



ACG Network Analytics Blog

Network visibility & Big Data analytics for operational intelligence

FutureStack – New Relic’s customer conference

I recently attended New Relic’s FutureStack customer conference in New York City, which was a well organized event with great content delivered by subject matter experts, including many New Relic customers. It was my first engagement with the New Relic team and a good opportunity to take an in-depth look at the world of visibility and analytics top-down from the perspective of application performance monitoring (APM).

New Relic is a fast growing a leader in the APM market, with revenue of \$263.5

 billion in fiscal 2017, up 45% from fiscal 2016. More than 16,000 customers worldwide use New Relic’s SaaS-based product suite, including 40% of the  Fortune 100. Company founder and CEO Lew Cirne was a pioneer in the modern  APM market, founding Wily Technology almost 20 years ago. It was refreshing to hear that Lew is still a developer at heart and takes regular week long sabbaticals  to work on ideas for new products.

New Relic offers a complementary set of products that serve as a “Digital Intelligence Platform” across three inter-related domains: digital user experience, application performance and infrastructure monitoring. The company’s core technology and expertise is embodied in its APM product line, which is used to instrument applications written in the leading programming languages and running across a wide range of execution environments. In his keynote, Lew emphasized that New Relic’s approach is to “instrument everything” so that

DevOps teams always have full visibility into the behavior and performance of all applications. He noted that the old rule was nothing goes into production without a full QA cycle, but the new rule is no application should be deployed without complete instrumentation.

New Relic also provides several products for monitoring user experience by instrumenting mobile applications and browsers, including synthetic monitoring solutions that can proactively detect problems before users are impacted. Last year, the company moved into infrastructure monitoring that extends beyond basic server/OS monitoring to integrate a wide range of cloud-native application services provided by AWS and Microsoft Azure. Together, the full suite of New Relic products enables development and IT operations teams to see a complete picture of application behavior and performance from the end point to the execution environment and the underlying service infrastructure.

How does New Relic make sense of all the metrics and event data that are extracted using this ubiquitous instrumentation? “Applied intelligence” is the other side of the “instrument everything” coin, and this is where New Relic is doing impressive work with Big Data and real-time analytics. The company operates its own cloud infrastructure to deliver SaaS-based services to its customers. In order to be able to ingest, process and store the massive amount of

 metric and event data collected from customer applications, New Relic built its own high performance, multi-tenant, Big Data database from the ground up. The system currently processes on average 1.5 BILLION metrics and events per  MINUTE. That’s a whole lot of data and speaks to why I believe SaaS-based analytics is the preferred approach for the vast majority of Big Data monitoring  solutions, for several reasons. 

First, SaaS solutions have significantly lower up front costs and can be deployed rapidly. Second, the elastic nature of the cloud allows the customer to rapidly scale monitoring, on-demand. Third, Big Data technology is a moving target and a SaaS solution shields the customer from having to deal with software updates and hardware upgrades, in addition to possible technology obsolescence. Last, and perhaps most importantly, since applications are migrating to the cloud, monitoring and analytics should follow. Given the option of a cloud-based Big

Data monitoring solution, I can't think of a good reason why mainstream enterprise IT organizations would choose to deploy on-premise.

Visibility into applied intelligence is provided by New Relic's Insights product for visualizing application insights, including user-customizable dashboards that were showcased by customers in the main tent session that concluded the conference. Under the hood, New Relic has employed advanced statistical analysis and other techniques for correlating data extracted from user experience, application and infrastructure monitoring.

One example is RADAR, a new Insights feature that was introduced at FutureStack. RADAR "looks ahead and behind" to automatically glean useful intelligence for "situational awareness" that might not be readily apparent to customers looking at the usual dashboards. The analytics software acts like an intelligent assistant, constantly searching for anomalies and conditions that the customer might overlook or not discover until it's too late. Not necessarily AI in the strictest use of the term, but certainly just as helpful.

FutureStack was also a great forum for learning how many leading enterprise IT organizations are embracing DevOps for application deployments spanning hybrid and multi-cloud environments, but I'll wrap up my thoughts on FutureStack in my  ext post with a closer look at this far-reaching trend and its market impact.



ephen Collins / September 25, 2017



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