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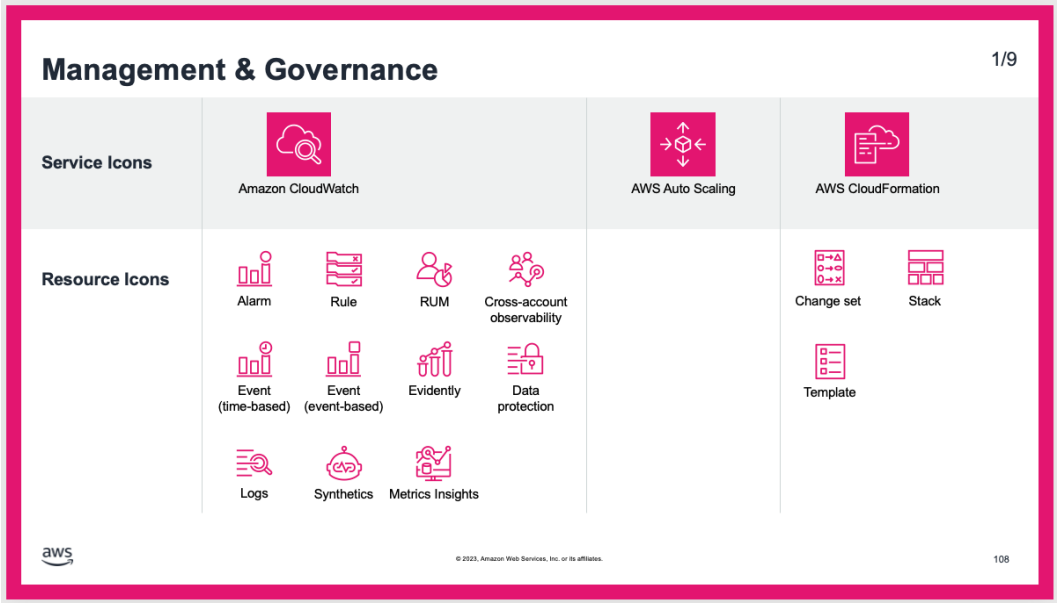
AWS CloudWatch (CW)

A Complete Guide



Introduction

CloudWatch (CW) is a ***robust monitoring and management service*** that Amazon Web Services (AWS) provides.

It offers a **comprehensive** suite of tools and features that allow you to **monitor**, **analyze**, and **gain insights** into your AWS

Pravin Mishra - Author

resources. In this post, we will explore the basics of CloudWatch, highlighting its key functionalities and how it can benefit your AWS environment.

With CloudWatch, you can gather metrics from various AWS services, such as EC2 instances, Amazon RDS databases, and Amazon S3 buckets. These metrics give you insights into resource utilization, performance, and behaviour, helping you optimize your AWS resources.

CloudWatch also allows you to collect, monitor, and analyze logs from AWS services and custom applications. It centralizes log management, making it easier to troubleshoot issues, detect anomalies, and track changes within your environment. CloudWatch Logs Insights provides a powerful query language for analyzing log data and extracting valuable information.

Additionally, CloudWatch offers the ability to create alarms based on metric thresholds. These alarms can trigger actions such as sending notifications, auto-scaling EC2 instances, or invoking AWS Lambda functions, helping you automate responses to critical events.

CloudWatch plays a crucial role in monitoring, analyzing, and maintaining the performance and availability of your AWS resources. It provides valuable insights, facilitates proactive troubleshooting, and enables you to optimize the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of your AWS infrastructure.

The " **9 CloudWatch Concepts that Every Cloud Engineer Should Know** "

We will discuss different elements of Cloud Watch below:

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1. Monitoring AWS Resources:

CloudWatch enables you to monitor a wide range of AWS resources, including EC2 instances, databases, load balancers, storage services, and more. It collects and tracks metrics, such as CPU utilization, network traffic, and disk usage, providing real-time visibility into the health and performance of your resources.

Example:

Consider an e-commerce website hosted on AWS that utilizes various services such as EC2 instances, RDS databases, and S3 buckets. By monitoring these resources, you can gain insights into CPU utilization, database performance, storage capacity, and network traffic. This information helps you identify bottlenecks, scale resources as needed, and ensure a positive user experience.

Monitoring AWS resources involves collecting and analyzing metrics, logs, and events from different services. You can leverage tools like AWS CloudWatch, which provides a centralized monitoring solution for AWS resources. With CloudWatch, you can set up alarms, create dashboards, and gain real-time visibility into your resources.

Command-based Example (AWS CLI):

To demonstrate monitoring AWS resources using the AWS CLI and CloudWatch, consider the following example commands:

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1. Get EC2 Instance Metrics:

```
aws cloudwatch get-metrics-statistics --namespace AWS/EC2
--metric-name CPUUtilization --dimensions
Name=InstanceId,Value=i-1234567890 --start-time
2023-07-01T00:00:00Z --end-time 2023-07-02T00:00:00Z
--period 3600 --statistics Average
```

In this command, replace "i-1234567890" with the ID of your EC2 instance. The command retrieves the average CPU utilization metric for the specified instance over the given time period.

1. Get RDS Database Metrics:

```
aws cloudwatch get-metric-statistics --namespace AWS/RDS
--metric-name CPUUtilization --dimensions
Name=DBInstanceIdentifier,Value=mydbinstance --start-time
2023-07-01T00:00:00Z --end-time 2023-07-02T00:00:00Z
--period 3600 --statistics Average
```

Replace "mydbinstance" with the identifier of your RDS database instance. This command retrieves the average CPU utilization metric for the specified database instance.

These commands demonstrate how to use the AWS CLI and CloudWatch to retrieve metric statistics for specific AWS resources. You can adjust the parameters, such as metric names, dimensions, time ranges, and statistics, to monitor different aspects of your AWS resources.

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Monitoring AWS resources enables you to stay informed about their performance, health, and usage patterns. By leveraging tools like CloudWatch and customizing monitoring configurations, you can ensure optimal resource utilization, detect anomalies, and respond effectively to changes in your AWS environment.

2. Custom Metrics:

Besides pre-defined metrics, CloudWatch allows you to define and publish custom metrics, which can be specific to your applications and use cases. You can collect and monitor these metrics alongside the default ones, gaining deeper insights into the behaviour and performance of your applications.

Metrics are crucial for proactive monitoring and observability in AWS. They enable you to gain insights into resource usage, identify trends, detect anomalies, and take appropriate actions to optimize performance, ensure availability, and maintain security within your AWS environment.

In summary, metrics in CloudWatch provide specific data points that measure the performance and behaviour of AWS resources. They form the basis for monitoring, analysis, and decision-making, helping you optimize your AWS infrastructure and ensure the smooth operation of your applications and services.

Let's explore Custom Metrics with an example and provide a command-based example for creating Custom Metrics using AWS CLI.

Example:

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Consider a video streaming platform that wants to monitor the number of video streams in progress at any given time. By creating a Custom Metric called "VideoStreamsInProgress" and sending data points to CloudWatch, the platform can track the concurrency of video streams and set alarms or create visualizations based on this metric.

Custom Metrics are flexible and can be tailored to your specific needs. You can define and track any metric that is relevant to your application, such as the number of orders processed, user registrations, or custom error rates.

Command-based Example (AWS CLI):

To demonstrate creating Custom Metrics using the AWS CLI and CloudWatch, consider the following example commands:

1. Put Metric Data:

```
aws cloudwatch put-metric-data --namespace MyNamespace --metric-name VideoStreamsInProgress --value 10 --unit Count
```

In this command, replace "MyNamespace" with the desired namespace for your custom metric. "VideoStreamsInProgress" is the name of the custom metric, and the "--value" parameter represents the current value of the metric. The "--unit" parameter specifies the unit of measurement for the metric, such as Count, Seconds, or Percent.

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1. Get Metric Statistics:

```
aws cloudwatch get-metric-statistics --namespace MyNamespace
--metric-name VideoStreamsInProgress --start-time
2022-01-01T00:00:00Z --end-time 2022-01-02T00:00:00Z
--period 3600 --statistics Average
```

This command retrieves the average value of the "VideoStreamsInProgress" metric over a specified time period. Replace "MyNamespace" and adjust the start and end times as per your requirement.

These commands demonstrate the process of creating Custom Metrics and retrieving metric statistics using the AWS CLI and AWS CloudWatch. Custom Metrics provide the flexibility to monitor specific aspects of your applications or services, enabling you to gain insights into custom behaviours and performance metrics beyond the predefined metrics offered by AWS services.

3. Logs:

CloudWatch Logs enables you to centralize and store log files generated by your applications, systems, and AWS services. It simplifies log management by providing a scalable and secure solution. You can stream logs directly to CloudWatch or use the AWS Command Line Interface (CLI) or SDKs. Once logs are stored, you can search, filter, and analyze them to gain valuable insights and troubleshoot issues efficiently.

Logs are records of events or activities generated by systems, applications, or services. They provide valuable information for monitoring, troubleshooting, and auditing purposes. Here's an example of a log entry:

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Timestamp: 2022-07-15 10:30:15
Level: INFO
Component: MyApp
Message: User with ID 123 logged in successfully.

In this example, we have a log entry with the following components:

Timestamp:
This indicates the date and time when the log entry was generated. It helps in understanding the chronological order of events.

Level:
Represents the severity or importance of the log entry. Typical levels include INFO, WARNING, ERROR, and DEBUG. They provide insights into the nature and impact of the logged event.

Component:
Identifies the specific component or module of the application or system that generated the log entry. It helps in categorizing and isolating logs related to particular components.

Message:
Contains descriptive information or details about the event being logged. In this example, it states that a user with ID 123 successfully logged in.

Logs are typically stored in log files or sent to a centralized log management system, such as AWS CloudWatch Logs or ELK Stack (Elasticsearch, Logstash, Kibana). These systems provide tools for analysing, searching, and visualising logs.

The visualization of logs is typically done through log management and analysis tools that display log entries in a structured manner, allowing you to search, filter, and analyze logs based on various

criteria. Log visualization tools can present logs in tabular form, as a list of events, or in graphical representations, depending on the tool's capabilities.

In practice, log visualisation tools often provide features like log filtering, aggregation, and time-based analysis to help you gain insights from the logs and troubleshoot issues effectively.

4. Events:

CloudWatch Events helps you respond to changes and events in your AWS environment. It allows you to set up event-driven workflows by defining rules and triggers. For example, you can configure an event rule to trigger an AWS Lambda function whenever an EC2 instance is launched or stopped. This flexibility enables you to automate actions and streamline your operational processes.

Here's an example of an event:

Event Name: UserSignUp
Timestamp: 2022-07-15 14:45:23
Source: AWS Cognito Details: New user signed up with emailaddress:example@example.com

In this example, we have an event with the following components:

Event Name:
Identifies the type or category of the event. In this case, it is named "UserSignUp," indicating that it represents a user sign-up event.

Timestamp:
Indicates the date and time when the event occurred, providing temporal context.

Source:
Specifies the system or service that generated the event. Here, it is AWS Cognito, which is an AWS service for user authentication and management.

Details:
Contains specific information or data related to the event. In this case, it states that a new user signed up with the email address example@example.com.

Events can be captured and processed by various systems and services, allowing you to respond to specific events programmatically. For example, in AWS, you can set up event-driven architectures using services like AWS Lambda, Amazon EventBridge, or AWS Step Functions. These services enable you to define rules or triggers based on events and execute corresponding actions or workflows.

Visualizing events is often done through event management and monitoring tools or within the respective AWS service consoles. They can be displayed as lists of events, timelines, or event streams, depending on the tool's capabilities. These visualizations help you track and analyze events in near real-time, providing insights into system behaviour, user interactions, or other significant occurrences.

5. Alarms and Notifications:

CloudWatch offers a powerful alarm feature that allows you to set thresholds and trigger actions based on metric values. You can create alarms to automatically notify you when certain conditions are met, such as high CPU utilization or a sudden increase in request latency. These notifications can be delivered via various

channels like email, SMS, or even triggering an AWS Lambda function.
Let's explore these concepts with an example and provide a command-based example of setting up an alarm and notification.

Example:

Let's consider an Amazon EC2 instance that needs to be monitored for CPU utilization. We want to receive a notification whenever the CPU utilization exceeds 80% for a sustained period.

Alarm:
We create an alarm for the CPU utilization metric of the EC2 instance. We set the threshold to 80%, indicating that if the CPU utilization exceeds this value, the alarm will be triggered.

Notification:
We configure a notification action to be triggered when the alarm state changes. This notification can be sent via email, SMS, or integrated with other AWS services like SNS (Simple Notification Service) or AWS Lambda functions.

Command-based Example:

To set up an alarm and notification using the AWS CLI, we can use the following example commands:

1. Create an Alarm:

```
aws cloudwatch put-metric-alarm --alarm-name MyEC2CPUAlarm --alarm-description "CPU Utilization exceeds 80%" --metric-name CPUUtilization --namespace AWS/EC2 --statistic Average --period 300 --threshold 80 --comparison-operator GreaterThanOrEqualToThreshold --evaluation-periods 3 --alarm-actions arn:aws:sns:us-east-1:123456789012:MyNotificationTopic
```

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2. Create a Notification Topic:

aws sns create-topic --name MyNotificationTopic
Subscribe to the Notification Topic: aws sns subscribe --topic-arn arn:aws:sns:us-east-1:123456789012:MyNotificationTopic --protocol email --notification-endpoint example@example.com

In this example, we create an alarm named "MyEC2CPUAlarm" to monitor the CPU utilization metric of an EC2 instance. If the CPU utilization exceeds 80% for a sustained period of 15 minutes (evaluated over 3 consecutive periods of 5 minutes each), the alarm will trigger an action. We specify an SNS topic as the alarm action to send a notification to an email address subscribed to the topic.

6. Logs Monitoring and Analysis:

CloudWatch Logs enables you to capture, store, and analyze log data from your AWS resources and applications. It provides a centralized location for storing logs, making it easier to troubleshoot issues, monitor application behaviour, and gain operational insights. You can search and filter logs, set up metric filters, and create custom dashboards to visualize log data in real time.

Example:

Consider an application deployed on Amazon EC2 instances that generates logs for various activities, such as user authentication, database queries, and error messages. By monitoring and analyzing these logs, you can gain insights into user behaviour, identify performance bottlenecks, and troubleshoot issues effectively.

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1. **Log Collection:**
   Configure the application to generate logs and ensure they are centralized and stored in a designated location or log management system. In this example, we use AWS CloudWatch Logs as the log management system.

2. **Log Group and Log Stream:**
   Create a log group, which acts as a container for related log streams. Each log stream represents a specific source or instance generating logs. For example, you can have log streams for different EC2 instances or different components of your application.

3. **Log Filtering and Retention:**
   Set up log filters to capture specific log events or patterns of interest. You can define filter patterns using regular expressions to extract relevant information from the log data. Specify the retention period to determine how long log data should be stored.

4. **Log Analysis:**
   Utilize log analysis tools or features provided by your log management system to search, filter, and analyze logs. AWS CloudWatch Logs Insights, for example, allows you to run queries on log data using a powerful query language and extract meaningful information or identify patterns and trends.

Command-based Example (AWS CLI):

To demonstrate log monitoring and analysis using AWS CloudWatch Logs, consider the following example commands:

1. Create a Log Group:

```
aws logs create-log-group --log-group-name MyLogGroup
```

2. Create a Log Stream:

```
aws logs create-log-stream --log-group-name MyLogGroup
--log-stream-name MyLogStream
```

3. Put Log Events:

```
aws logs put-log-events --log-group-name MyLogGroup
--log-stream-name MyLogStream --log-events '[{"timestamp":
1664774000000, "message": "Log message 1"},
{"timestamp": 1664774010000, "message": "Log message
2"}]'
```

In this example, we create a log group named "MyLogGroup" to store logs. We then create a log stream named "MyLogStream" within the log group. Finally, we use the "put-log-events" command to add log events to the log stream, specifying the timestamp and log message for each event.

These commands illustrate the process of setting up log monitoring and analysis using the AWS CLI and AWS CloudWatch Logs. The actual log data and configurations can be tailored based on specific requirements and log management systems used.

7. Dashboards:

CloudWatch Dashboards allow you to create customized, visual representations of your metrics and logs. You can build interactive dashboards with graphs, charts, and widgets, providing a consolidated view of your AWS resources. These dashboards can be shared across teams, helping to improve collaboration and enabling quick decision-making based on real-time data.

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Example:

Consider an e-commerce application that tracks various metrics such as website traffic, conversion rates, and revenue. A dashboard for this application can display real-time information about the number of active users, orders placed, and revenue generated. With this dashboard, stakeholders can quickly assess the performance and identify any issues or areas for improvement.

A dashboard typically consists of widgets, which are visual elements that display specific data or metrics. Devices can include line charts, bar graphs, gauges, or other visual representations of data.

Command-based Example (AWS CLI):

To demonstrate creating a dashboard using the AWS CLI and CloudWatch, consider the following example commands:

1. Create a Dashboard:

```
aws cloud watch put-dashboard --dashboard-name MyDashboard
--dashboard-body file://dashboard.json
```

In this command, replace "MyDashboard" with your preferred name for the dashboard. The file "dashboard.json" should contain the JSON definition of the dashboard structure, including widgets and metrics to be displayed.

1. Get a Dashboard:


```
aws cloudwatch get-dashboard --dashboard-name MyDashboard
```

This command retrieves the definition and configuration of an existing dashboard named "MyDashboard".

1. List Dashboards:

```
aws cloudwatch list-dashboards
```

This command lists all available dashboards in your AWS account. These commands demonstrate the process of creating, retrieving, and listing dashboards using the AWS CLI and AWS CloudWatch. The actual dashboard configuration, widgets, and metrics can be customized based on specific requirements.

Dashboards visually represent data and metrics, allowing users to monitor, analyze, and make informed decisions based on real-time information. They serve as a valuable tool for tracking the performance and health of systems, applications, and services.

8. Autoscaling and Resource Optimization:

CloudWatch integrates seamlessly with AWS Auto Scaling, enabling you to scale your resources dynamically based on metrics and predefined conditions. By leveraging CloudWatch's monitoring capabilities, you can automate the scaling process to meet demand fluctuations, optimize resource utilization, and achieve cost efficiency.

Pravin Mishra - Author

Example:

Consider an e-commerce website that experiences varying levels of traffic throughout the day. During peak hours, the website requires additional resources to handle the increased user load, while during low-traffic periods, those resources are underutilized. Autoscaling allows the website to adjust the number of resources based on demand, ensuring optimal performance and cost-effectiveness. Autoscaling involves two main components: scaling policies and scaling groups.

Scaling policies define the conditions under which scaling actions are triggered, and scaling groups determine the resources that are scaled.

Command-based Example (AWS CLI):

To demonstrate autoscaling using the AWS CLI and AWS Auto Scaling, consider the following example commands:

1. Create an Auto Scaling Group:

```
aws autoscaling create-auto-scaling-group
--auto-scaling-group-name MyAutoScalingGroup
--launch-configuration-name MyLaunchConfig --min-size 2
--max-size 10 --desired-capacity 4
```

In this command, replace "**MyAutoScalingGroup**" with the desired name for your autoscaling group. "MyLaunchConfig" should be the name of your launch configuration, which defines the instance

specifications for the autoscaling group. The parameters min-size, max-size, and desired capacity determine the minimum, maximum, and desired number of instances in the group, respectively.

1. Create a Scaling Policy:

```
aws autoscaling put-scaling-policy --policy-name MyScalingPolicy
--auto-scaling-group-name MyAutoScalingGroup
--scaling-adjustment 2 --adjustment-type ChangeInCapacity
```

This command creates a scaling policy named "MyScalingPolicy" for the autoscaling group "MyAutoScalingGroup". The scaling adjustment specifies the number of instances to add or remove, and the adjustment type determines whether the adjustment is an absolute number or a percentage.

1. Attach the Scaling Policy to a CloudWatch Alarm:

```
aws cloudwatch put-metric-alarm --alarm-name MyAlarm
--comparison-operator GreaterThanOrEqualToThreshold
--evaluation-periods 2 --metric-name CPUUtilization --namespace
AWS/EC2 --period 300 --statistic Average --threshold 80
--alarm-actions
arn:aws:autoscaling:us-east-1:123456789012:scalingPolicy:9876
5432-1234-5678-90ab-1234567890ab
```

This command creates a CloudWatch alarm named "MyAlarm" that triggers the scaling policy "MyScalingPolicy" when the CPU utilization metric exceeds 80%. Adjust the parameters based on your requirements and specify the appropriate ARN for the alarm-actions parameter.

These commands demonstrate the process of setting up autoscaling using the AWS CLI and AWS Auto Scaling. The actual configurations, parameters, and resource names can be customized to fit specific requirements.

9. Insights and Analytics:

CloudWatch Insights provides advanced analytics capabilities, allowing you to query and analyze log data efficiently. With a powerful query language and built-in functions, you can perform complex searches, filter data, and gain deep insights into your logs. This helps in troubleshooting issues, detecting patterns, and understanding the behaviour of your applications.

Example:

Consider an e-commerce platform that collects data on customer behaviour, such as browsing patterns, purchase history, and demographics. By applying insights and analytics techniques to this data, the platform can gain valuable insights, such as identifying popular products, understanding customer preferences, and optimizing marketing strategies.

Insights and analytics can involve various methods, including data exploration, visualization, statistical analysis, machine learning, and predictive modelling. The goal is to derive actionable insights and make data-driven decisions.

Command-based Example (AWS CLI):

To demonstrate analytics using the AWS CLI and AWS CloudWatch Insights, consider the following example command:

1. Query Log Data:

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```
aws logs start-query --log-group-name MyLogGroup --query-string 'fields @timestamp, @message | filter @message like /ERROR/' --start-time 1627651200 --end-time 1627737599
```

In this command, replace "MyLogGroup" with the name of your log group. The query-string parameter specifies the query to run on the log data. In this example, we are filtering for log messages containing the term "ERROR" and extracting the timestamp and message fields. The start-time and end-time parameters define the time range of the log data to query.

This command initiates a query on the log data and returns the results.

Insights and analytics help organizations make informed decisions, optimize operations, improve customer experiences, and drive business growth. By leveraging tools, technologies, and techniques for data analysis, businesses can uncover valuable insights and gain a competitive advantage.

Conclusion

CloudWatch is a fundamental service for monitoring and managing your AWS resources. Its rich set of features, including resource monitoring, alarms, logs analysis, dashboards, and autoscaling integration, empower you to proactively monitor, optimize, and troubleshoot your AWS environment. By leveraging CloudWatch, you can ensure the reliability, performance, and cost-effectiveness of your AWS resources, ultimately enhancing the overall operational efficiency of your applications.

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So, dive into CloudWatch and harness its capabilities to gain valuable insights, make data-driven decisions, and unlock the full potential of your AWS infrastructure.