

SETTING UP ALERTS AND NOTIFICATIONS WITH EASE AFTER MIGRATING TO AWS



Shopper Approved helps their clients collect user-generated content from their customers. It specializes in reviews and ratings, helping their customers display those ratings everywhere including a client's website, Google search, Facebook page, Twitter feed, and other locations online. Founded in 2010, Shopper Approved has seen exponential growth starting in 2015 and serves over 7,000 clients and counting. It has been recognized by Inc Magazine as one of the fastest growing companies in America two years in a row in 2016 and 2017.

THE NEED: SETTING UP MONITORING AND ALERTING AFTER MIGRATING TO AWS

Because Shopper Approved grew so fast, and experienced such a high growth rate, their original infrastructure wasn't built to handle the overwhelming demand. Toward the end of 2017 they realized that they needed to migrate from their current dedicated server environment to the cloud, and so they started preparing for a full migration to AWS. They were planning on migrating in March 2018, but in January their main server unexpectedly gave up the ghost, and they were forced to do an emergency migration to AWS. Fortunately, they had done enough pre-planning to be able to successfully make the transition without significant interruptions to their service, but it was a very stressful time.

"It was absolute madness for about a week straight," recalls Christopher Budge, VP of Engineering. After the migration was completed and the legacy service was back up and running in AWS, Budge realized that Shopper Approved's application would need to be re-architected for a Cloud environment. The team selected AWS' Elastic Container Service (ECS) to rebuild their service with a container-based architecture.

While Budge and team focused on maintaining the legacy system while rebuilding the service for ECS, Budge turned his attention to monitoring. Budge's team didn't have a lot of knowledge about AWS but they had set up some very basic alerts in CloudWatch. But with a lean team and limited time, he knew he couldn't sink months into configuring and setting up a monitoring tool. Budge explains, "I'm sitting there looking at CloudWatch and thinking, 'This absolutely sucks.' Don't get me wrong, CloudWatch is fantastic from a customizability aspect, but the fact of the matter is when it comes down to monitoring and troubleshooting and being the go-to guy it is just me."

"I don't have time to play with CloudWatch all day."

INSTANT MONITORING AND ALERTING COVERAGE WITHOUT THE TOIL

After discovering and implementing Blue Matador, Budge was immediately impressed with how easy it was to fully onboard with the product and the immediate impact it made. Budge recalls, "With Blue Matador, we had a tool that worked out of the box, had basically no configuration that we had to do, and had all the information that we needed. I don't know if you can get more transformative from a system monitoring perspective. Going from simple graphs to something that proactively alerts us of problems and potential issues was night and day for us."

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

After a migration from on-prem to AWS, setting up actionable alerts and notifications with limited AWS knowledge and limited time to sink into setting up alerts with a traditional monitoring tool

SOLUTION

Out-of-the-box, Blue Matador provided instance monitoring and alerting coverage for Shopper Approved's AWS environment without any configuration

RESULTS

- Moved from reactively addressing issues raised by customers to proactively addressing them before customers were affected
- Avoiding the time waste of setting up and configuring alerts and notifications with a typical monitoring tool
- Confidence to easily troubleshoot potential issues even with new, unfamiliar AWS services
- Peace of mind knowing Blue Matador will automatically set up alerts and notifications as AWS use is expanding into new services

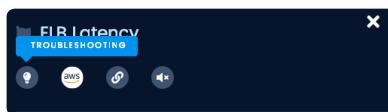


Budge has also appreciated the instant monitoring coverage of AWS and the breadth of services that Blue Matador effortlessly integrates with and monitors. One example for Budge is AWS' Elastic Load Balancers (ELB). He recalls, "I just did not feel like configuring CloudWatch to properly monitor ELBs. I looked into what it would take to get all of those monitors configured and get all of the end-points watched and it just wasn't worth it to me. But with Blue Matador you just sign-in with your AWS account and generate that read-only key and you're off to the races."

Reflecting on the getting started process with Blue Matador, Budge recognizes the massive amount of time that Blue Matador has saved him. "I didn't have to waste time setting up Blue Matador...CloudWatch is very granular and customizable but that also means to do basic things you have to customize it to have the output make sense," concludes Budge. The lengthy setup process typical of a traditional monitoring tools was completely avoided with Blue Matador.

TROUBLESHOOTING WITH EASE IN A NEW CLOUD ENVIRONMENT

One of the major challenges for Shopper Approved when moving to AWS was the information shortage on Budge's team. Before Blue Matador, they would have an idea that something was wrong, but they would have to spend a lot of time trying to hunt down what the specific issue was. Now they have all the relevant information at their fingertips. According to Budge, "Before Blue Matador it would take a lot of time to troubleshoot issues. Now with Blue Matador my servers tattletale on themselves when they are doing something they shouldn't be doing."



One of the features that Budge has found most valuable is Blue Matador's troubleshooting tips. When

Blue Matador notifies of a potential issue, the troubleshooting tips provide specific context about what could be causing the issue and how to address it. According to Budge, "When you are brand new to AWS, you have basic knowledge of the services but you don't always know what to do to troubleshoot specific issues." One example is EBS burst balance. According to Budge, "There are a certain amount of burst iops that are allotted to different parts of AWS' services and the fact that you could run out of those...I didn't even know that was a thing until Blue Matador started warning us about it." In circumstances like these, Budge uses Blue Matador's troubleshooting tips to quickly address these previously unknown issues. "Being able to click those troubleshooting tips and learning about what the issue is and what I can do to fix it has been extremely helpful for our move to AWS."

"This isn't just monitoring, this actually helps you proactively troubleshoot your service."

Shopper Approved's customers are the ultimate beneficiaries. According to Budge, "In the past some of our customers have expressed frustration that it seemed like Shopper Approved was the last to know there was a problem when in reality we should always be the first to know." Now with Blue Matador, Budge and his team aren't caught unaware and don't have clients calling in to tell them there is a problem. The difference is "an absolute 180 from the old Shopper Approved" according to Budge.

PEACE OF MIND DURING ONE OF LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT MOMENTS

Shortly after starting with Blue Matador, Budge's son was born. Reflecting on this special occasion, he was so happy to have Blue Matador in place so he could focus on this special event with his family. Thinking about what this experience would have been like without Blue Matador, Budge concludes, "Without Blue Matador, when my son was born I probably would have had to have my laptop there, my wife probably would have hated me (actually I know she would have hated me. I was told that I wasn't allowed to have my laptop). So being able to quickly check on our service, make sure that everything is okay, but then being able to actually focus on the birth was huge. That is something I know wouldn't have happened if I didn't have Blue Matador. I would have had to have been manually digging through CloudWatch with my laptop in the hospital...If I didn't have Blue Matador the entire experience would have been different."



Looking forward with their upcoming move to their container-based platform, Blue Matador has given the team confidence as they begin this transition. "Knowing how often Blue Matador notifies and the detail of those notifications during development gives me a lot of confidence knowing that when these issues happen in production we are going to be on it and not caught unaware and won't have our clients calling in to tell us. That is huge for us because that is just not how it has been in the past." With this new platform and the help of Blue Matador, Budge knows that Shopper Approved's service will be more resilient than ever.

"Shopper Approved had complete visibility into the health of the system for the first time in its history."