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DevOps Module 6.2

Case Study: Strangler Pattern at Blackboard Learn (2011)

The case study of Strangler Pattern at Blackboard Learn is a story about the company Blackboard, and their struggle with further development of their product, Learn, as they went on throughout the years. Having been working with a codebase that dated back to 1997, their monolithic method of development started to catch up to them, making any new development on Learn harder and harder, the more that was added to it. The bigger and more complex the product got, the longer lead times would become for them, which was especially bad for their customers, and even their feedback loop was affected with times that could reach over a day.

The Case Study shares a couple of graphs, one of which goes over the relationship between the lines of code added to the project, while the number of commits decreased, which is what causes the major problems. To solve this, chief architect at Blackboard David Ashman created a project that would help re-architect their code, based on the strangler fig pattern, in 2012. Creating what they called building blocks, these were used to allow their team of developers to work via modules, which worked outside of the main monolith. With their successful implementation, building blocks took code away from the source code, and shrank it in size, and helped manage it all in modules.

Through implementing the Strangler Fig Pattern, the building blocks of code served to help the number of commits and lines of code grow exponentially and aided in the productivity of the development team. These changes also aided in keeping mistakes and errors to a minimum, as they were kept out of the source code, and within their own local spaces. Through the changes made by Ashman, the team could work with more independence, work faster, and work with better quality.

Source:

Kim, G., Humble, J., Debois, P., Willis, J., Forsgren, N., & Allspaw, J. (2021). *The devops handbook: How to create world-class agility, reliability, & Security in Technology Organizations*. IT Revolution Press.