Jacob Ambrose

DevOps

Module 6.2

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Github Link

Strangler Fig Pattern at Blackboard Learn

The Strangler Fig Pattern is a DevOps model of transferring features and functionalities of a platform to a new end-user environment without creating them from scratch, in a very oversimplified example it is unplugging an aux cord in a car and passing it to someone else to play music. Same functionality but new phone. In 2012 Blackboard Learn began to utilize the Strangler Fig Pattern to improve their platform.

Blackboard Learn is a technology platform heavily utilized by educational institutions. As with many organizations the longer a platform exists the number of features, quality of life updates, and other items begin to add weight and complexity to the platform. The engineering team found increasingly that the number of commits were drastically decreasing, showing that the number of resolved issues was going down. They soon learned getting feedback alone on newly integrated items took at minimum 24 – 36 hours. In 2012 David Ashman Chief Architect began to focus on rearchitecting the project using Building Blocks. Building Blocks was an internal terminology where developers worked on separate modules that had been decoupled from the previously monolithic codebase and had them access the codebase via API access. Over time as the Building Blocks became available to developers and the initial codebase was able to begin decreasing in size again. Ahman advised that developers in the organization appreciate the Building Blocks as any issues that arise only cause failures in smaller localized areas instead of impacting the entire system. By making the overall program more modular with the Building Blocks it allowed smaller development teams to work faster with greater independence. With shorter lead times the development teams were able to make greater number of commits, receive faster feedback, and overall produce better quality code.