

Splunk at CloudShare

Splunk App for VMware Delivers Insight into the Cloud



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Elad Gotfrid
IT Manager, CloudShare

OVERVIEW

INDUSTRY

- Cloud computing services

SPLUNK USE CASES

- VMware Monitoring
- Operational Intelligence
- Correlation of Business and Performance Data
- Marketing & Customer Support
- 360° Reporting and Analysis

BUSINESS IMPACT

- Increases customer conversion and retention rates
- Saves weeks in development time to create custom performance metrics
- Optimizes infrastructure resources using performance and usage metrics
- Reduces troubleshooting and support resolution times
- Enables forensic analysis of performance anomalies
- Delivers end-to-end visibility across the infrastructure

DATA SOURCES

- VMware physical and virtual hosts
- Network, storage, CPU and memory
- Custom applications
- Customer usage metrics
- System logs: Linux/UNIX and Windows syslogs
- App logs: SharePoint, Oracle, MS Office

The Business

CloudShare is a cloud solution for pre-production, focused on development and testing, training and sales enablement. CloudShare technology makes it easy for application professionals to work in the cloud. With CloudShare, users can efficiently create multi-VM environments, collaborate with others and deploy projects into production, with no background in IT-infrastructure required. CloudShare makes it easy to build and distribute simple and complex IT applications to anyone with an Internet connection.

Challenges

CloudShare focuses on what it calls the pre-production market, enabling their customers to use high-performance virtualized computing platforms to carry out a variety of applications, including development and testing, pre-sales demos, POCs, evaluations, technical training, hardware and software certification and channel enablement.

The company provides a variety of paid service options for more than 100,000 users worldwide, as well as hundreds of free trials daily. In fact, customers have provisioned more than 150,000 SharePoint servers—CloudShare’s most popular service—since the introduction of a monthly subscription offering in March 2011.

Until they discovered Splunk, CloudShare did not have a reliable way to collect and correlate critical performance and business metrics from thousands of virtual servers, as well as devices and systems.

“We tried using several solutions to collect log data across our environment and provide alerts, but all of them had limitations and none could provide the centralized view,” explains Elad Gotfrid, CloudShare IT manager. “Particularly with regard to our virtualized environment, it was very difficult and labor intensive to track down problems.”

Enter Splunk

Splunk® Enterprise™ made its first appearance at CloudShare in 2010 as a way to collect log data from the organization’s backend systems. However, it soon became apparent that Splunk could do much more.

“Once we saw the value that Splunk provides, we started moving it to much wider use in our environment,” Gotfrid notes. “From that point, it became one of our most critical applications. It is the application that connects all of the CloudShare units. We now collect everything in Splunk.”

An early beta tester of the Splunk App for VMware, CloudShare has now adopted the application company-wide to help gain deep insight into the thousands of virtual machines (VMS) supported by the company’s infrastructure.

Breakthroughs

Operational insight

Splunk Enterprise and the Splunk App for VMware® enable CloudShare to leverage valuable VMware vSphere™ performance metrics as well as performance metrics and logs from every infrastructure component, including storage, networks, operating systems and their custom applications.

“We tried Microsoft® System Center Operations Manager, NetApp® storage management tools, vCenter, esxtop and other tools to try to better understand our infrastructure, collect log information and create alerts,” Gotfrid says.

Splunk and the Splunk App for VMware are providing CloudShare with enhanced visibility into every aspect of an increasingly complex operation. “The major value we get from Splunk is in allowing us to correlate business data with performance metrics. We can now group our customers and understand which resources they are consuming. We are better able to understand and plan our capacity based on clear trends we have identified.”

The Splunk App for VMware has also helped CloudShare solve a significant challenge related to its move to vSphere 5. The new vSphere version supports only the slimmed down ESXi hypervisor, creating a challenge to run esxtop in local memory. The Splunk centralized approach using the virtual forwarders in the Splunk App for VMware allows CloudShare to continue collecting data from ESX and ESXi hosts, complementing the power of the vSphere 5.0 management system.

Customer service and support

Splunk also plays a key role in customer service and support. Dashboards created in Splunk and linked to operational data from virtual sources help guide everyone from network operations and customer support to marketing/sales and R&D.

For example, a production load status dashboard uses data collected with the Splunk App for VMware to show not only ESX and ESXi host data, but also the number of active VMware environments, RAM consumption and memory swapping or ballooning. Splunk is helping CloudShare troubleshoot customer concerns up to 70% faster by providing insight into current and historical system status and relationships.

Marketing and sales support

Using Splunk and the Splunk App for VMware to collect statistics on every user, CloudShare is able to track and record the impact of free trial offers, template usage, the rate of conversion to paid services, country of origin and resource utilization.

“With a few hundred free trials every day, we cannot talk to every individual who samples our service,” Gotfrid explains. “However, Splunk helps us understand which customers are most likely to convert to a paid service, and provide this information to our sales force through a link with Salesforce.com. By following up on these qualified leads, we’ve helped increase our conversion rate significantly over the past year.”

Fraud detection and security

Network device and firewall information gathered with Splunk is used to create attack signatures to trigger automatic blocks or generate alerts to the NOC for manual investigation.

Gotfrid concludes: “Without Splunk we could not really understand what our users are doing. Here at CloudShare we think of Splunk as our eyes—with it we can really understand and see into every aspect of our operations.”

Free Download

[Download Splunk](#) for free. You’ll get a Splunk Enterprise license for 60 days and you can index up to 500 megabytes of data per day. After 60 days, or anytime before then, you can convert to a perpetual Free license or purchase an Enterprise license by contacting sales@splunk.com.