

Crowdsourcing Platform Engineering

Building shared ownership through empathy, visibility and trust

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Platform engineering at Cash App did not
start with a platform team.

It started with volunteers.



The first full-time Android Developer
Experience engineer.

This story is not about the role.
It's about the culture that made the role
necessary.

The Problem

Show of hands

Who has filed a ticket to a platform team and waited weeks for something you could build yourself in a day?



The more centralized,
the more disconnected.

The Consequences

- ★ Platform teams → ticket queues
- ★ Tools drift from real needs
- ★ Feature teams lose trust
- ★ Delivery slows



We crowdsourced platform engineering.

The Turning Point



20+ conversations
across the mobile org

"What slows you down most?"

"Which part of the codebase has the
most dragons?"



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"What slows you down most?"

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most dragons?"



"I have to search through release branches to figure out where my code shipped."

"My previous company used release tags. I wish we had that here."



"Would you like to help build that?"



Release tagging shipped.

That engineer grew to staff level.

Platform engineering doesn't scale because you hire more platform engineers.

It scales because you invite more engineers into platform work.

The pattern repeated



The pattern repeated



Dev Productivity Day



- ★ 20 volunteers
- ★ 60+ engineers
- ★ Not a mandate

Five Components of Shared Ownership



Visibility



android-updates

Messages Files

February 13th, 2025

mariannab 2:50 PM
Hi friends! 🐾
Missed writing here last week and since this week OS team has a wellness day on Friday, decided to share the updates with you during the mini Friday 🐾 Lots of cool learnings and achievements across the teams in just 8 days of work: 🐾

- 🐾 @sherryuan has enabled the RC-tag creation today so we will be able to test release tag creation during the branch cut tomorrow! 🐾
- 🐾 Did you see the beautiful new design of the Cash Mobile Guide? @stang just did a major design and structure re-haul of the guide, which will make it much easier to search and learn from!
- 🐾 @egor, @qnguyen and @elabelle have migrated many UI tests to use the new `BaseUiTest`, which makes the tests much less flaky, cleaner and easier to maintain! 🐾
- 🐾 Master being red detector is now automated (and it is not an @egor bot 🐾 😊)! Huge thanks to @myoon who shared the android-register script with us for automating master health checker and helping troubleshoot the issues! 🐾
- 🐾 We have a plan for sharing code with the OCTO team now! The proposed suggested solution will be reviewed next week (let me know if you would like to attend) so we can finally remove the copy 🐾 🐾 🐾 🐾 🐾 🐾 pasta code from cash and register repos (thank you @inez for kicking off the original doc!)
- 🐾 Have you seen the "Syntax highlighting has been temporarily turned off" error in AS? @egor has shared a helpful workaround to get rid of the issue, while also being a good Android citizen and sharing the logs with Google who now have enough data to fix it. 🐾
- 🐾 Firebase Test Lab is dead! Long live Android Test Farm! @alicechang fixed the last of the tests to pass the on ATF and the team have removed the remaining FTL code from cash-android! Migration complete! 🐾
- 🐾 Did you notice how convention plugins are making the cash-android codebase so much cleaner thanks to all the work by @jatwood! 🐾
- 🐾 Want to learn about how our CI works for cash-android and how to create new shards? The documentation is live - it will move to cash mobile guide next week, but you can take a look now! Thank you @bgardner for setting up the initial notes that evolved into this guide 🐾
- 🐾 Want to get this new M4 machine? @fduarte has been hard at work for analyzing data and writing the proposal for getting those machines for you and increase the builds 3x (for those of you who are still on M1). We now track the data for available disk space on build scans in both Android and iOS to help justify the purchases 🐾

Next week:

- 🐾 **CASH MOBILE DEVELOPER PRODUCTIVITY DAY!!!!** 🐾 It is taking place next Wednesday February 19th!
 - o If you have 1:1s or other meetings scheduled, please reschedule them to a different day. The managers have been asked to accommodate so they should be supportive 🐾
 - o Make sure to expense the \$25 lunch! 🐾
 - o Huge thanks to @lpadron for getting all the individual invites set up for the talks and making sure they are recorded! 🐾
 - o 🐾 We have a packed agenda of world class speakers (you, wonderful Block 🐾 engineer) and I cannot wait to learn from all of you!

Have a wonderful weekend and do not get snowed in! 🐾

👍 15 🐾 1 🐾 1 🐾

Visibility - What to Do

- ★ Write one short update.
- ★ Share it where stakeholders already spend time.
- ★ Do it again next week.
- ★ Create the habit.

Contribution



Contribution - What to Do

Can a motivated mid-level engineer pick this up
without asking for help?
If not — that's the work to do first.

Recognition



mariannab 8:06 AM

Hi friends! 🐱 This is going to be the last Cash MDX update of the year since the next ~3 weeks are going to be holiday filled! 🎉

What did the team do this week? 🐱

- 🐱 **The average PR build time is now 18 min** (it was 40min at the beginning of September 🐱!!!!)
- 🐱 Cash Android App can now be downloaded and dogfooded (or champagned) without VPN on [#cash-android-dogfood](#) channel! 🐱 We initially started publishing release builds, but updated to debug builds so as to allow dogfooders to use the debug menu. 🐱 If you would like to try and dogfood, follow the steps in [go/\\$dogfood](#) or [go/\\$champaigne](#) (it is the same document 🐱). Note, the build currently does not autoupdate, so if you want a new version, you can download it through the [#cash-android-dogfood](#) channel. 🐱
- 🐱 Emerge tool also posts a comment on [cash-android](#) PRs about the size of the release app with a link to help developers with size analysis! 🐱
- 🐱 CI wizard [@inez](#) did another round of CO speed optimizations in kochiku graph build! 🐱 Check out the below beautiful graph that shows how much MDX collaboration with OCTO MDX team has brought us since September:
- 🐱 We have another MDX contributor [@kagrawal](#)! 🐱 Through the conversations with Android engineers earlier in the quarter, a lot of Android engineers pointed out they wanted to have a git commit hook to run spotless. [@kagrawal](#) has volunteered his time to add the git hook to the repo, with the diff coming up soon 🐱 Thank you so much Kartik 🐱🐱
- 🐱 Planning for 2025 Virtual Developer Productivity Day continues! It is not too late to vote if you plan to attend it 🐱🐱 Lunch is on us! 🐱 Mark your calendars, the day will be on Wednesday, February 19th, 2025! 🐱

Next week (it will only be 2.5 days long for me), we plan to:

- 🐱 Break down 2025 plan into more detailed technical details.
- 🐱 Continue planning the Dev Productivity Day and finalizing the agenda for the day.
- 🐱 Look into decreasing the app size by converting pngs into webps.

🐱🐱🐱 Happy Holidays friends!!! (edited)

inez
We made it
image.png



From a thread in [dx-android-collab](#) (archived) Dec 10th, 2024 · View reply

Recognition - What to Do

Find the right venue.
Use it every single week.
Consistency is what changes the culture.

Empathy



Surveys tell you what.
Conversations explain why.

Empathy - What to Do

Schedule three interviews this month.

Ask what scares them. What slows them. What they wish existed.

Listen for: "oh, and one more thing."

Rotation



You will never fully understand their pain until you feel it too.

Rotation - What to Do

Propose one rotation in the next quarter.

Two weeks transforms collaboration.

Rotation builds trust faster than documentation ever will.

What changed?

The Numbers



- ★ CI builds: 40+ min → 19 min
- ★ Developer hours saved: ~4,000 / year
- ★ Developer Productivity Day: 60+ engineers
- ★ Engineers promoted through platform work

The Real Result

The System in One Breath

Visibility

Contribution

Recognition

Empathy

Rotation



AI will write more code.
It will not build the culture to own
that code.



Would you like to help build that?