

CLOUD9 CASE STUDY



[01] **Cloud9 achieved production-ready status for Valorant VRT, a brand-new concept, in just one month's time thanks to SOUTHWORKS' quick mobilization and media expertise.**

[02] SITUATION

Since 2013, Cloud9 has become one of the most recognizable esports organizations in the world. They field professional teams that attract unmatched viewership across an ever-growing roster of games, including League of Legends, Valorant, and CS:GO. Cloud9 prides itself on providing their players and staff with the best possible resources and support for fostering success.

A number of these resources come from Cloud9's partnership with Microsoft. In addition to being Cloud9's cloud services provider and a commercial sponsor, Microsoft serves as their official technology and performance analytics partner. The two companies "collaborate closely to create new tools, build predictive models, and provide anything technology-related to help our players win," explained Halee Mason, Lead Data Scientist at Cloud9.

In July 2020, Cloud9 and Microsoft hosted a 3-day hackathon competition to develop new training capabilities for Cloud9's teams. The winning hackathon team delivered a prototype for something that hadn't existed before: a Valorant VRT (video-on-demand reviewer tool). This new tool, if fully implemented, would give Cloud9's managers, coaches, and players the ability to review gameplay video from scrimmages and competitions, which provides a distinct competitive advantage over any other team to enter the digital arena.

After several other planned projects, just before Thanksgiving 2020, Halee and her team were "ready to develop this tool to help our Valorant

"I would be excited to work with SOUTHWORKS again and I recommend them to other teams within Cloud9."

– Halee Mason, Lead Data Scientist at Cloud9

teams analyze gameplay and improve how they practice and compete." Cloud9 set an aggressive timeline for development, aiming to have the Valorant VRT production-ready by December 2020 or early January 2021.

Microsoft stepped in to help their partner find the best possible provider to develop the tool, which would ultimately be powered by Microsoft Azure cloud services. Microsoft enlisted the help of Team Wasserman—an elite consultant for strategic account management of exclusive Microsoft clientele, such as Burton and The NFL. Together with Cloud9, they reviewed a number of firms they experienced success with in the past.

Microsoft recommended SOUTHWORKS as an especially strong candidate "because of their media expertise and reputation as a great development partner," according to Tom Labuziński, Brand Partnerships Manager at Microsoft. Team Wasserman also felt strongly that SOUTHWORKS was the right provider for the job. Most importantly, Cloud9 themselves "really wanted to work with SOUTHWORKS because they understood our needs and were ready to jump right on board and hit the ground running," said Halee.

[03]

SOLUTION

SOUTHWORKS mobilized quickly, assembling a team of developers “within a week of our first call,” recalled to Halee. A detailed project plan quickly followed and development began in early December, just after Thanksgiving.

Starting with the hackathon winner’s single-page prototype, SOUTHWORKS needed to add a variety of new components in order to transform the Valorant VRT into a fully-functional training tool. Development included building back-end processing for a data pipeline to be run in Microsoft’s Azure Batch, multiple deep learning models, an API layer to support the user interface (UI) of the Valorant VRT, and updating the UI itself to support entirely new features and pages. SOUTHWORKS was even able to collaborate with the original hackathon team on certain technical aspects of the tool.

Development was completed within a month. Cloud9’s Valorant VRT was fully operational, with newly added pages for video uploads and statuses as well as a game history library. Iterating on rough mock-ups for the design of the new pages,

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“SOUTHWORKS really took it a step further by adding in additional UI elements to help make the page more clear and functional from a usability standpoint,” said Halee.

Close communication and collaboration were key to the project’s success within its tight timeline. SOUTHWORKS leveraged agile development practices and scrum rituals—meeting with Halee and the development team each morning to coordinate daily tasks. They also conducted weekly development reviews to evaluate the work that had been completed and how to best approach what remained to be done. Team Wasserman and Microsoft remained engaged as well, meeting with Cloud9 to discuss the project “in great detail and from a high-level strategic perspective,” according to Halee. “All in all, everyone was connected and had a pulse on the project’s progress.”

[04]

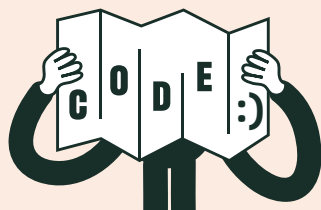
RESULTS

> Short Timeline, Long-term Results

The Valorant VRT, which was planned and developed by SOUTHWORKS within just a month, is a game-changer. Cloud9’s “managers and players are extremely excited about the future potential of this tool,” said Halee. “It’s going to drastically change the way that our teams operate.”

> Prototype to Product

SOUTHWORKS iterated on a single-page application prototype and wireframes to develop a fully-functional tool with multiple new pages, features, and UI enhancements; data infrastructure and processing run in Azure Batch; and an API layer to connect the front and back-end.



> Strong Communication + Support

By meeting with Halee every morning and conducting thorough weekly reviews, SOUTHWORKS collaborated closely with Cloud9 and their partners. “They did a really fantastic job of understanding our needs and being responsive to fixing technical issues,” said Halee. “Everyone was connected and had a pulse on the project’s progress.”

> Over-delivering

Despite the limited scope and timeframe they were working with, SOUTHWORKS “went above and beyond on certain features that really show they understand the space we’re in, adding in little features to make it a better user experience and just going that extra step to make it a more polished product,” said Halee. Kate Burton, Manager at Team Wasserman echoed Halee’s sentiments, having worked with “a lot of great partners, but SOUTHWORKS exceeded everyone’s expectations.”