, optimize physical space, and make daily operations more efficient. Employees can then focus on tasks that are more conducive to the overall success of the business.

One significant issue the case study identified was the need for department managers to leave the sales floor and use a back-office PC to fill out forms. This not only disrupted workflows but also caused delays and errors because the forms required information managers often did not have readily available, such as employee numbers. Recognizing these inefficiencies, the team organized a workshop with all relevant stakeholders, including business partners, the mainframe team, and shared services.

Through value stream mapping, the team identified the primary constraints and experimented with targeted improvements. One initial step was removing the employee number field from the form and delegating that task to a downstream process. This change alone reduced processing time by four days. Building on that success, the team replaced the PC-based application with a tablet-based solution that allowed managers to complete tasks directly from the sales floor. This further reduced processing times from days to seconds and allowed employees to remain focused on customer interactions.

The implementation of these changes provided significant benefits. The demands to migrate the COBOL mainframe system disappeared as the new processes addressed the business’s pain points without requiring costly system overhauls. These changes also benefit employees by allowing them to easily track their commissions, creating a more transparent and efficient system. The application is a win-win for both customers and employees, enhancing their overall experience. As software developers, our ultimate goal is to design scalable solutions that effectively address real-world problems.