

On the Radar: nClouds' nOps solves cloud change management challenges

Addressing change management issues on AWS

Publication Date: 29 May 2018 | Product code: INT003-000168

Michael Azoff



Summary

Catalyst

Cloud computing is not just the domain of the IT department, as business users are now able to acquire cloud services both with and without the participation of IT staff. This has led to a dramatic increase in the volume, velocity, and complexity of IT service requests. In many cases, new services are being created without any change management process, and IT groups are finding that their existing IT service management (ITSM) processes are ill-equipped to keep service levels high while handling the increased demands. As cloud adoption grows, problems occur, such as a lack of visibility of why and when changes were made, their effect, and the cost. There is a lack of control over what services are running and why, and an audit is virtually impossible because of the multitude of different change processes used by different groups.

These are the issues addressed by nOps, a new software-as-a-service (SaaS) offering from nClouds, which solves the change management challenges associated with the dramatic increase in the volume and velocity of IT service requests in AWS cloud environments.

Key messages

- nOps originated in the field; it was initially created and used by DevOps service delivery teams at AWS-certified nClouds in hundreds of real-world customer engagements.
- It provides visibility of infrastructure changes, cost management, compliance, security, and incident remediation, and it supports security and compliance audits.
- It reduces cloud costs proactively by identifying unused resources, and it prevents and accelerates recovery from incidents by correlating changes.
- It enables the automation of change authorization to handle most requests without human intervention.
- It provides customized exception handling with easy workflows, integrated with Slack, HipChat, Jira, and AWS Service Catalog.
- It helps automate and standardize deployments centrally using AWS Service Catalog.

Ovum view

Cloud change management is an area in which many organizations are not fully in control. They need proactive cost management to know how many cloud instances are still active. They need to track what they have done for compliance and security reasons, and they need to handle a massive increase in change requests, tracking back to the root cause of failures. The degree of automation and the simplicity of use offered by nClouds' nOps provide them with a good opportunity to get on top of these issues. An important feature of nOps is that it finds and tracks change requests in a non-obtrusive manner that does not impose a burden and slow down developers. nOps lets organizations manage all aspects of AWS infrastructure and cloud-based development to track, manage, and control the environments in which their systems run. Currently, it only supports the AWS environment; future integrations, such as with Azure and Google Cloud Platform (GCP), will widen its appeal. nOps is available on AWS Marketplace.

Recommendations for enterprises

Why put nClouds nOps on your radar?

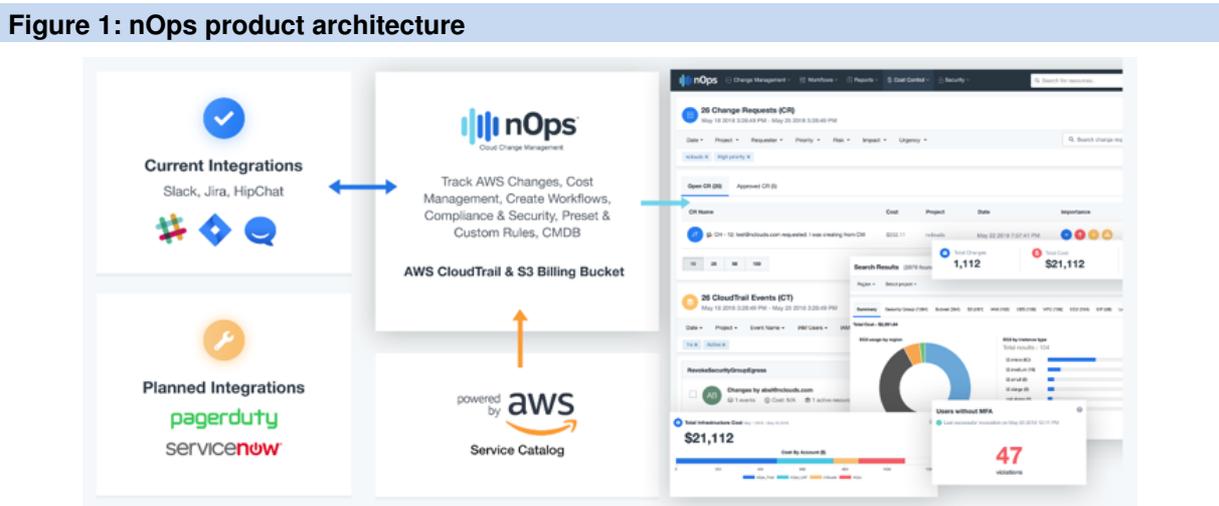
There are three main reasons why customers have approached nClouds to help them manage their AWS configuration issues. The first is the realization that they need to automate change requests/authorizations as much as possible if they are to respond to the volume and velocity of IT service requests. The second is the issue of cost management: their need to get a handle on costs and become more proactive in managing them, including tracking down and halting zombie instances. The third is their need to effectively and speedily manage incident remediation, using engineers' time efficiently by giving them immediate visibility of what changes happened just before an outage. Ovum suggests that for many organizations, nOps provides a very rapid way to understand what configurations are installed and running, and gives them the visibility they may have previously lacked.

Highlights

Architecture

nOps uses AWS CloudTrail and AWS Service Catalog to provide meaningful information about the infrastructure changes happening in an AWS cloud environment. Machine learning is used for analyzing historical data and providing insight into future infrastructure needs. There are APIs for commonly available apps such as Jira, Slack, and HipChat to provide close integration among the different tools.

Other features include the ability to create predefined rules and custom workflows to automate change authorizations. There is a Change Management Summary and Dashboard, which has the ability to track multiple projects within AWS. There are also useful summary dashboards for cost management and security. nOps uses a bot for some of the common activities that can be done by the user on the fly.



Source: nClouds

Service and support

nClouds offers an extensive range of professional services in support of nOps, including DevOps consulting to help customers move to the use of containers and microservices, and it provides AWS Well-Architected Reviews. It also offers managed services with change management, service catalog, and infrastructure automation. It helps clients with migration when moving on-premises workloads to AWS, both lift-and-shift and full single-tenant to multitenant conversions. Finally, it offers 24x7 support for on-call, SLA-level support of cloud infrastructure.

Future development

nClouds is continuously building methods and tools to make service delivery more efficient through automation and to apply best practices. Many of these will remain internal tools used by nClouds' service delivery teams. Some, like nOps, will have broad applicability and will be productized for commercial availability.

Planned nOps development for 2018 includes:

- The use of machine learning and natural language processing (e.g. for AWS Lex) for patterns and for predicting and auto-approving changes.
- AWS Service Catalog–driven deployments and workflow sharing.
- Alignment with the AWS Well-Architected Framework pillars.
- PinkVerify certification.
- Integration of nOps change management with ServiceNow workflow.
- PagerDuty integration to alert on-call for certain types of changes (such as disabling multifactor authentication on root).
- Multicloud support.
- Basic pre-built change authorization workflows such as provisioning a new server and advanced workflows to build a Kubernetes cluster.
- The introduction of a Mobile dashboard.

Background

nClouds was founded in 2012 and is headquartered in San Jose, CA, US. Its CEO and co-founder, JT Giri, had been consulting on DevOps for more than 12 years and began working with Amazon EC2 when it was still in beta. nClouds is an award-winning, certified AWS Advanced Consulting Partner as well as Technology Partner, Managed Service Partner, DevOps Competency Partner, and Approved Well-Architected Partner, with Service Distinction with AWS Service Catalog and AWS CloudFormation.

Current position

nCloud's customers for nOps include Avaya, TuneIn, Informatica, and Prodea. The company has delivered over 250 DevOps AWS implementations, has deployed over 500 pipelines, and manages more than 10,000 servers.

Currently, nClouds employs 60 staff based at its headquarters and in locations in the US, Canada, Central America, India, China, and Europe. Its staff growth has been around 50% per year, with

growth in the US expected in engineering, project management, sales and marketing, and services. Its client support growth is expected worldwide for clients of the SaaS English-language nOps platform.

The vendor's year-on-year financial revenue growth for services and software has been 300%.

Data sheet

Key facts

Product name	nOps	Product classification	Cloud change management
Version number	1.0	Release date	February 12, 2018
Industries covered	All	Geographies covered	nClouds (services): US nOps (SaaS): North America, Latin America, EMEA, Asia-Pacific
Relevant company sizes	V1: small, medium, and large (teams)	Licensing options	Free 14-day trial Perpetual: n/a 1-year term: n/a 1-year SaaS: \$1,788 (standard, yearly, \$149/month), or \$169/month (standard, monthly), includes three users. - Add Cost Management: \$49/month per \$10,000 AWS billing. - Add user: \$49/month
URL	www.nops.io	Routes to market	Direct – nOps.io; AWS Marketplace
Company headquarters	San Jose, CA, US	Number of employees	60

Source: nClouds

Appendix

On the Radar

On the Radar is a series of research notes about vendors bringing innovative ideas, products, or business models to their markets. Although On the Radar vendors may not be ready for prime time, they bear watching for their potential impact on markets and could be suitable for certain enterprise and public sector IT organizations.

Authors

Martin Gandar, Associate Senior Analyst

martin.gandar@ovum.com

Michael Azoff, Principal Analyst, Infrastructure Solutions

michael.azoff@ovum.com

Ovum Consulting

We hope that this analysis will help you make informed and imaginative business decisions. If you have further requirements, Ovum's consulting team may be able to help you. For more information about Ovum's consulting capabilities, please contact us directly at consulting@ovum.com.

Copyright notice and disclaimer

The contents of this product are protected by international copyright laws, database rights and other intellectual property rights. The owner of these rights is Informa Telecoms and Media Limited, our affiliates or other third party licensors. All product and company names and logos contained within or appearing on this product are the trademarks, service marks or trading names of their respective owners, including Informa Telecoms and Media Limited. This product may not be copied, reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission of Informa Telecoms and Media Limited.

Whilst reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that the information and content of this product was correct as at the date of first publication, neither Informa Telecoms and Media Limited nor any person engaged or employed by Informa Telecoms and Media Limited accepts any liability for any errors, omissions or other inaccuracies. Readers should independently verify any facts and figures as no liability can be accepted in this regard – readers assume full responsibility and risk accordingly for their use of such information and content.

Any views and/or opinions expressed in this product by individual authors or contributors are their personal views and/or opinions and do not necessarily reflect the views and/or opinions of Informa Telecoms and Media Limited.

CONTACT US

ovum.informa.com

askananalyst@ovum.com

INTERNATIONAL OFFICES

Beijing

Dubai

Hong Kong

Hyderabad

Johannesburg

London

Melbourne

New York

San Francisco

Sao Paulo

Tokyo

