Serverless Architecture

Software Architecture

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Oxymoron 1. Serverless

Logic running on someone else's server.

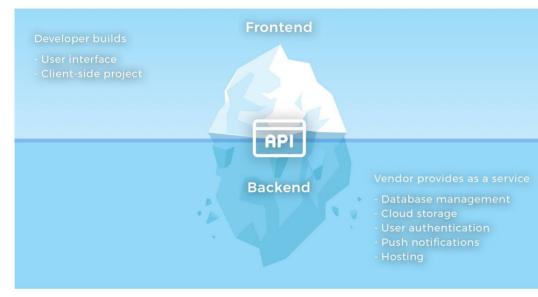
Developers can focus on logic, not infrastructure to deliver it.

Definition 1. Backend as a Service (BaaS)

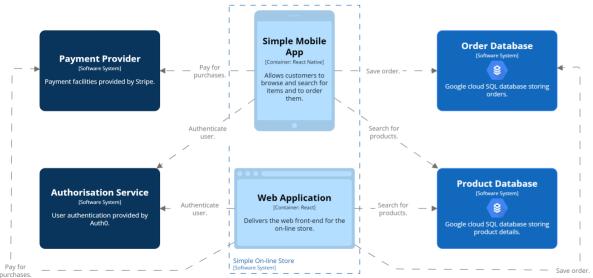
Cloud-hosted applications or services that deliver functionality used by an application front-end.

- Front-end may be a SPA or mobile app.
- Back-end provides sophisticated functionality (e.g. database,
- machine learning, location services, authentication, ...).
 Front-end ties back-end services together to deliver the application's functionality.

BaaS Iceberg [Brunko, 2019]



BaaS Example



- Example of simple system with back-end functionality delivered entirely via BaaS.
- Feature-rich front-ends coordinate behaviour delivered by BaaS.
- Consequence: Front-ends are tightly coupled to BaaS.
- Consequence: Front-ends are have both UI and functional behaviour logic.
- Front-end could have a layered design, though many SPAs don't.

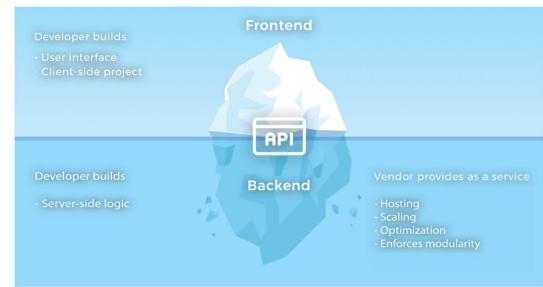
Definition 2. Functions as a Service (FaaS)

Application logic that is triggered by an event and runs in a transient, stateless compute node.

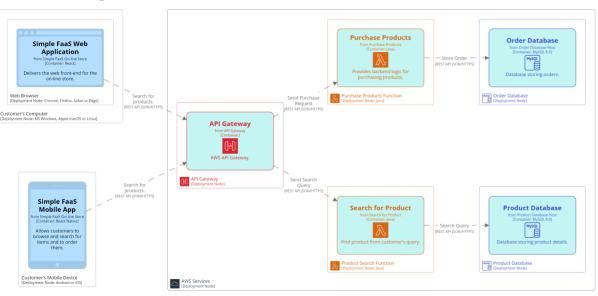
- Node may only exist for duration of function call.
- Server infrastructure (e.g. type of node, lifespan, scaling, ...) are managed by hosting provider.
- e.g. AWS Lambda, Google App Engine, Azure Automation,

. . . .

FaaS Iceberg [Brunko, 2019]



FaaS Example



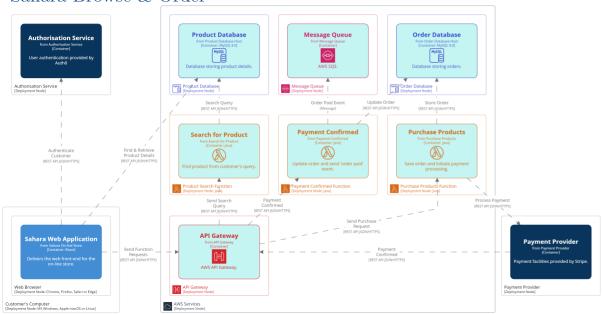
- Example of simple system with back-end functionality delivered entirely by FaaS.
- Feature-rich front-ends coordinate behaviour delivered by FaaS.
- Front-ends invoke functions via an API.
- API Gateway provides some separation between front-end and functions.
- May allow a bit more separation between UI and logic.

Definition 3. Serverless Architecture

Software system delivering functionality through BaaS or FaaS.

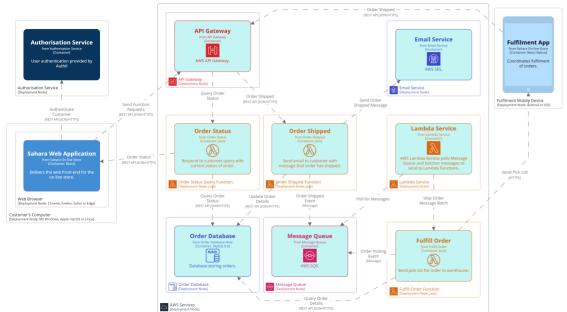
- Many people focus on FaaS when considering Serverless.
- Some simple Single Page Web Apps (SPA) coordinate.
- Front-end ties back-end services together to deliver the application's functionality.

Sahara Browse & Order



- Sahara eCommerce example as a serverless app.
- Only browse, search and purchase are shown.
- Point out that it uses both BaaS & FaaS.
- Shopping cart is implemented within the web and mobile app for this architecture.
- Order Scenario 1: Customer checks out their shopping cart in the web or mobile app.
- Order Scenario 2: App calls Purchase Products function via API Gateway.
- Order Scenario 3: Purchase Products stores order in DB and sends a payment request to Payment Provider.
- Order Scenario 4: We provide Payment Provider with API end point to call to report payment result.
- Order Scenario 5: Payment success causes Payment

Sahara Fulfilment



- Sahara eCommerce example as a serverless app.
- Only fulfilment functions are shown.
- Shows Lambda Service polling Queue, demonstrating how Lambda Functions are invoked via events in a message queue.
- Fulfilment Scenario 1: Lambda Service monitors Queue for 'ship order' messages.
- Fulfilment Scenario 2: Lambda Service batches groups of 'ship order' messages and sends them to Fulfill Order function.
- Fulfilment Scenario 3: Fulfill Order gets order details from DB and sends pick list to Fulfilment App.
- Fulfilment Scenario 4: When order is shipped, Fulfilment App calls Order Shipped function via API Gateway.

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- Reduced server management
- Easier to run closer to client
 - Launch in same zone as client

BaaS Tradeoffs

- Front-end accesses database directly
 - Front-end needs to sanitise inputs
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 - Duplication of logic with multiple front-ends
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 - Less modularisation
 - Duplication of logic with multiple front-ends
 - Web, mobile, ...
- No control over server optimisation

- Spoofing messages is an issue for all BaaS services.
- Modern expectations are that almost all systems will have multiple front-ends.
- Duplication of front-end logic is a smaller, but still partial, concern for FaaS.

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 - Some languages worse than others (e.g. Java)

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FaaS Tradeoffs

• Startup latency

• Functions take time to start

• Proliferation of functions

• Loss of encapsulation

- Server running function can be killed when function is not running. • Can occassionally send messages to functions to keep them
- alive.
- Java has concurrency benefits over other languages.

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 - BaaS

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- Rich client apps with common backend
 - BaaS
- High latency processing
 - Within function duration constraints
- Apps with variable load
 - Take advantage of auto-scaling

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When is serverless not appropriate?

- Quick response required
 - Can't wait for FaaS to start
- Compute intensive processing
- Apps with steady load
 - Server-based approaches are cheaper

Self-Study Exercise

- Redesign your scalability assignment to be serverless.
- What parts of your design would benefit from being serverless?
- Implement your revised design.

Pros & Cons Extensibility Reliability Interoperability Scalability Deployability Modularity Testability Security Simplicity

• Modularity: Deployed functions are naturally modular. • Modularity: Higher-level abstractions to group deployed functions is difficult. • Testability: Unit testing FaaS functions is easy. • Testability: Integration testing is hard. • Security BaaS: Front-end access database directly. No server-side protection of db. • Security FaaS: Every function needs its own security policy

(e.g. IAM), which is easy to get wrong.

References

[Brunko, 2019] Brunko, P. (2019).

Serverless architecture: When to use this approach and what benefits it gives.

https://apiko.com/blog/serverless-architecture-benefits//.