Once Upon a Time...

Alerts don’t suck.
YOUR alerts suck!

@LeonAdato
Principal Technical Evangelist

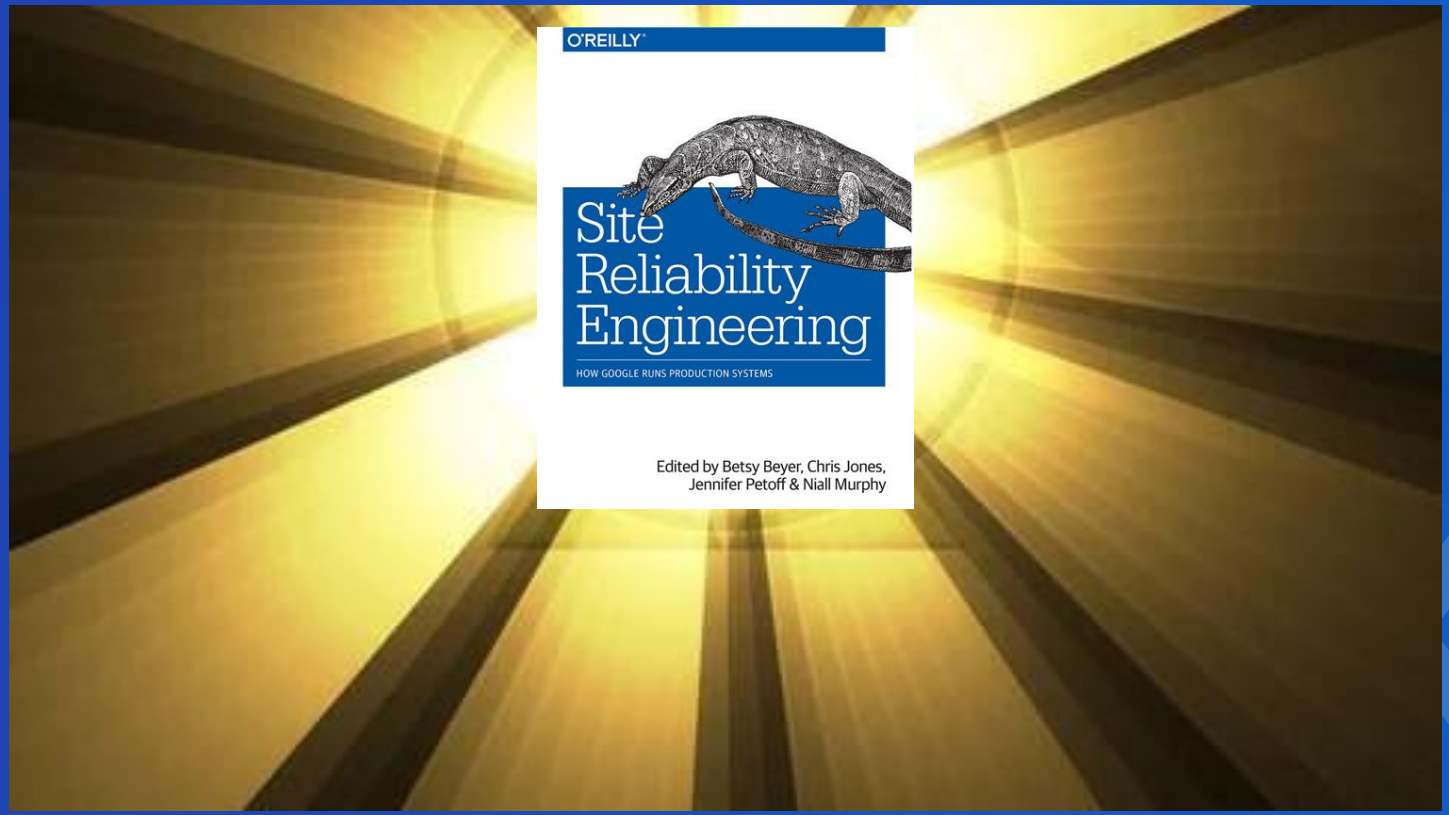
Leon Adato

- Principal Technical Evangelist
  - ***at Kentik***
- ~35 yrs in tech.
- ~25 yrs monitoring & observability.
- ~10 yrs as a Tech Evangelist, DevRel Advocate, and (ugh) “Head Geek”.
- Tivoli, BMC, OpenView, janky perl scripts, Nagios, SolarWinds, DOS batch files, Zabbix, Grafana, New Relic, and other assorted nightmare fuel.

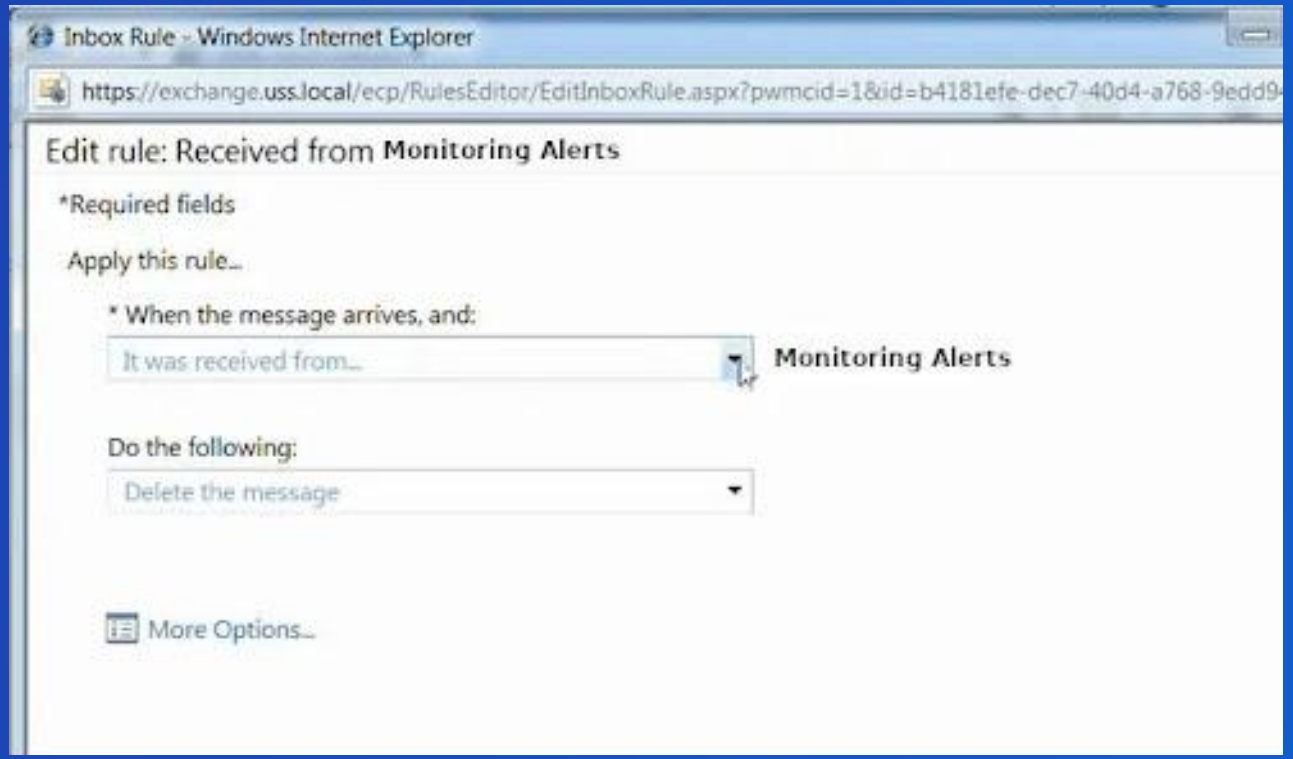
@LeonAdato on almost all social media.

This is an Oyster Talk™

The Good Book Says....



Inbox rules are like a$$holes...*



** Everyone has one, and they all stink*

A hill I will die on

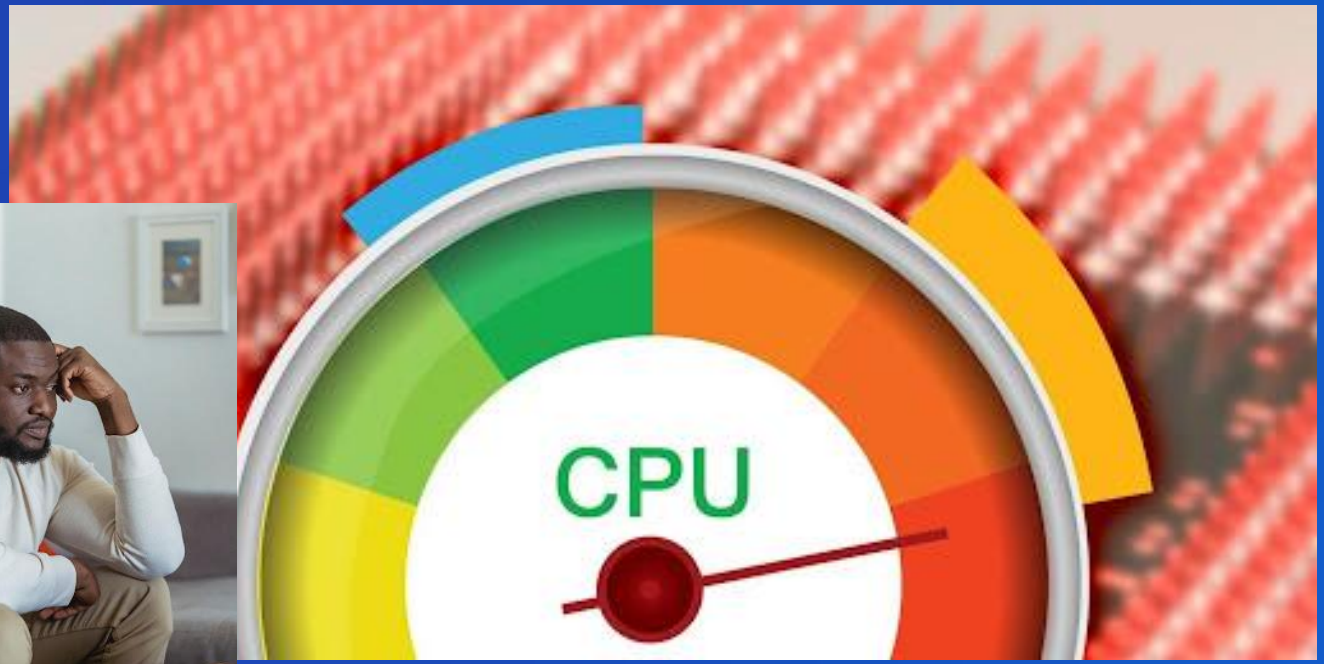
Lesson One:
Alerts Are… what?!?

Three Important Rules:

- Alerts <> Monitoring
- Alerts != Monitoring
- Alerts ≠ Monitoring

About once a year…

The problem with high CPU alerts isn’t the CPU



Hold up…

Lesson Two:
Monitoring vs Observability

Lesson Two:
~~Monitoring vs Observability~~
Monitoring AND Observability

Let’s add a little nuance

Observability

- Un-Known Unknowns
- High cardinality
- Correlation baked-in
- Golden signals

Monitoring

- Known Unknowns
- All cardinalities welcome
- (mostly) manual correlation
- Domain-specific signals

Alerts and Observability

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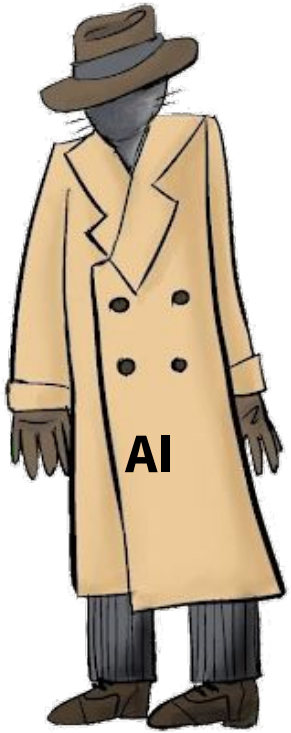

Alerts and Observability

Observability

- Un-Known Unknowns
- High cardinality
- Correlation baked-in
- Golden signals

Designed by M. Scharlock

Lesson Three:
Alerts Must Matter

A simple algorithm:

IFF(Human && do something && now && about $problem) == true

IFF(Human && do something && now && about $problem) == true

If it's not an alert,

- (!= human)
- (!= now)
- (!= problem)
- (!= doing something)

What is it?

== automation

== report

== dashboard

== delete

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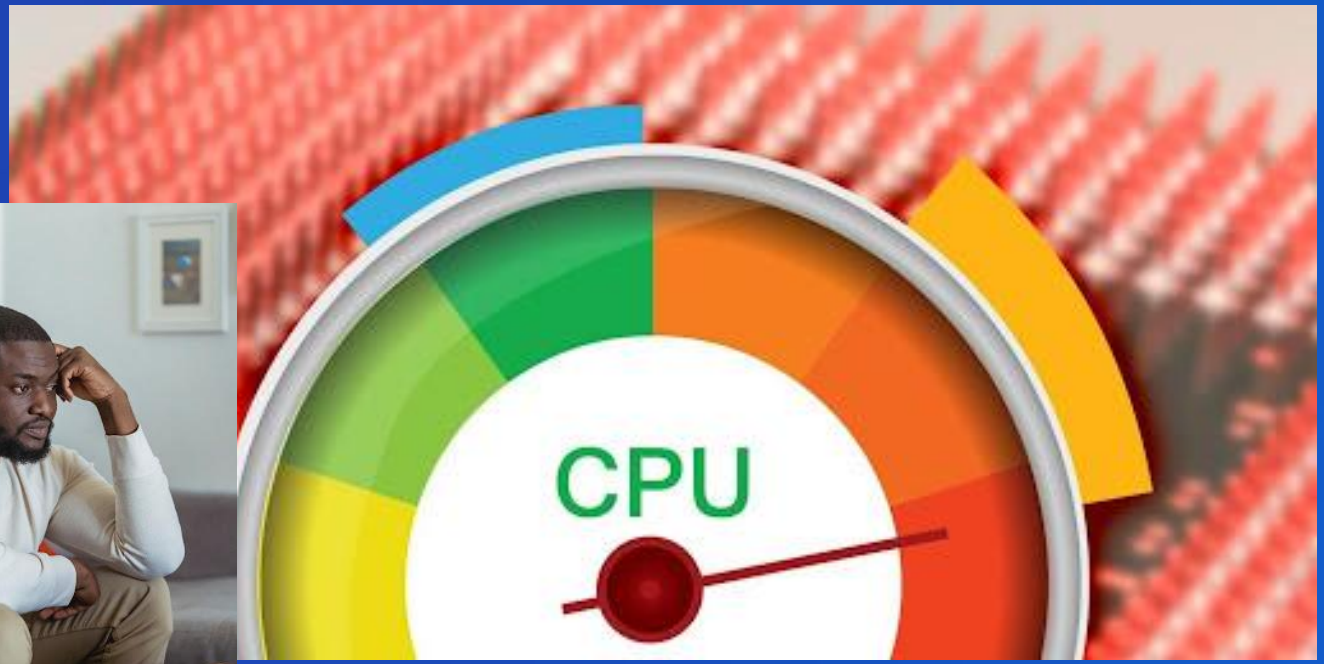
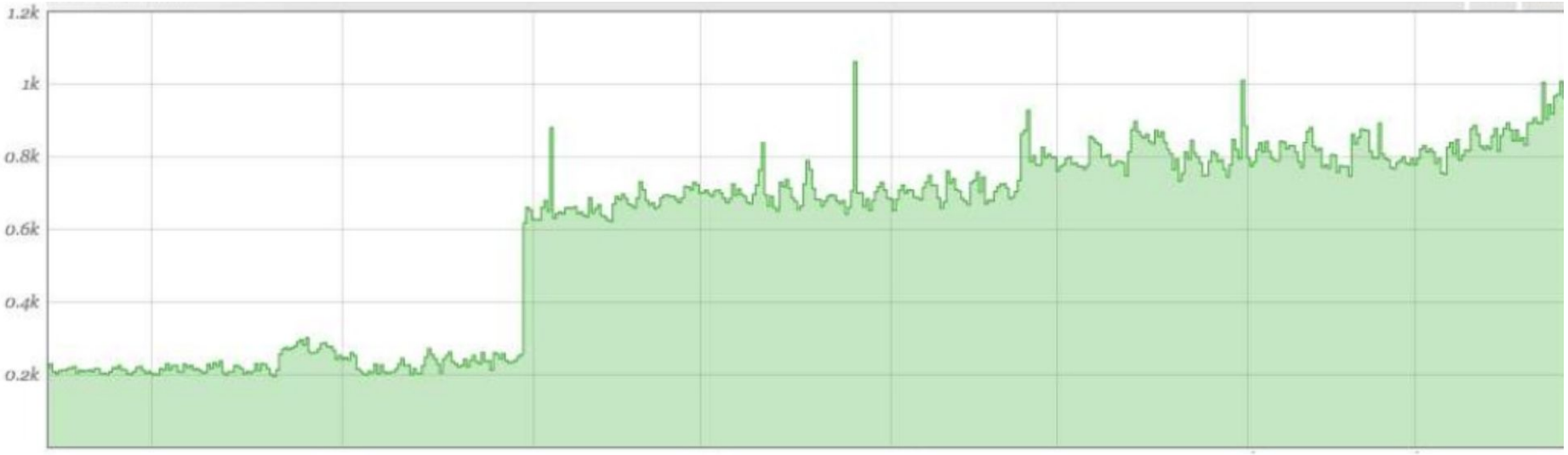
The problem with high CPU alerts isn’t the CPU



Do you see it?



Credit: Leon Fayer

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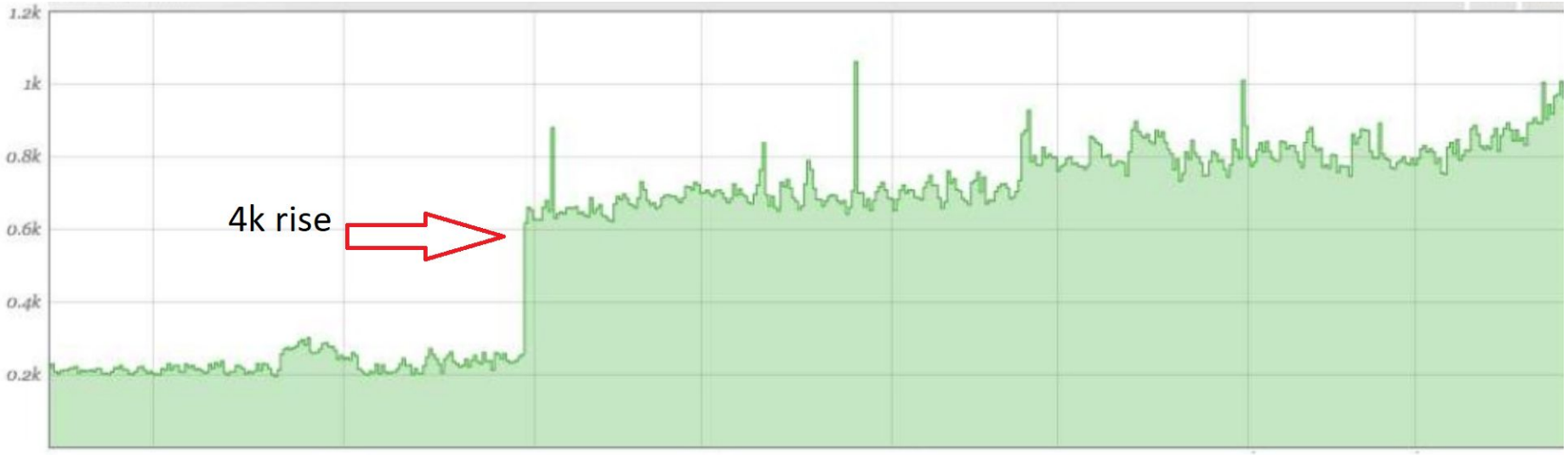
Do you see it?



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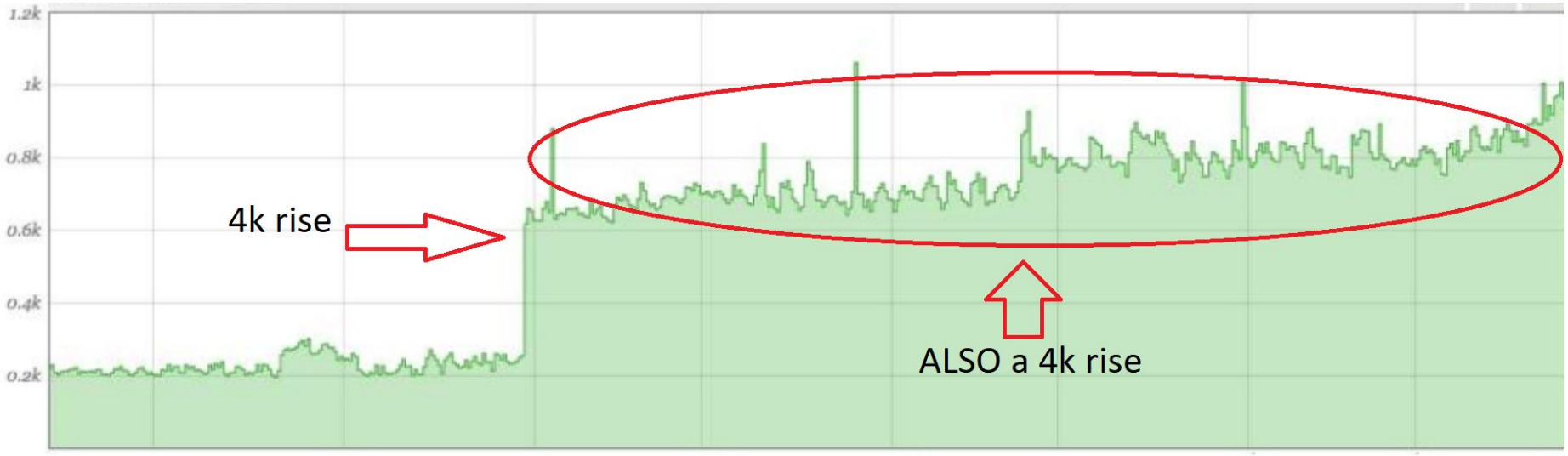
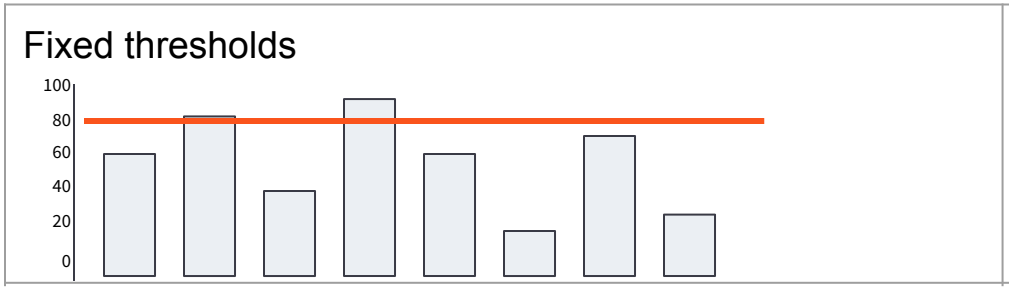
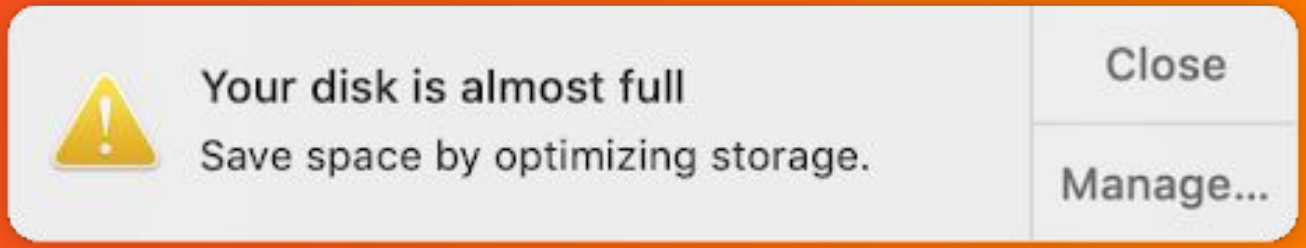


Credit: Leon Fayer

Monitoring is like Music: Both need a solid baseline!



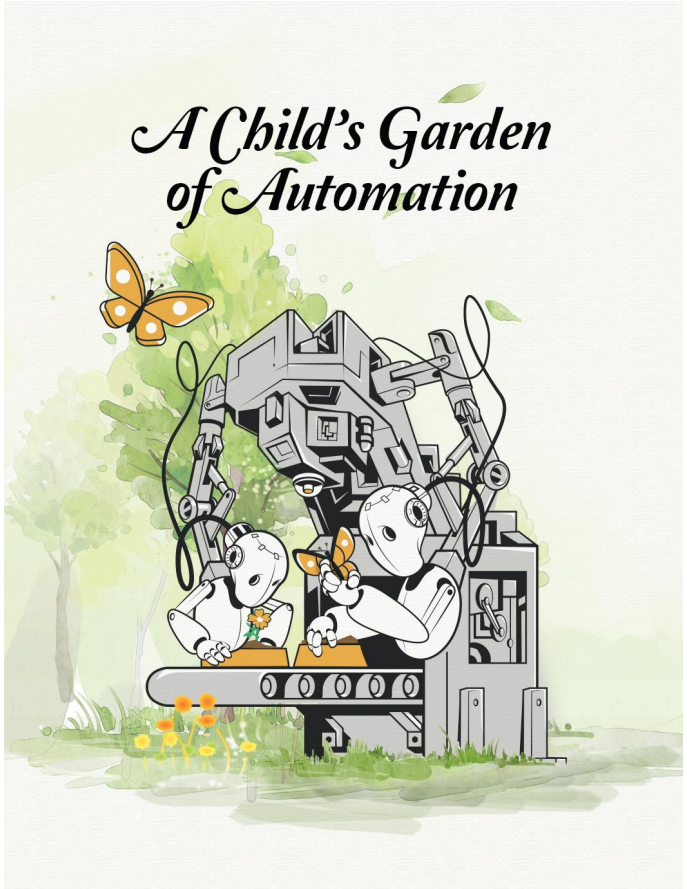
Yes, it’s a problem



But what do you DO about it?

What we have here is…
…a failure to AUTOMATE

When (this thing) goes wrong,
What do YOU do about it?



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A cascade of (automated) joy

IIS App is slow
- Clear the Application Pool
- (wait)
  - Reset the IIS service
  - (wait)
    - Rebuild from image
    - (wait)
      - Move to new region/site/whatever
      - (wait)... then send ticket

Lesson Four: Skilled Interrogati…

Interviewing

Hunting the great “useful alert”

- How do YOU know when something went wrong?
- How do you know it's "all better"?
- Is there a knowledge article for it (yet)?
- Can you make it happen on purpose?

Let’s sum up:

- Identified and interrogated the recipient
- Designed alert that matters because it
  - Has real-world trigger elements
  - Takes duration and baseline into account
  - Includes automation
- Verified the alert is built with the intent of immediate action by a human

Lesson Five:
The work never ends

From the Pages of the Sages

הֲפֹךְ בָּהּ וַהֲפֹךְ בָּהּ, דְּכֹלָּא בָהּ

“Turn it over, and [again] turn it over, for all is therein.”

- Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 5:22

לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לִגְמֹר
וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶּן חוֹרִין לִבָּטֵל מִמֶּנָּה

“It is not your duty to finish the work,
but neither are you at liberty to neglect it.”

- Pirkei Avot 2:16

Are you  ?

I’m ready for your questions!

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