



Customer Demand for Open Source and Tools in the DevOps Space

Q&A with CEO xOps CEO Sean Mack

Question: What kind of open source tools are customers telling you they need right now?

Sean: Customers with a DevOps focus are very interested in what the user experience is, and how applications and features are actually performing for their customers. Because of this there is a lot of interest in synthetic monitoring and application performance monitoring. In these areas there are lots of options out there, but no great open source alternatives.

Question: What are areas where you recommend customers to look at open source monitoring tools?

Sean: Elastic is really doing some great stuff for log management. There are additional charges for security and machine learning but the basics that are included in the Elastic stack are really quite robust. For mid-sized companies looking for log management solutions, I think this is a great open source solution.

There are also some great options for infrastructure monitoring that have been around for quite some time now. We are building a platform based on these to provide a scalable open source architecture for enterprise clients.

Question: In terms of people and using these tools, what really matters?

Sean: It's about putting engineers on the front line, not just technicians. The reason for that is they try to solve root-cause problems, not just respond to alerts. They can build automation and leverage machine

learning. With this approach the cost of doing monitoring keeps dropping as the volume goes up.

The engineers can think about automation, and how to automate specific data-streams and server configurations, and how to automate resolution of the tickets that come up without manual intervention.

Advances in machine-learning are key because, in combination with a low cost single pane of glass tool like xView, you can get true predictive intelligence and self-healing systems. That's when it gets really interesting and becomes a really smart learning system.

The interesting part is when you apply machine-learning and it starts to see the patterns that a human can't. A lot of times there's so much noise, you don't see the smaller issues. For example, why does this one server keep maxing out its CPU? It maxes out and goes down, and no one may ever notice. Or maybe someone does, but they are habitualized to manually restart it. But machine learning could pick that out and say, "Hey, look, you got a bad server. Replace it. Your performance will improve." Minor patterns like that are often much easier for machines to detect than humans.

Question: How do you use tools to promote the DevOps culture?

At xOps, we're culturally DevOps from the get-go, from the ground up. We work together as a whole team to deliver value to our customers as quickly as possible using the best tools to accomplish the task. If DevOps is about a culture of collaboration then you need to look for tools that encourage collaboration. There are a huge range of tools here, everything from deployment, to automation, to monitoring. The key is to look at how they encourage collaboration. This is why chat tools like Slack or HipChat are so integral to DevOps. They encourage collaboration and automation. When looking at monitoring tools you also want to ensure that you are sharing your data across teams. If everyone is looking at the same data you begin to break down the silos that were so prevalent in legacy operations organizations.

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