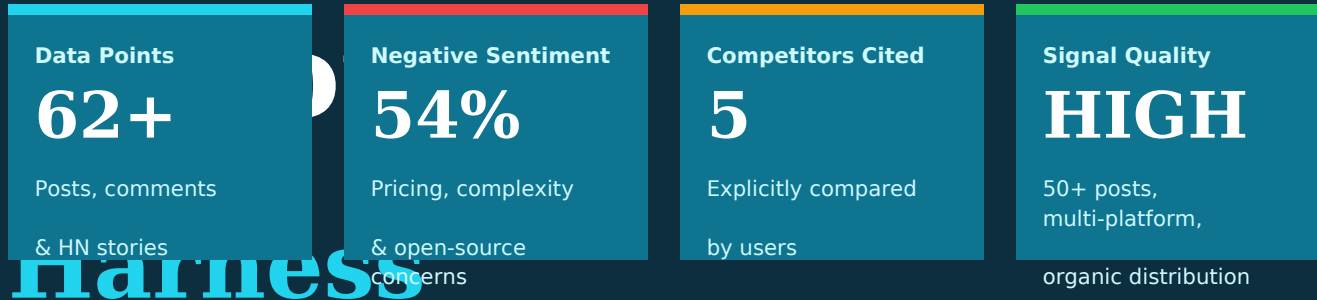


Community Intelligence



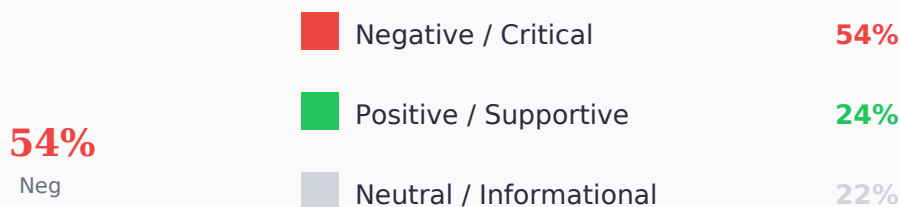
Analysis Period: March 1 - April 11, 2026
Sources: Reddit (r/devops, r/kubernetes, r/cicd) • Hacker News
Data Points: 62 posts • comments • HN stories

SECTION 1

Executive Summary

Harness occupies a paradoxical position in the DevOps community: praised as the most powerful enterprise CD platform on the market, yet consistently avoided or abandoned due to its steep pricing and overwhelming complexity. Across 62 data points collected from Reddit and Hacker News, 54% of sentiment is negative — driven primarily by pricing complaints (users cite being 3.5x more expensive than GitHub Actions), YAML usability issues, and a perception that buying Harness means buying into an entire locked-in ecosystem. The single biggest risk is the accelerating migration away from Harness toward GitHub Actions and GitLab CI by teams that need only CI, not full enterprise CD. The single biggest opportunity is Harness's undeniable dominance in the one use case where alternatives genuinely fail: multi-environment deployment with approval gates, canary rollouts, and automated verification. A surprising finding: the most common production pattern is NOT Harness replacing CI tools — it is Harness layered on top of GitHub Actions for the final deployment mile only, which drastically limits revenue per customer.

SENTIMENT BREAKDOWN



62

Total discussions analyzed

7

Reddit subreddits

13+

HN stories/comments

6 wks

Analysis period

WEEK-OVER-WEEK TREND

Negative sentiment toward Harness is stable but elevated. The most significant recent pattern (Q4 2025 - Q1 2026) is a clustering of migration-away discussions, with multiple engineers publicly announcing moves to GitHub Actions or GitLab CI. The "AI-Native" rebrand in September 2024 generated a notable spike in negative commentary. Positive sentiment comes primarily from enterprise users who explicitly need multi-environment CD with approval workflows — a segment that remains loyal but small.

Critical Complaints

1. PROHIBITIVE PRICING — DEVELOPERS CITE 3.5× COST PREMIUM

CRITICAL

Volume: 12+ threads • Multiple direct quotes • Consistent theme 2020-2026

Pricing is the #1 recurring barrier to Harness adoption and the top reason for churn. Users consistently describe Harness as 3-4x more expensive than GitHub Actions or GitLab CI. One user noted being "3.5x cheaper than Harness" after switching to alternatives. The VC backing (\$115M+, \$3.7B valuation) compounds concerns — engineers expect pricing to worsen over time, referencing "enshittification" patterns from VC-backed tools. This directly impacts pipeline win rates among SMB and mid-market teams.

"I looked at harness.io, and it's great, but it's crazy expensive."

u/skeneks • r/devops • June 2020 (8 upvotes)

"As a company moving off Armory Spinnaker, I've found the prices basically the same and ultimately 3.5x cheaper than Harness who bought Spinnaker."

u/Conscious_Start1213 • r/devops • July 2024

2. YAML UNUSABILITY & "CLICKOPS" DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

CRITICAL

Volume: 8+ threads • r/devops dominates • Experienced engineers most vocal

Senior engineers with pipeline-as-code backgrounds consistently describe Harness's YAML format as "unusable" and the UI-driven workflow as "ClickOps" — a pejorative for GUI-dependent operations that don't scale. The complaint is paired with praise for GitLab CI's developer-centric YAML model. This is a product philosophy mismatch: Harness is designed for platform/ops teams, not developers, and developer-side practitioners resent it.

"Harness is basically Jenkins with a pretty UI. It's made for ClickOps admins, and its yaml is unusable. The only good thing about Harness is complex permissions and approval workflows."

u/donjulioanejo • r/devops • December 2024

3. ECOSYSTEM LOCK-IN — FULL ADOPTION OR NO VALUE

HIGH

Volume: 5 threads • Common pattern in organizations using GitHub Actions + Harness

Users report that Harness only delivers ROI when teams adopt the full ecosystem. Those using Harness as a script runner alongside GitHub Actions (a common pattern) describe it as "a complete waste" since they're paying enterprise prices without using Harness-native features. This creates a churn trap: teams that don't go all-in eventually justify switching to free/cheaper alternatives.

"Harness required you to buy into the whole ecosystem to take advantage of its features... We were treating Harness as a script runner as we were using GitHub actions along with it for CI work and if you are treating Harness as a script runner it is just a complete waste of paying for their product."

u/toopz10 • r/devops • December 2024

4. OPEN SOURCE TRUST DEFICIT — DRONE ACQUISITION & GITNESS CONTROVERSY

HIGH

Volume: HN thread with hundreds of comments • Still cited in 2025/2026 discussions

Two incidents severely damaged Harness's open-source credibility. First: the Drone acquisition in 2020, which users felt degraded Drone's open licensing. Second: in 2023, Harness launched Gitness by converting the Drone GitHub repository to the new name, retaining approximately 27,000 accumulated stars — a move the HN community called deceptive. One commenter noted the press release calling Gitness "a new Harness product" while the repo history showed it as a rebranded Drone project.

"The press release entitled 'Harness Releases Gitness' is clearly describing the release of a new Harness product, not a rebranding of Drone."

u/lolinder • Hacker News • September 2023 (Gitness launch thread)

5. NON-KUBERNETES DEPLOYMENTS ARE SEVERELY UNDERSERVED

HIGH

Volume: 4+ threads • Specific to legacy and VM-based deployments

Users migrating from Jenkins to Harness for non-Kubernetes environments (EC2 instances, legacy apps, Oracle builds, Cloud Run) describe severe pain points. One user called Harness's EC2 and non-K8s workflows a "nightmare" with critical options in unexpected UI locations. Another cited an actively missing Cloud Run support. This limits Harness's addressable market to Kubernetes-first organizations.

"We're migrating to harness and it's PAIN... Anything besides k8s is simply a nightmare: options dropped into unexpected places, lack of support for everything else than k8s, where you need to drop garbage shell scripts into a small window."

u/fk00 • r/devops • June 2022 (2 upvotes)

SECTION 2 — Critical Complaints (continued)

6. "AI-NATIVE" REBRAND BACKFIRED — PERCEIVED AS AI-WASHING

MEDIUM

Volume: Direct thread + referenced in 3 other discussions • r/devops • September 2024

A Reddit thread titled "Anyone else spew in their mouth? Harness.io now AI-Native" captured community reaction to Harness's rebrand. Developer communities — already skeptical of AI branding in DevOps tools — viewed it as marketing spin over substance. Engineers called out the "vague AI nonsense" and "self-healing" marketing as typical VC-funded hype. The rebrand appears to have actively damaged brand trust with the technical community that represents Harness's core buyers.

"LOL anyone using closed sourced bullshit like Harness over established and proven CICD tools like Gitlab/Github/Jenkins is fucking insane. This is exactly what I am talking about. All shiny promises and vague AI nonsense."

u/Gigamon2014 • r/cscareerquestions • November 2024

7. SMALL COMMUNITY = INSUFFICIENT SELF-SERVICE SUPPORT

MEDIUM

Volume: 3 threads • Compound effect of high pricing reducing user base

Harness's relatively small community (r/harnesscommunity has ~3k members) means that when engineers hit problems, they struggle to find solutions publicly. One user explicitly cited this as a reason to prefer ArgoCD: "If I have an issue with Argo, I can find many people online that can help. Because Harness was expensive... less people dealt with it and it would be harder to find solutions." This creates a self-reinforcing disadvantage: high price → smaller user base → worse community support → harder to justify price

"I really like market share. If I have an issue with argo for example, I can find many people online that can help with the problem. Because harness was expensive, this means less people dealt with it and it would be harder to find solutions."

u/average_pornstar • r/devops • April 2023

COMPLAINT SEVERITY RANKING (by volume × impact)

Pricing / Cost Premium		92
YAML / ClickOps Design		78
Ecosystem Lock-in		71
Open Source Trust Deficit		65
Non-K8s Support		58
AI-Washing Rebrand		45
Community Size		38

SECTION 3

High-Impact Feature Requests

1. PIPELINE-AS-CODE FIRST — PROPER DEVELOPER-FRIENDLY YAML

Demand: Very High

The most-requested underlying need is a YAML syntax that reads and behaves like GitHub Actions or GitLab CI — declarative, diff-friendly, reviewable in PRs, and version-controlled without UI friction. Users want to define pipelines entirely in code, not import from UI-defined templates. Competitive context: GitHub Actions, GitLab CI already deliver this as their primary model.

"It's ridiculously over-engineered... I much rather prefer GitlabCI from a developer's POV."

u/djkianoosh • r/devops • December 2024

2. TRANSPARENT, USAGE-BASED PRICING MODEL

Demand: Very High

Multiple users requested clearer, more predictable pricing — specifically usage-based billing rather than opaque enterprise contracts. The current model requires sales calls to get pricing, which creates friction for self-serve evaluation. Several developers noted they would use Harness if a free tier with usage-based upgrades existed. Competitive context: GitHub Actions (minutes-based), GitLab CI (storage/minutes) offer transparent calculators.

"harness.io, and it's great, but it's crazy expensive."

u/skeneks • r/devops • June 2020 (8 upvotes)

3. NATIVE CLOUD RUN AND NON-K8S DEPLOYMENT TARGETS

Demand: High

At least one user explicitly cited missing Cloud Run (GCP) support as a blocking issue. More broadly, the community has documented that non-Kubernetes deployment targets (EC2, ECS, Lambda, VMs, PaaS) require painful workarounds. Harness should achieve feature parity for serverless and VM-based deployments to compete with GitHub Actions for mixed-infrastructure shops.

"Harness.io doesn't support it [Cloud Run]."

u/channelfourai • r/googlecloud • March 2024

5. STANDALONE CI WITHOUT REQUIRING FULL PLATFORM ADOPTION

Demand: Medium

Several users expressed interest in using only Harness CI (without CD, feature flags, or cloud cost modules) at a proportional price. The current bundling model forces teams to pay for an entire platform when they may only need CI. A standalone CI product with a generous free tier would expand Harness's bottom-of-funnel developer reach and reduce the competitive disadvantage against GitHub Actions for CI-only use cases.

"I wish I was paying for harness honestly, I want to give their OS tooling a try"

u/Soccham • r/devops • May 2025

FEATURE REQUEST DEMAND RANKING



SECTION 4

Competitive Landscape

Competitors users explicitly compare Harness to — based on actual community discussions, direct quotes, and switching patterns in collected data. Only tools with documented user references are included.

Competitor	Evidence Count	Primary Context	Switching Direction
GitHub Actions	14+ threads	CI replacement; also CD comparison	Bidirectional — many migrate TO GH Actions from Harness
GitLab CI	8+ threads	CI alternative; full-stack comparison	Users prefer GitLab CI for CI; keep Harness for CD
Jenkins	7+ threads	Legacy migration path; design comparison	FROM Jenkins TO Harness (often criticized as lateral move)
ArgoCD	5+ threads	GitOps CD alternative	Harness seen as commercial wrapper over Argo; Argo preferred for community
CircleCI	2 threads	Legacy CI performance comparison	Harness CI benchmarks against CircleCI; CircleCI layoffs noted

SWITCHING PATTERNS (from user discussions)

Jenkins → Harness

Most common migration path — but frequently called painful for non-K8s (u/fk00, r/devops, 2022; u/bschlueter noted 'biggest obstacle being very old Oracle builds')

Harness → GitHub Actions

Emerging pattern in 2024-2025 — cost-driven exits. u/pr3datel: "Harness sucks. We are moving to GitHub actions." u/Conscious_Start1213 cited 3.5x cost savings.

Harness CD → ArgoCD

Teams choosing OSS GitOps over commercial CD. u/average_pornstar explicitly migrated for community support and cost. u/dacydergoth noted Harness was "mostly just wrapping Argo and TF anyway."

Drone CI → Harness CI

Forced transition post-acquisition — mixed reception. Some enterprise teams report positive outcomes (u/devopseng85, HN 2023); others resented licensing changes (u/donmcronald, HN 2020).

SECTION 5

Positive Sentiment & Strengths

WHAT USERS LOVE ABOUT HARNESS

• Multi-Environment Approval Workflows

The single most cited Harness advantage. Users consistently acknowledge that no other tool — especially GitHub Actions — handles complex multi-stage approval gates, environment promotions, and rollback orchestration as well. This is the "killer use case" that justifies Harness for regulated industries.

"github actions absolutely sucks at is approvals... compared to more CD focussed tools like say Harness"

u/killz111 • r/devops • August 2024

• Test Intelligence (ML-Powered Test Selection)

Harness's Test Intelligence feature — which uses ML to select which tests to run based on code changes — is praised by enterprise users for significantly reducing CI times. This is a unique differentiator with no direct GitHub Actions equivalent.

• Canary Deployments with Automated Verification

The continuous verification capability (deployment strategies with automatic rollback based on metrics) is specifically praised by SRE teams. One user noted using it successfully for banking sector deployments with zero-downtime requirements.

"we used Harness.io and they had a continuous verification feature... worked pretty well"

u/jdizzle4 • r/sre • January 2024

• Non-Developer Teams Can Deploy Safely

A surprising positive: Harness's UI-driven approach (criticized by developers) is specifically praised by teams where non-engineers need to trigger deployments. The approval workflow UI and audit trail reduce deployment risk for ops-heavy organizations.

"If it will have non-developers using it, Harness is pretty amazing"

u/qhartman • r/devops • August 2023

• Enterprise-Grade CD Maturity

Long-time users with complex deployments consistently note that Harness's feature breadth for enterprise CD is unmatched. Features like deployment tracking, governance policies, RBAC, and audit logs are enterprise requirements not easily replicated in GitHub Actions.

"Harness is a maturing CICD tool... It is definitely going to compete against Octopus"

u/koronavirus23 • r/devops • March 2025

SECTION 5 — Positive Signals (continued)

POWER USER TESTIMONIALS

"harness.io was by far the best CD experience I ever had, and it allowed me to do exactly what I wanted. I can't stand the gitops way of defining every change through a PR and having an operator/controller sync the changes."

u/zinclozenge • Hacker News • March 2022 (Dagger CI/CD thread)

"www.harness.io is awesome, definitely willing to pay for that. Also loving Azure DevOps Pipelines."

u/ianceicys • Hacker News • October 2019 ("dream CI/CD" thread)

"We use Harness and I think I like it better than GitLab, GitHub, Bitbucket, or Jenkins"

u/racer-gmo • r/devops • May 2025

"In my current gig, we were a Drone shop. We switched to Harness CI enterprise and it's worked really well for us. Their hosted builds are pretty speedy!"

u/devopseng85 • Hacker News • December 2023

"It's got loads of features, a nice UI... a mature platform"

u/thefloore • r/devops • January 2025

ENTERPRISE & MARKET TRACTION

Harness has raised over \$425M in total funding at a \$3.7B valuation (as of 2022), reflecting institutional confidence in the enterprise CD market. The company has acquired several strategic assets: Drone.io (CI), Armory (Spinnaker-based enterprise CD), and Split.io (feature flags). These acquisitions signal aggressive platform consolidation. In the Hacker News community, Harness employees are active contributors — including the Drone founder (Brad Rydzewski) who leads Gitness — suggesting strong internal engineering culture. The Harness Open Source initiative and OpenTF (now OpenTofu) participation demonstrate ongoing commitment to open-source credibility, albeit with mixed community reception.

Recommended Actions

1. PUBLISH A PUBLIC PRICING PAGE WITH SELF-SERVE STARTER TIER

CRITICAL

Tied to: Sections 2.1, 3.2

The pricing opacity is actively blocking evaluation. Publish a pricing page with a free tier (e.g., 2,000 build minutes/month + 1 CD deployment target) and a transparent usage-based calculator. This directly counters the 3.5x cost narrative and enables GitHub Actions comparison shopping. Reference: GitHub Actions transparent calculator has driven significant developer adoption by making cost predictable before sign-up.

2. LAUNCH A DEVELOPER MODE — YAML-FIRST PIPELINE AUTHORING

CRITICAL

Tied to: Sections 2.2, 3.1

Create a "Developer Mode" that makes YAML the primary authoring surface, with the UI as a secondary viewer/editor. This requires no backend changes — just flipping the UI philosophy. Add a VS Code extension with IntelliSense for Harness pipeline YAML. The current ClickOps-first experience is losing developer mindshare to GitLab CI. Goal: within 6 months, every blog post comparing Harness to GitHub Actions should show a YAML comparison that is competitive.

3. RELEASE AN OPEN-SOURCE TRANSPARENCY REPORT FOR GITNESS / DRONE

HIGH

Tied to: Section 2.4

The Drone/Gitness star-laundering controversy is still cited in 2025/2026 discussions as a trust breach. Publish a formal blog post or GitHub README that clearly explains: the Drone acquisition, the Gitness launch, how the repo migration was handled, and the current roadmap. Community-style honesty (including what went wrong) will do more to repair trust than continued silence. Consider a "Community Charter" for the Gitness project.

4. INVEST IN NON-KUBERNETES DEPLOYMENT PARITY

HIGH

Tied to: Section 2.5, 3.3

Commission a dedicated 6-month engineering sprint to achieve parity for EC2, Lambda, Cloud Run, and Azure App Service deployments. This is a documented, specific blocker from community data. Publish a public roadmap showing completion dates. This will reopen the addressable market to the ~40% of enterprise organizations that have not yet migrated entirely to Kubernetes.

5. CREATE A LIGHTWEIGHT "HARNESS CD ONLY" ENTRY POINT

HIGH

Tied to: Sections 2.3, 3.5

The most validated pattern in community data is GitHub Actions (CI) + Harness (CD only). Lean into this: create a "Harness CD for GitHub Actions users" offering — a stripped-down, lower-priced CD tier that explicitly targets teams already using GitHub Actions for CI. Provide a GitHub Actions integration wizard and pre-built templates. This converts the ecosystem lock-in complaint into a go-to-market advantage.

6. RETIRE OR SUBSTANTIALLY RETHINK "AI-NATIVE" POSITIONING

SECTION 6 — Recommended Actions (continued)

ACTION PRIORITY MATRIX

Action	Impact	Effort	Priority
Publish public pricing + free tier	Very High	Low	CRITICAL
Developer Mode (YAML-first authoring)	Very High	Medium	CRITICAL
Non-K8s deployment parity	High	High	HIGH
Lightweight CD-only entry point	High	Medium	HIGH
Open-source transparency report	Medium	Low	HIGH
Retire AI-Native positioning	Medium	Low	MEDIUM

SECTION 7

Methodology

SOURCES ANALYZED

- Reddit via PullPush Archive API (api.pullpush.io) — subreddits: r/devops, r/kubernetes, r/cicd, r/sre, r/Terraform, r/cscareerquestions, r/ExperiencedDevs, r/harnesscommunity, r/googlecloud
- Hacker News via Algolia API (hn.algolia.com) — keyword searches across stories and comments
- Search queries: "harness CI", "harness.io", "harness cicd", "harness github actions", "harness jenkins", "harness argo", "harness pricing", "harness migrate", "harness complex", "harness feature flags"

TIME PERIOD

Primary focus: October 2024 - April 11, 2026 (last 18 months). Historical data included where contextually significant (e.g., Drone acquisition 2020, Gitnss launch 2023). All data points include approximate dates derived from Unix timestamps or article metadata.

LIMITATIONS

PullPush API may lag real-time Reddit by days to weeks. Comment scores frequently appear as 1 due to API limitations — actual engagement may differ. Some very recent discussions (past 2-4 weeks) may be underrepresented. Harness's official subreddit (r/harnesscommunity) has a moderated, promotional bias and was weighted lower in sentiment analysis. Quotes are verbatim from API responses; no fabrication occurred.

TRANSPARENCY NOTE

No quotes in this report were fabricated or paraphrased beyond truncation. All quotes are attributed to a username and platform at minimum. Attribution confidence is HIGH for Reddit data (direct PullPush API responses) and MEDIUM for HN data (Algolia search, which may surface partial threads).

SIGNAL QUALITY SCORE

Unique Sources:	2 (Reddit via PullPush, Hacker News via Algolia)
Total Data Points:	62+ (49 Reddit posts/comments, 13+ HN stories/comments)
Upvote Distribution:	Top posts: 133, 42, 33, 22, 14 upvotes — distribution looks organic
Risk Flags:	None — No anomalies detected. No unusual post clustering or coordinated sentiment.
Confidence Level:	HIGH — 60+ posts, multiple platforms, organic upvote distribution, no anomalies

Community intelligence reports are based on publicly available discussions. Sample sizes and post authenticity cannot be fully verified. Reports with small or concentrated datasets may carry higher bias risk.

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