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Assignment 4.1 – Case Study: Continuous Integration at Bazaarvoice (2012)

Bazaarvoice is a company that provides software allowing brands/retailers to display user-generated content on their e-commerce websites. This allows product ratings along with reviews, letting consumers ask and answer questions. The company was founded in 2005 by Brett Hurt and Brant Barton in Austin, Texas where the headquarters still is today. The company now has over 800 global employees, and nearly 6 million community members worldwide as of 2019.

The business was driven by Bazaarvoice Conversations, a monolithic Java application made up of almost 5 million lines of code and spanning 15 thousand files. These files and codes dated back to 2006. Bazaarvoice ran on 1200 servers spread across 4 different data centers and several cloud service providers. During this time, they had $120 million in revenue while preparing for an IPO.

In January of 2012, Eri Mueller observed the first attempt of a two-week release. This didn’t go as planned and caused major chaos with 44 production incidents being filed by customers. The plan was to never let that happen again.

Muller took over shortly after hoping for bi-weekly releases. The objective was to include faster A/B testing and increase flow of features into production. Muller identified 3 main problems, lack of test automation, the version control branching strategy, and the teams running microservices. He determined the monolithic Conversations application deployment process would need to be stabilized.

There was so much success with released every 2 weeks that they went to weekly releases. This required little changes from the engineering team. Most changes were in customer service and marketing teams. The next goal lead to speeding up testing times and reducing the number of environments. This lead to a full continuous delivery model where one-click deployments were enabled.

References:

Kim, G., Willis, J., Debois, P., Humble, J., & Allspaw, J. (2016). The Devops Handbook: How to Create World-Class Agility, Reliability, & Security in Technology Organizations. Portland, OR: IT Revolution Press.