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CSD 380

Module 6.2

February 9, 2025

Chapter 13 of The DevOps Handbook presents a case study on Blackboard Learning, a widely used education technology platform and the platform we use at Bellevue University. The case explores how Blackboard transformed its software delivery processes by adopting DevOps principles to improve speed, reliability, and operational efficiency.

One of the biggest challenges Blackboard faced was long deployment cycles and unstable releases. Their traditional release process was slow, with major updates requiring significant coordination and often leading to production issues. By shifting towards a DevOps model, Blackboard was able to move to continuous integration and continuous delivery (CI/CD), which streamlined their deployment pipelines and reduced time-to-market for new features.

Another key lesson from the case study is the importance of automation and testing. Prior to their DevOps transformation, Blackboard’s manual testing processes were a major bottleneck, delaying releases and increasing the risk of bugs in production. By investing in automated testing frameworks and infrastructure as code (IaC), the company significantly improved its ability to detect and resolve issues early in the development cycle (Kim et al., 2021).

Additionally, the study emphasizes the cultural shift required for successful DevOps adoption. Blackboard had to break down traditional silos between development and operations teams, fostering a collaborative culture where engineers took ownership of both code and infrastructure. This shift not only increased deployment frequency but also improved system stability and resilience (Forsgren, 2018).

Lessons Learned:

* Shorter feedback loops lead to faster improvements – Blackboard’s transition to CI/CD allowed them to release features and fixes more frequently, providing immediate feedback to developers.
* Automation is key to scalability – By implementing automated testing and deployment processes, Blackboard reduced human error and freed up developers to focus on innovation.
* Cultural change is just as important as technical change – Encouraging collaboration between teams helped eliminate inefficiencies caused by rigid organizational structures.
* Monitoring and observability matter – Implementing better monitoring tools helped Blackboard proactively identify and resolve system issues before they impacted users.

Blackboard’s case study really highlights how a successful DevOps transformation can lead to meaningful improvements in software delivery and efficiency. Their journey underscores the need for automation, cultural change, and continuous improvement to create a more resilient and scalable platform.

Works Cited

Forsgren, N. (2018). Accelerate: The Science of Lean Software and DevOps: Building and Scaling High Performing Technology Organizations. IT Revolution.

Kim, G., Humble, J., Debois, P., & Willis, J. (2021). The DevOps Handbook: How to Create World-Class Agility, Reliability, & Security in Technology Organizations (2nd ed.). IT Revolution.