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On-call as your superpower

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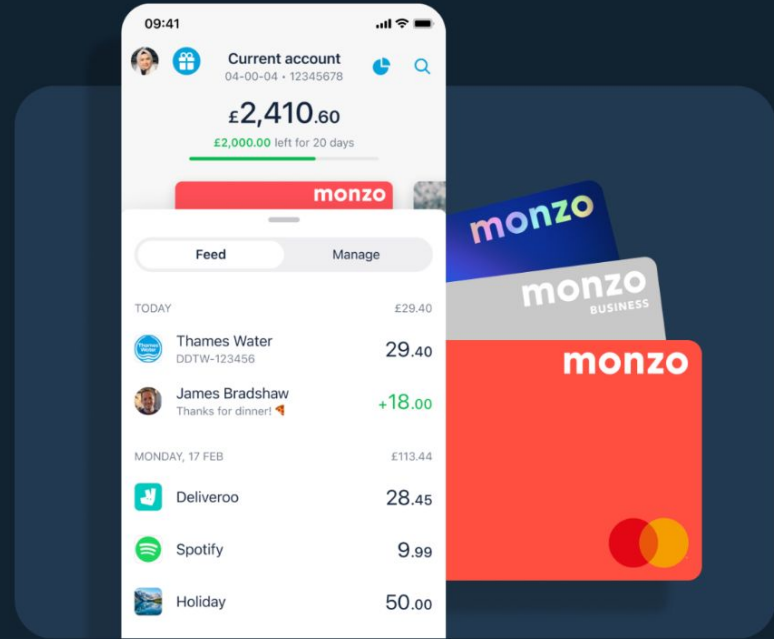
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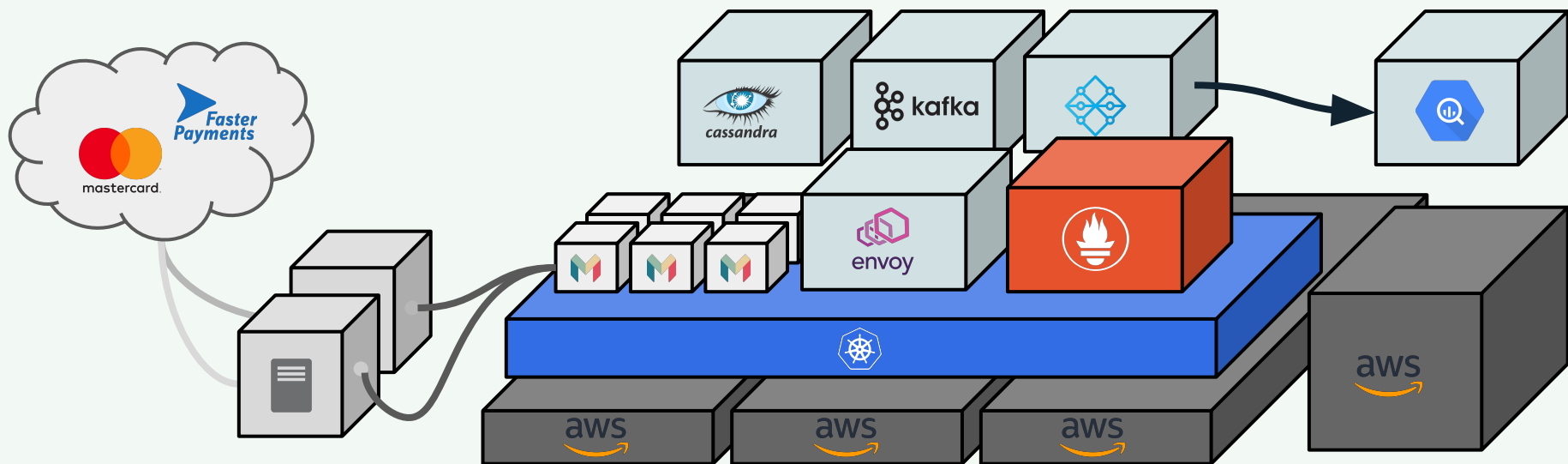
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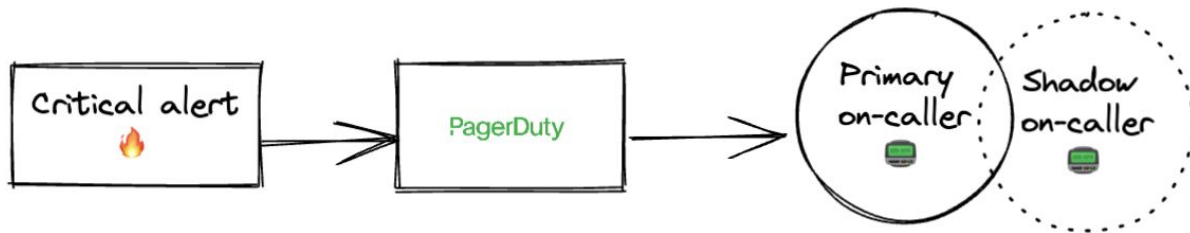
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Story time

The rocketship



“We don’t expect this approach to work forever, but right now it’s letting us iterate quickly on processes and tools, and develop a pattern for on-call which we can roll out more widely later ”

– Monzo on-call blog, 2018

Some things were good...



First responders

We'd get a human onto the problem as soon as it happened



Incentives

Good quality docs and built-in resilience to our services



Learning opportunities

This model gave on-callers broad exposure to our entire platform



Cost effective

A max of two engineers on-call at any time kept operational costs low

Some things were not...



Difficult to onboard

Requires specialist knowledge to resolve, often tenured engineers



Slower resolution times

Some engineers would be paged for systems they had no context on



Didn't incentivise strong ownership

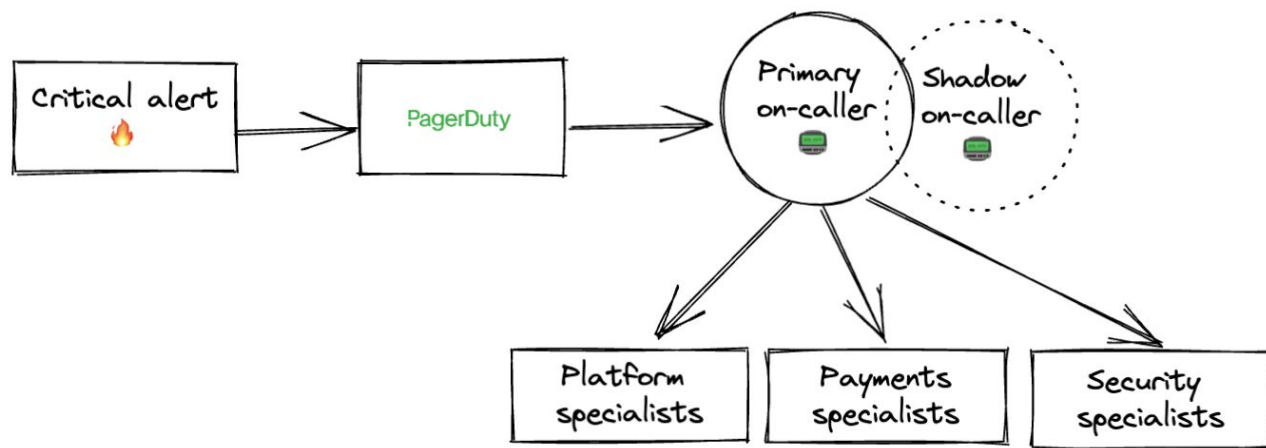
Teams didn't directly feel the impact of problems with their services



Didn't scale

Fine whilst scaling, but as we built more features became unsustainable

The scale up



Ups and downs...



Quick access to knowledge

Typically we could get someone with the right knowledge into an incident quickly



The primary on-callers were morphing into a first-line team

Primary on-callers would often be the messengers for problems



We were still growing quickly

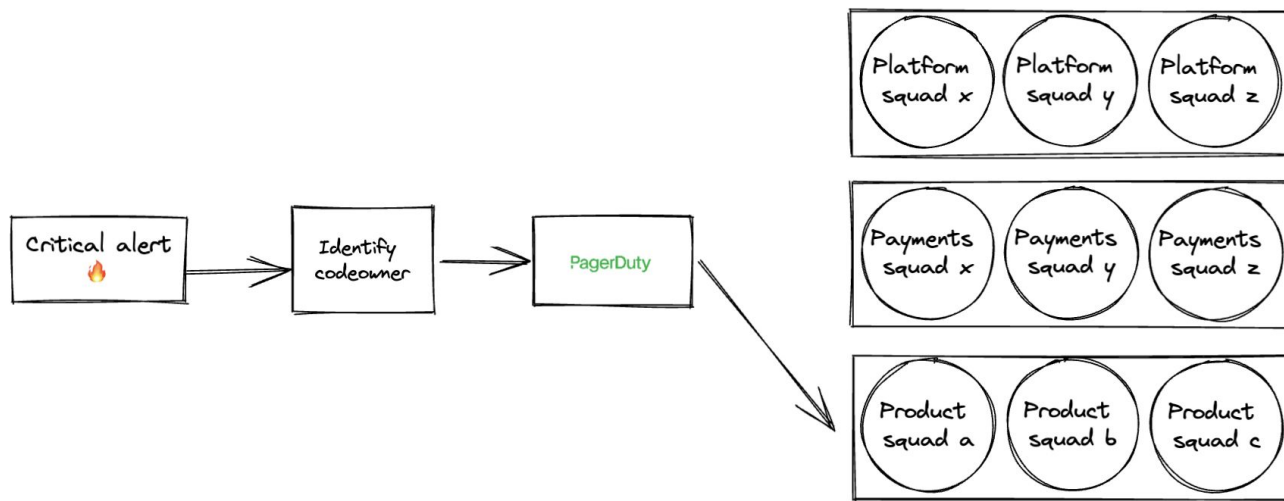
Meaning the effectiveness of our specialists varied

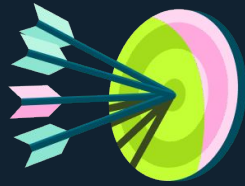


More friction in the process

There was a sometimes unnecessary hop in the process to get the right responder online

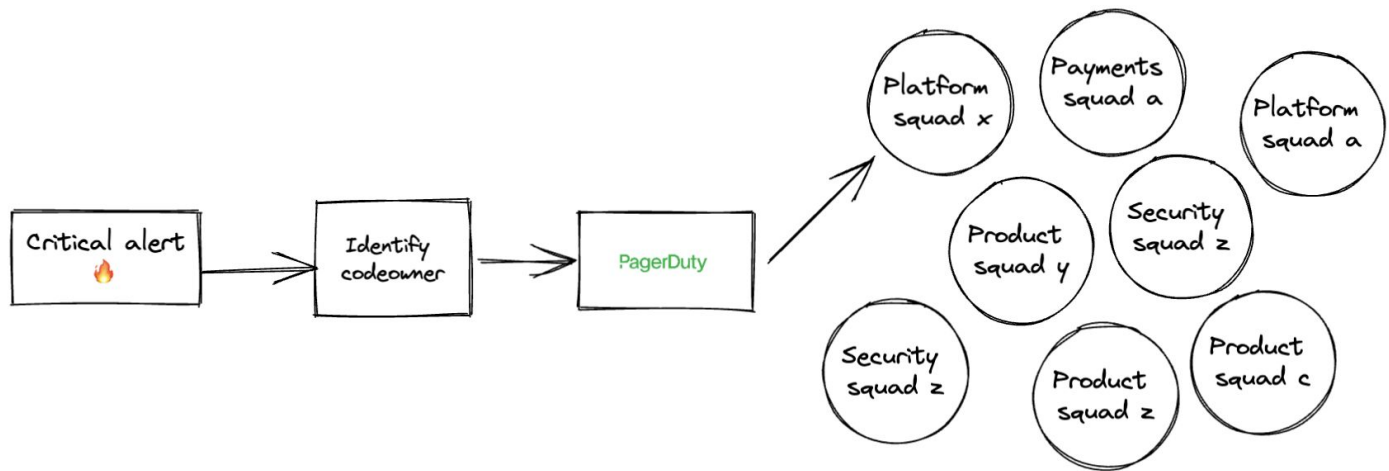
The grown-up





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Today...



Technical Incident Managers

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- 1 Trained crisis managers who are automatically paged into major+ incidents
- 2 Provide support for engineers so they can focus on the technical investigation
- 3 Act as the key interface between our engineering teams and the rest of the organisation
- 4 Pull all of the right people together to support our response



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Human centred on-call

**Don't accept
deviant system
behaviour**

**Share your
lessons
widely**

Thank you!

