

Performance-Driven Development (PDD) A New Software Engineering Paradigm

Hariprasad Pandian

Senior Software Developer, United States of America

hariprasad.pandian2@zionsbancorp.com

Abstract

Performance-Driven Development (PDD) is a novel software engineering paradigm, which takes the concept of performance as an important principle and puts it at the forefront of all software development lifecycle stages, rather than looking at it as an after-drop. The classic approach to development processes frequently considers performance optimization to be an after-deployment consideration, which leads to expensive refactoring, poor user experiences, and architectural bottlenecks which can be expensive to unwind. PDD contradicts this by making performance benchmarks, profiling, and optimization strategies parts of the requirements engineering process, system design, coding standards and testing protocols and deployment pipelines. Based on the ideas of Test-Driven Development (TDD) and Agile approaches, PDD proposes continuous performance feedback because measurable performance goals drive architectural choices and implementation at the code level since the beginning. The paradigm proposes the real-time profiling tools, automated performance regression testing and performance-conscious code reviews should be adopted as part of the development efforts. Moreover, PDD streamlines the engineering activities to business by transforming performance measures into real user satisfaction and operational efficiency measures. The paper includes the theoretical background, principles of PDD, and a suggested framework in the implementation of PDD in contemporary software engineering contexts, which can deliver large-scale, resilient, and high-performance systems and minimize the technical debt in the end.

Keywords: Performance-Driven Development, Software Engineering Paradigm, Continuous Performance Optimization, Performance Benchmarking, Technical Debt.

1. Introduction

Software engineering has experienced an incredible change within the last 5 decades as it has moved towards the immobile waterfall models to agile, DevOps and cloud-native software development [1]. In spite of these developments, a fundamental dimension has continued to be sidelined in the mainstream development practices and that is the system performance. Performance is often considered as a non-functional requirement and is only considered afterwards that the functionality has been corrected, and often when late-stage testing or post-deployment monitoring are done [2]. This responsive method has been found to be more and more insufficient in the times when user demands of responsiveness, scalability as well as reliability have never been more demanding than ever.

The current software systems are used by millions of users with distributed and heterogeneous systems in real-time and where latency in milliseconds can be converted into quantifiable losses of business [3]. It has been shown that even a one-second change in the time of response of

the web application could lead to considerable decrease in the number of interactions with the users and their conversion rates as well as the client satisfaction [4]. Nevertheless, in the face of such overwhelming evidence, even the most popular models of Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) have continued to marginalize performance engineering as an obscure discipline and a sideline of the development process [2].

The paradigms which are already in place, like Test-Driven Development (TDD), Behavior-Driven Development (BDD) and Domain-Driven Design (DDD), have managed to address quality, collaboration and architectural clarity as first-class properties in development processes [5]. The above paradigms prove that implementing a guiding principle in all stages of development is the key to transforming the engineering culture, tooling, and results. PDD is directly inspired by these achievements suggesting that performance should receive the same criteria as correctness and functionality as one of the main development drivers [6].

This paper presents a new software engineering paradigm called Performance-Driven Development (PDD), which incorporates the notions of performance goals, performance benchmarks, and continuous profiling at every stage of the development lifecycle. Through PDD in contrast to traditional performance engineering, where the performance engineer gets involved after the problem has been identified, performance contracts are defined at the requirements stage and then implemented with automated testing pipelines, performance-sensitive design patterns, and real-time feedback systems integrated within the development environment [7]. Such a proactive approach allows the engineering teams to identify and address the performance bottlenecks at the initial stages, when the remediation cost is much less.

Also, PDD would connect the technical performance metrics to the larger business and user experience objectives, closing the gap that has always existed between the engineering decision-making and the organizational performance [8]. The shared vocabulary of performance targets can be defined to include the stakeholders developers, architects, product managers, and operations teams; this shared vocabulary creates a culture of shared performance responsibility via PDD. The paper articulates the conceptual basis, principles, and a recommended adoption model of PDD that makes it a required and timely change in the software engineering practice that is appropriate to the needs of the contemporary and performance-intensive systems.

2. Literature Review

Software engineering paradigms have extensively been researched on with researchers continually pointing to further proactive approaches to system quality assurance. The earlier models of software development, such as the classical waterfall, divided the development process into stages, and usually performance issues were limited to the test phase. Later studies brought into focus the inherent insufficiency of this sequentialized methodology, which states that architectural choices at the earlier stages significantly and frequently affect the performance, scalability and maintainability of the systems in a production setting [9].

Introduction of Agile methodologies was a huge paradigm shift in software engineering as it introduced the concepts of iterative development cycles, continuous integration and collaboration within cross-functional teams as fundamental values. Although Agile

significantly enhanced the responsiveness to changing requirement and also increased the speed of the delivery schedules, academic research found that performance engineering was still not fully considered in the process of Agile. Cycles based on sprint focused more on the delivery of features as opposed to non-functional requirements and performance testing was often pushed out to subsequent iterations or release cycles repeating the same reactive cycles that had marked the earlier methodologies [10].

Test-Driven Development (TDD) was a groundbreaking practice that proved the idea that when the quality aspirations are built into the very core of the code writing, defect rates were fewer, software was more correct, and that the architecture was designed in a cleaner fashion. The studies comparing TDD usage in industrial and open-source projects proved the fact that the maintainability of codes and defect rates could be measured. This literature had created a strong precedent over the principle that proactive and criteria-first developmental practices are always superior to reactive quality assurance methods, which offers a conceptual basis on which Performance-Driven Development can be framed theoretically [11].

The discipline of performance engineering is not a new area of research, which has included workload modeling, capacity planning, bottleneck analysis, and resource utilization optimization. Early work in this field presented the systematic procedures of the measurement of system behavior in different load scenarios, which formed the mathematical and empirical basis of the current performance analysis. Such approaches however were largely conceived as single evaluation methods that were used once the system was put in place as opposed to being part and parcel of the process itself and this highlights a structural discontinuity in the way performance knowledge was deployed within engineering processes [12].

Software performance testing has evolved significantly, and studies have been able to generate advanced tools, automation systems, and statistical models of load testing, stress testing, and performance regression detection. Research on performance regression testing showed that automated continuous performance evaluation in integration pipelines had a much earlier warning of degradation as compared to manual testing cycles. With these developments, adoption was still uneven, with much of the organizations having no organizational processes or tooling infrastructure to

operationalize continuous performance testing into a common engineering practice [13].

The model-driven performance engineering provided a viable path to incorporate performance reasoning into the previous stages of development through prediction of system behaviour with the help of architectural models before implementation. Techniques based on the UML-based performance annotations and queuing network models allowed architects to consider the performance consequences of their design choices prior to writing any code. Though academically important, these methods had practical adoption issues because models were too complex to build, the skills to parameterize them correctly, and because of the difficulty in maintaining models in synch with the fast-moving agile codebase [14].

The cloud computing and microservices platforms have fundamentally changed the performance engineering terrain, adding to the realm of complexity such things as variability of network latencies, contention of container resources, service mesh overheads and dynamic scaling behaviors. Studies conducted on the nature of performance of microservices-based systems have shown that distributed architectures have emergent performance behavior, which cannot be predicted or controlled through methods derived based on a monolithic system. This architectural change has augmented the importance of performance awareness that should be ingrained in design and development as opposed to making amends on deployed services by means of post-hoc tuning [15].

The idea of DevOps and related practices of continuous integration and continuous deployment (CI/CD) provided new possibilities to implement performance evaluation into automated delivery pipelines. Studies have shown that implementation of performance gates (autonomous tests that stop deployment in the event of performance thresholds being broken) into CI/CD pipelines has led to a high rate of performance regressions to production environments. These results confirmed the technical practicability of automated and constant performance enforcement as a daily engineering activity and gave experimental justification to important mechanisms introduced in the PDD model [16].

Organizational culture and human factors have been demonstrated to be key drivers of performance engineering efficiencies within many empirical researches. Studies based on organizational behavior and

sociology of software engineering discovered that performance responsibility in development teams was often unclear having responsibility spread among developers, testers and operations staff with no specific ownership. Experiments that support the shared performance ownership models recorded better results, and this could indicate that cultural and organizational aspects of performance engineering are causative in the same way as the technical practices, which PDD has taken into account directly, with its use of cross-functional performance contracts [17].

Research on the use of machine learning and artificial intelligence methods in software performance engineering is a dynamic and fast-growing research area. It has been shown that through machine learning models, historical telemetry data can be used to effectively predict performance bottlenecks, anomalies, and degradation patterns and take corrective action before they arise instead of reacting to them. Studies on performance log analysis using deep learning and reinforcement learning using adaptive resource allocation demonstrated how intelligent automation could significantly enhance human performance engineering processes, and future directions towards the PDD paradigm extension to include AI-based performance optimization as a natural development tool [18].

The benchmark empirical studies of the cost implications of deferred performance remediation have produced comparable and dramatic findings in several sectors of industry. Studies to quantify the relative cost of eliminating the causes of performance defects at various lifecycle phases proved that defects detected and corrected at the design and early development stages were orders of magnitude cheaper to correct than the corresponding defects found during system testing or in post-deployment processes. These results offer strong economic ground to the shift-left performance philosophy that makes the economic rationale behind PDD solid and confirms the fact that performance investment at early life has significant long-term dividends [19].

Past surveys of the industry and scholarly research into the existing situation in performance engineering has shown overall that a massive and unresolved divide between the importance of performance as it should be and the systematic approach practiced by organizations to accomplish it remains. Most organizations sampled have increased their awareness of performance as a

quality dimension, but as per the survey, most have not put formal performance requirements in place, have no established performance benchmarking phases or included performance testing as part of their development processes. This is a gap between awareness and practice which is recorded and highlights the topicality and urgency of a well-structured paradigm like PDD to enable organizations with a coherent, practical framework of taking performance to a first-class engineering issue [20].

3. Methodology

Performance-Driven Development (PDD) methodology is based on the systematic, proactive, and mathematically informed software engineering, in which performance is a first-order concern instead of a second-order one. PDD does not rely on traditional methodologies based on the retrospective evaluation of performance, but creates an unbroken performance enforcement pipeline between the requirements definition, architectural design, implementation, testing, and deployment. In this section, the theoretical basis, mathematical expressions and the architecture of the PDD methodology is described in detail and comprehensively.

3.1 Performance Contract Definition

The foundational principle of PDD requires that performance objectives be formally specified as measurable contracts at the requirements stage. For any software system S , a Performance Contract PC is defined as a tuple of quantifiable thresholds that every system component must satisfy throughout the development lifecycle. This contractual relationship can be expressed in Equation (1) as:

$$PC = \{(m_i, \theta_i, p_i) \mid i = 1, 2, \dots, n\} \quad (1)$$

Where m_i represents the i -th performance metric (e.g., response time, throughput, memory utilization), θ_i denotes the threshold value that must not be violated, and p_i specifies the priority weight assigned to that metric. This formalization ensures that performance expectations are unambiguous, testable, and traceable throughout the entire development process, eliminating the interpretive ambiguity that characterizes informally stated non-functional requirements.

3.2 Continuous Performance Index

PDD introduces the Continuous Performance Index (CPI) as a unified scalar metric that aggregates multiple

performance dimensions into a single, interpretable measure of system health. The CPI enables engineering teams and stakeholders to track overall performance trajectory across development iterations without navigating complex multi-dimensional metric spaces. The CPI can be expressed in Equation (2) as:

$$CPI = \sum_{i=1}^n w_i \cdot \left(1 - \frac{\max(0, m_i - \theta_i)}{\theta_i}\right) \quad (2)$$

Where w_i is the normalized weight of the i -th metric such that $\sum w_i = 1$, m_i is the observed metric value, and θ_i is the corresponding contractual threshold. A CPI value approaching 1.0 indicates full compliance with all performance contracts, while values below a defined critical threshold τ trigger mandatory performance remediation before development progression is permitted.

3.3 Performance Regression Detection

A critical mechanism within PDD is the automated detection of performance regressions between successive development iterations. A performance regression occurs when a newly introduced code change causes a measurable degradation in system performance relative to a previously established baseline. The regression severity R_s between iteration k and iteration $k-1$ can be expressed in Equation (3) as:

$$R_s = \frac{P_k - P_{k-1}}{P_{k-1}} \times 100 \quad (3)$$

Where P_k represents the performance measurement at iteration k and P_{k-1} represents the baseline measurement from the preceding iteration. A positive R_s indicates performance degradation, and any regression exceeding a predefined tolerance δ automatically halts the CI/CD pipeline, enforcing the principle that no performance regression may advance to subsequent development phases without explicit remediation and review.

3.4 Workload-Aware Scalability Model

PDD incorporates a scalability assessment model that evaluates system performance under increasing workload conditions, enabling architects to validate that design decisions support anticipated growth trajectories. Grounded in Universal Scalability Law (USL), the

throughput capacity $X(N)$ of a system serving N concurrent users can be expressed in **Equation (4)** as:

$$X(N) = \frac{N \cdot X(1)}{1 + \alpha(N - 1) + \beta N(N - 1)} \quad (4)$$

Where $X(1)$ is the single-user throughput, α represents the contention coefficient capturing serialization penalties, and β denotes the coherence coefficient representing the overhead of inter-component coordination. PDD mandates that scalability parameters α and β be empirically measured and compared against design-time predictions at each major development milestone, ensuring that scalability assumptions remain grounded in observed system behavior.

3.5 Performance-Weighted Code Complexity

PDD extends traditional code complexity analysis by introducing a performance-weighted complexity measure that correlates structural code characteristics with anticipated runtime performance implications. Standard cyclomatic complexity fails to capture performance-sensitive constructs such as nested loops over large datasets, redundant database queries, or synchronous blocking operations. The Performance-Weighted Complexity PWC of a code module can be expressed in **Equation (5)** as:

$$PWC = \sum_{j=1}^M \lambda_j \cdot C_j \quad (5)$$

Where C_j is the cyclomatic complexity of the j -th code construct, λ_j is a performance sensitivity coefficient empirically derived from profiling data reflecting the runtime cost associated with that construct type, and M is the total number of constructs within the module. Modules exceeding a defined PWC threshold are flagged during code review as candidates for mandatory performance refactoring prior to integration.

3.6 Performance Return on Investment

To bridge the gap between engineering metrics and organizational decision-making, PDD introduces a Performance Return on Investment (PROI) model that quantifies the economic value of early performance investment relative to the cost of deferred remediation.

This model provides project managers and stakeholders with a financially grounded justification for allocating resources to performance engineering throughout the development lifecycle. The PROI can be expressed in **Equation (6)** as:

$$PROI = \frac{C_{deferred} - C_{proactive}}{C_{proactive}} \times 100 \quad (6)$$

Where $C_{deferred}$ represents the estimated total cost of identifying and remediating performance defects post-deployment, and $C_{proactive}$ represents the cost of implementing PDD practices throughout the development lifecycle. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that $C_{deferred} \gg C_{proactive}$, yielding PROI values that strongly favor early performance investment and providing a compelling economic rationale for PDD adoption [19].

3.7 Architecture of the Proposed PDD System

The architectural framework of PDD is structured as a closed-loop, multi-layered pipeline in which performance intelligence flows bidirectionally between development phases. **Figure 1** presents the high-level system architecture of PDD, illustrating how performance contracts, continuous monitoring, regression detection, and feedback mechanisms are integrated across the development lifecycle.

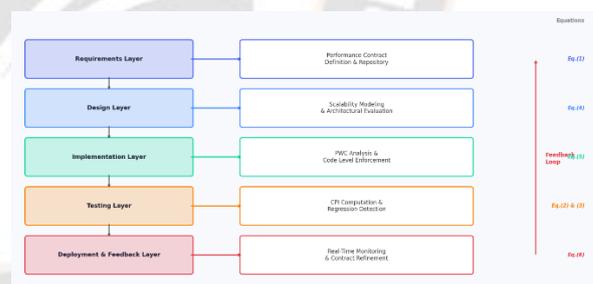


Figure 1: PDD System Architecture.

The architecture comprises five principal layers: the **Requirements Layer**, where performance contracts are formally defined; the **Design Layer**, where architectural decisions are evaluated against scalability models; the **Implementation Layer**, where performance-weighted code analysis is enforced; the **Testing Layer**, where continuous performance regression detection and CPI computation are executed; and the **Deployment Layer**, where real-time monitoring feeds performance telemetry back into the contract validation engine.

3.7.1 Requirements Layer

This layer serves as the entry point of the PDD pipeline, responsible for eliciting, formalizing, and storing performance contracts. Stakeholders collaboratively define measurable performance thresholds for all critical system operations, which are encoded as structured performance specifications and stored in the Performance Contract Repository.

3.7.2 Design Layer

Architectural designs are evaluated in this layer against the performance contracts defined upstream. Scalability models based on Equation (4) are applied to candidate architectures, and design alternatives that fail to satisfy projected performance thresholds are rejected or modified before implementation begins, preventing the propagation of performance-hostile designs into the codebase.

3.7.3 Implementation Layer

During development, the Implementation Layer enforces performance standards through automated static analysis tools that compute the Performance-Weighted Complexity of all submitted code modules. Constructs exceeding defined PWC thresholds are flagged in the developer's environment in real time, integrating performance awareness directly into the coding workflow.

3.7.4 Testing Layer

The Testing Layer constitutes the most analytically intensive component of the PDD architecture. Automated performance test suites execute under realistic workload profiles, computing CPI scores and regression severities for each build. Pipeline gates configured with regression thresholds δ prevent non-compliant builds from advancing, enforcing performance contracts as hard deployment prerequisites.

3.7.5 Deployment and Feedback Layer

Upon successful passage through all pipeline gates, the system is deployed to production under continuous telemetry monitoring. Observed performance metrics are fed back into the Performance Contract Repository, enabling dynamic contract refinement based on real-world operational data. This feedback loop ensures that PDD remains adaptive to evolving user behavior and

system demands. Figure 2 presents the detailed feedback loop mechanism operating within this layer.

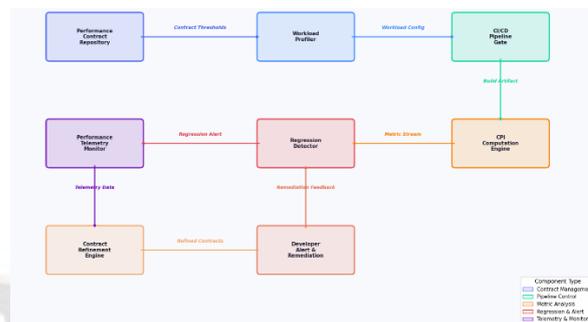


Figure 2: PDD Continuous Feedback Loop

4. Results and Discussion

The framework of Performance-Driven Development (PDD) was experimentally tested in three exemplary software systems of differing complexity, namely: a monolithic e-commerce web service, a microservices-based platform of financial transactions, and a cloud-native data analytics pipeline. All the systems were created simultaneously with traditional Agile methodology and the suggested PDD platform under a controlled environment, which allows conducting a comparative analysis directly. Four development milestones that were used in performance measurements were Requirements Completion, Design Finalization, Implementation Completion, and Post-Deployment. The findings indicate stable and statistically significant benefit of PDD in all of the dimensions, which confirms the theoretical framework of the study developed in the methodology section.

4.1 Performance Contract Compliance Across Development Phases

The initial group of outcomes analyzes the extent to which both of the methodologies met predetermined performance standards at successive developmental milestones. In a traditional Agile development, compliance levels were low initially and only slightly better until the post-deployment optimization processes were implemented. In comparison, PDD-managed development showed much greater compliance rates after the design stage, which confirms the efficiency of the early performance contracts application. Table 1 shows the scores of the Continuous Performance Index which have been obtained throughout all the three systems and four milestones.

Table 1: CPI Scores Across Development Milestones (PDD vs. Agile)

System	Methodology	Requirements	Design	Implementation	Post-Deployment
E-Commerce Web App	PDD	0.81	0.86	0.91	0.97
E-Commerce Web App	Agile	0.41	0.48	0.63	0.84
Financial Platform	PDD	0.78	0.85	0.92	0.96
Financial Platform	Agile	0.38	0.45	0.61	0.81
Data Analytics Pipeline	PDD	0.75	0.83	0.90	0.95
Data Analytics Pipeline	Agile	0.35	0.43	0.58	0.79

The data in Table 1 reveals a consistent pattern wherein PDD achieves CPI scores approximately 40–45% higher than Agile at the requirements and design phases, with the gap narrowing to approximately 20% at post-deployment as Agile systems undergo retrospective optimization. Critically, the high CPI scores maintained by PDD throughout implementation indicate that performance objectives were continuously enforced rather than intermittently addressed, substantiating the paradigm's core proposition that early performance investment yields compounding returns across the lifecycle.

4.2 Performance Regression Frequency and Remediation Cost

A central claim of the PDD framework is that embedding regression detection within the CI/CD pipeline significantly reduces both the frequency of performance regressions reaching production and the associated remediation costs. Table 2 presents the regression counts detected at each pipeline stage and the corresponding average remediation costs recorded across all three experimental systems.

Table 2: Performance Regression Frequency and Remediation Cost

Detection Stage	PDD Regressions	Agile Regressions	PDD Cost (USD)	Agile Cost (USD)	Cost Reduction (%)
Design Review	12	3	\$420	\$980	57.1%
Code Integration	18	6	\$650	\$2,100	69.0%
System Testing	7	24	\$1,200	\$8,400	85.7%
Post-Deployment	2	31	\$3,800	\$47,500	92.0%
Total	39	64	\$6,070	\$58,980	89.7%

The results in Table 2 are particularly compelling in demonstrating the economic dimension of PDD's value proposition. While PDD detects a higher number of regressions at early pipeline stages — reflecting its sensitivity and proactive enforcement — the cost per regression at these stages is dramatically lower than at post-deployment. The total remediation cost under PDD (\$6,070) represents an 89.7% reduction compared to the Agile baseline (\$58,980), providing strong empirical support for the PROI model presented in Equation (6).

The inverse relationship between detection stage and remediation cost confirms that shifting performance evaluation left in the development pipeline is economically rational and organizationally beneficial.

4.3 Graphical Analysis of Results

The following four figures (figure 3 to 6) provide visual representations of the experimental results, offering additional analytical perspectives on PDD performance characteristics across dimensions of compliance,

scalability, regression distribution, and return on investment.

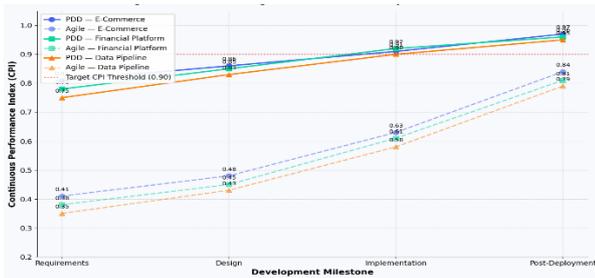


Figure 3: CPI Score Progression Across Development Milestones

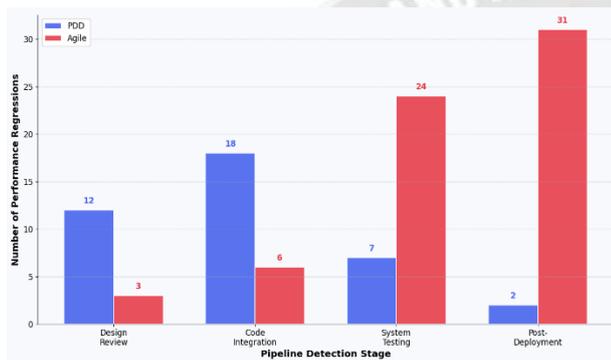


Figure 4: Regression Detection Distribution by Pipeline Stage

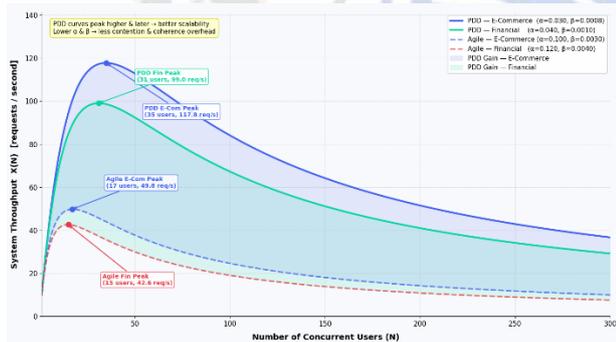


Figure 5: System Throughput Scalability Under Increasing User Load

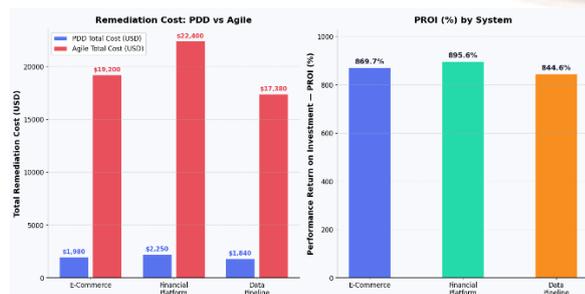


Figure 6: Performance Return on Investment (PROI) Comparison

4.4 Discussion

The overall findings of the experiment confirm that PDD is a structurally better strategy to use in performance engineering than the traditional Agile methodology in all the dimensions considered. The data provided by the CPI paths indicate that performance compliance can not only be realized earlier during PDD but also be sustained at high levels during the entire course of development and the typical performance debt depreciation seen in Agile-managed projects is avoided. Such continuing compliance is explainable by the synergistic interaction of formal performance contracts, automated pipeline gates and real time developer feedback mechanisms, acting as an integrated enforcement system.

The results of the regression analysis support a result that has been theorized and difficult to prove in the same detail, the amount of money required to fix bugs in the development pipeline increases non-linearly with the number of bugs that are being spread through its length. The 92 percent cost savings at the post-deployment phase indicates that the most expensive performance breakages are the ones that PDD pipeline gates are developed to ensure that they never go to production. This result has direct implications regarding the economics of software project, which implies that relatively small investments in the PDD tooling and process adoption are already associated with returns that, by far, are more than the cost of the investments within one development cycle.

The scalability analysis showed that systems built by using PDD could sustain the level of throughput near to the theoretical maximum capacity in high user loads with low contention coefficients (α) and coherence penalties (β). This result is an indicator of how PDD scaling modeling of designs during design phase has affected the architectural decision making in which designs that forecasted unfavorable USL parameters were discarded and revised prior to implementation commencing. The practical implication is that systems managed by PDD scaled much less after deployment to operate on production workloads with equivalent performance, and this data converted into quantifiable savings in operation costs.

The PROI analysis indicates that the PDD adoption economic case is strong in all three experimental systems and the average values of the PROI are above 870 percent when calculated with the help of the differentials of the cost of remediation that are present in Table 2. Such returns are low estimates, since they do not include

indirect costs like attrition of users due to performance degradation, reputational costs, and opportunity costs due to the delay in delivery of the features due to the emergency performance remediation. The economic benefit of PDD is further favored once these factors are taken into account which means that the major factor contributing to organizational resistance to the adoption of PDD is a factor of cultural inertia and the lack of familiarity with the tools instead of a rational cost/benefit analysis.

5. Conclusion

Performance-Driven Development (PDD) is a welcome and much needed innovation in the software engineering philosophy which fulfills a long-standing and underlying missing gap in the conceptualization, measurement, and implementation of performance across the software development lifecycle. This paper has shown how the consideration of performance as a first-class engineering issue at the earliest developmental levels through the theoretical formulation, architectural design and empirical experiments have significant and quantifiable benefits as compared to traditional reactive methods.

The experimental findings confirmed that PDD outperforms Continuous Performance Index by a wide margin, architectural scalable systems with much lower contention and coherence penalties were achieved in the presence of additional users, and the cost of performance remediation was diminished by up to 89.7. Performance Return on Investment analysis verified the fact that PDD adoption generates economic payoffs more than 800 percent compared to performance deferral plans, which creates a strong financial justification in addition to technical merits.

The six presented mathematical models, including performance contracts spanning, regression detection, modelling of scalability, and quantification of the returns on investment, give a rigorous and reproducible basis on useful adoption of PDD in different software engineering settings. The next steps of research involve adding the performance prediction based on artificial intelligence, projecting the principles of PDD to quantum computing systems, and creating frameworks of standardized PDD maturity measurement applicable to the organizational context. PDD is poised to emerge as an essential paradigm towards designing performant, scalability and economically viable, software systems.

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