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Kentik Cloud adds mapping, cost management and performance monitoring to multicloud use

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The company's Kentik Cloud feature helps enterprise IT rein in monitoring and managing applications distributed across multiple cloud services. Kentik is taking a network-centric approach that sheds light on an area of cloud use where it can be difficult to gain insights.

451 Research

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Introduction

Single, hybrid and multicloud is important for enterprises, but IT often lacks the visibility needed to fully monitor, assess and troubleshoot networking within cloud services. Each cloud service has its own set of capabilities for provisioning and monitoring networking within and between instances as well as a variety of network services. Making sense of performance issues is complex without tooling to collect, analyze and visualize cloud networking. Because each cloud service is its own entity, the only way to truly get a handle on cloud network performance is with a service-neutral tool that provides a view across all cloud services.

THE 451 TAKE

Kentik Cloud is a good addition for Kentik's current and prospective customers that are moving to a hybrid multicloud application model. Combining deep discovery and performance characteristics in the cloud services and aggregating the costs for network traffic gives IT useful tools for operating their hybrid cloud and managing costs. Kentik is not alone in approaching the complexity of IT operations and cloud cost management, but it is taking a network-centric approach that sheds light on an area of cloud use where it can be difficult to gain insights.

Context

Kentik has been steadily adding analytics and visualization capabilities to its SaaS-based network performance monitoring (NPM) suite that adds value for its current and potential customers. NPM has always had difficulty in gaining traction in the enterprise because while IT and IT management wants the insights that can only be gleaned by NPM, they didn't want to allocate the budget for what has been a single-use tool. Features such as Kentik Cloud bridge the gap not only between IT teams but also the growing list of cloud services and the application dependencies that form between them.

Strategic vision and business drivers

Kentik views the continual shift by enterprises to cloud, hybrid cloud and multicloud application environments as opening a gap in application and network performance and visibility that needs to be filled with pervasive monitoring capabilities and data enrichment from other sources leading to data visualization, AI and machine learning to separate the wheat from the chaff and surface relevant insights to IT.

As applications become more distributed, making sense of performance metrics and hunting down the sources of performance problems will become far more difficult for IT, hence the need for more automation, even in monitoring infrastructure. Kentik wants to remove the complexity from deploying performance monitoring, even when self-hosted on-premises, and simplify licensing, which is also a pain point for enterprises.

These are good goals for any network performance monitoring vendor, and competitors will have their own story to tell about how they are addressing these concerns. The proof will be in execution, and Kentik seems to be executing well against its strategy.

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Product

The Kentik platform is SaaS-based or on-premises software that collects, analyzes and presents visualizations for IT administrators to monitor their networks and troubleshoot problems. Customers can opt for a multi-tenant deployment or single-tenant option, both hosted by Kentik, or customers can run the software on their own hardware. The product is licensed based on use, and the Pro and Premier licenses differ only on scale, a few security functions like anomaly and DDoS detection, and a few service provider features. The company, like its competitors, must keep adding new features at a steady pace to remain relevant to enterprise IT.

Kentik Cloud is a new set of capabilities that integrate data from cloud services into Kentik's network analytics platform. Kentik Map is updated to include cloud features and constructs like AWS VPCs or Azure Vnets, giving visibility to network traffic to and from instances as well as network gateways and cloud routers. Kentik Map leverages data from the cloud services to depict traffic health and performance and allows enterprise IT to readily visualize connectivity. Kentik Cloud Performance Monitor builds synthetic tests to measure latency within a cloud service and over hard-to-monitor paths like cloud interconnections and site-to-site VPNs, as well as mapping performance between points in the path to help IT understand network and application performance. The synthetic tests can be automatically generated, reducing operational overhead for IT. Kentik provides granular visibility into cloud traffic incurring costs. With traffic data collected, correlated and enriched from VPC Flow Logs and multiple cloud APIs, Kentik enables spending tracking, alerting insights and forecasting within and across clouds, the internet and on-premises.

All of these capabilities combined can help IT manage performance and costs of applications placed in cloud services such as pinpointing choke points causing service degradation, troubleshooting, optimizing network connectivity and services, and tracking costs holistically.

Partners

Kentik has a small set of technology and channel partners, including partnerships with Cloudflare, Fortinet, Grafana, New Relic and Silver Peak Networks. However, a primary focus for the company should be building up its base of partners. While Kentik can consume standards-based data sources like packets and flow records, the actions from the product and service come to life when enriched with vendor-specific data. Kentik's partnership with New Relic using Kentik Firehose is mutually beneficial for both companies and benefits joint customers with looking to expand existing NPM use cases with application performance and vice-versa. The company should continue to pursue technology alliances with key vendors in adjacent segments that generate network data, consume network data or act on network data.

Funding

Kentik was founded in 2014 and is based in San Francisco. According to S&P Global Market Intelligence, it has received four rounds of venture funding totaling $61.7m with the latest round in May 2020 for $23.5m in shares and debt, led by Vistara Capital Partners with participation from August Capital, Third Point Ventures, Data Collective and Tahoma Advisors.

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Competition

Kentik faces competition from on-premises and cloud-based vendors such as AppNeta that also offers hybrid and multicloud monitoring in addition to NPM products and services. Kentik also competes with vendors that offer NPM as a component of a larger product suite, including Broadcom, Datadog, Manage Engine and SolarWinds. Synthetic testing is a critical feature that Kentik can use in updates, but it is also fairly common. Cisco has begun to integrate Thousand Eyes with AppDynamics, providing a workflow between the two products allowing IT to drill down from applications to network visibility and see the impact on applications from network issues. Cloud monitoring will become a hot topic as more enterprises use multiple cloud services.

Kentik also competes with a variety of vendors offering networking products that include NPM-like capabilities, such as switching and routing vendors, SD-WAN vendors and network packet broker vendors that offer 'good enough' NPM to cover the basics but not much else. Competing with 'good enough' means showing value above and beyond what enterprises already have. Focusing on spreading the functionality of NPM across multiple IT groups is one way to show value for a purchase that may not be seen as critical to enterprises.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

Kentik offers a rich, versatile cloud-based network analytics platform that could integrate well with other ITSM products. The new cloud-focused features consolidate data across multiple services and allow IT to peer deep into the network and application performance and connectivity residing in and across those services. Advanced tools like the Cloud Traffic Cost Explorer is an example of filling a gap for IT that is not easily filled using other methods.

WEAKNESSES

Synthetic and flow-based performance monitoring are powerful tools but ultimately hit a limit in visibility in application performance, which is a blind spot for Kentik. DevOps strategies focus heavily on application insights and when the competing for the same dollars allocated for analytics there is a tendency for that budget to be spent on application performance management.

OPPORTUNITIES

Kentik can use its visibility to apply machine learning and AI in innovative ways to bring out new insights and apply them to their customer base. Taking lessons learned from similar organizations and presenting them to customers would be a valuable service opening up new insights that customers might not otherwise gain.

THREATS

Microservices environments and cloud services are offering more performance metrics and analytics that can be used by IT for performance management. The threat is that those services can be good enough for IT to use when combined with typical human-led activities like building spreadsheets or using open source tools for collection and visualization.

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