



Architecting the Cloud, part of the On Cloud Podcast

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Title: Navigating the COVID-19 disruption: cloud can help with security and continuity
Description: The unprecedented disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many companies to retrench operations and adjust their business models to enable remote working, communication, and learning—while maintaining security. Those companies already in cloud are most likely able to adjust more easily than those who are still relying on on-premise systems that may be hard to access, support, or maintain. In this episode of the podcast, Mike Kavis and guest, Sumo Logic’s Ramin Sayar, discuss the disruptions that has pushed many companies to accelerate their journey to cloud. However, Ramin urges companies to focus first on security and business continuity with flexible, scalable architecture becoming the goal to operate effectively in a post-pandemic world.
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Mike Kavis: Hey, everyone. Welcome back to the Architecting the Cloud Podcast, where we get real about cloud technology. We discuss what's new in the cloud, how to use it and why, but most importantly, we discuss it with people in the field who are doing the work every day. I'm Mike Kavis, your host and Chief Cloud

Architect over at Deloitte, and today I'm joined with Ramin Sayar. Ramin is the CEO of Sumo Logic, so welcome aboard. Tell us a little bit about your background and tell us about the work you're all doing over there at Sumo.

Ramin Sayar:

Well, thank you for having me, and it's a pleasure to be here. I've had the distinct honor to now be at Sumo for just over half the lifespan of the company. We're about ten years old, and we just celebrated our ten-year anniversary. And it gives us a logical opportunity to kind of look back and make sure that we continue to deliver on our mission. We're happy that our vision continues to play out.

To your point, we started the company ten years ago to effectively help customers who are going through digital transformation that we all know today, but also cloud migration, be able to not only help improve their security posture, because that's our background and history and heritage, but also the operational posture and policies. And so, we've delivered a single platform and service that brings together development operations and security teams through better ways of collaborating and communicating. We refer to this as continuous intelligence, a category that we created five years ago.

Mike Kavis:

That's cool stuff. So you mentioned digital transformation, so we're in the middle of this COVID-19 issue that's happening out there. Is that forcing companies to rethink or look more towards digital transformation?

Ramin Sayar:

Well, I think honestly, first and foremost, it's forcing a lot of us who are not used to working remotely all the time get used to this new world and reality. And the second thing it's forcing us to do is not only individually work at home because we're quarantined, but also find ways to better collaborate with our peers at work versus the normal ways that we used to do in the office or face-to-face. So that adjustment period is taking time.

But I think to your question, in terms of what else is COVID forcing, I think it's accelerating in some cases a lot of our customers' requirements to not only improve the way they secure and get insights and intelligence into their data and their experience for their employees because everyone is working from home and remote workforce, but also make sure that their digital services are not just up and running but also secure. So it's really forcing them to holistically double down on not only security but also operational performance and reliability of these services a lot of their prospects and customers rely on.

Mike Kavis:

It's also forcing us to communicate a lot differently. So we traditionally focused a lot on face-to-face meetings and discussions with clients, but now because everyone's quarantined, we're moving more towards remote ways of doing that. How is that also changing our approach to things like sales and even technology like requirements, meetings, all that? How do you see us needing to change, and is data helping us figure some of that out?

Ramin Sayar:

Yeah, I mean, I think what's interesting is that machine learning and artificial intelligence has been a topic du jour for many years, and I would say that, for a lot of cases and customers, it's been more of a talk, versus a reality, and something they were looking to transition to. And I think those that have already been using real time data to get that intelligence and insights in terms of their services and usage and adoption are rapidly transforming their businesses and being able to adopt new ways to digitally reach out versus traditional events and travel. I can speak from a Sumo perspective, for example, since a lot of folks can't travel to various events, we've curated different types of campaigns for not only our existing customers or install base, but also for trying to give back. Meaning we want to be able to help not only do good or do well in the community that we serve already, but broaden that sphere and influence to help educational institutions and other small-medium businesses.

So the teams at Sumo put together a work-from-home type of campaign for free for a lot of educational institutions, higher ed, and small-medium businesses that we rolled out. Similarly, there are other creative means that the teams have come up with to reach out through different digital campaigns for security because, as people work from home now, things around VPN or access to collaboration and productivity tools become stressed on the services. And so how do you provide means for the IT teams and the security teams supporting the remote employees now to make sure those services that those employees rely on are available. So we've also rolled out a set of packaged application analytics to help not only the existing customers, but new customers for those types of services.

Mike Kavis:

Yeah, one of the things that I've learned through all this is there's a lot of logistics that go into everything we do, whether it's putting food in the grocery stores, or supplies, or even getting stuff to hospitals. We always just kind of took for granted because it was always there, right. And now everything's stressed and we're seeing some areas where there's a need for more traditional tracking, more event management, more of everything. And I also think – this is just my observations – I also think there's a lot of people or types of companies in the ecosystem that never had to work together, or at least not as often, that are now having to work together. And because of that, there's not a lot of good information flowing. There's a lot of new scenarios, so how can we use these concepts of continuous intelligence and analytics to help with that?

Ramin Sayar:

Well, there's some simple things that we see with a lot of our customers. During this unforeseen and uncertain time, experience is supreme. And what I mean by that is those that rely heavily on usage of digital applications, streaming gaming services, online banking, online shopping and stuff. It's important more so now than ever that those services remain up and running and are reliable and so that they don't have a situation where prospects or customers leave and use something else because they're frustrated.

We always create scenarios for how we need to be able to scale up, scale out our services unpredictable load, and we've tried to share a lot of those best practices with our own customers. And so how do you kind of go through not necessarily COVID planning, but disaster recovery and business continuity planning. And so those companies that have already done that are thriving today. Those that are trying to figure that out or trying to be helpful and provide our own best practices, tips and tricks for doing so as well. But that's from an operational perspective.

I think the other aspect is a mind shift sense perspective, and what we're used to seeing and doing because we're working face-to-face in the office or visiting prospects and customers now all have to be remote. And so there's a different way that you can start to analyze data, and it doesn't require necessarily change in how we work, per se, to get those insights and trends. Like, we're looking at our web site traffic, we're looking at traffic on digital ads and stuff that we're doing and looking at keywords and trying to use that to compare and contrast to actual searches in our system and correlate what we need to put more content out, either in the form of e-books, or in the form of podcasts, or in the form of other means to educate and help our community of users.

Mike Kavis:

Yeah. One thing I've been thinking about is how all this changes how we approach business continuity, disaster recovery. So I live down here in Florida, and we always think of hurricanes. And hurricanes is a season it's like these three or four months that we're usually trying to protect against an outage for some amount of time. And this is traditional way we've done but we kind of have a second location. Usually it has less stuff and hopefully we can spin it up and stay working for a while until we get everything fixed here. This kind of blows all that out of the water. It doesn't even matter what your second site is if your first one can't keep up. This isn't about losing a data center; this is about being overwhelmed. So how does this change the way we approach disaster recovery and business continuity and those types of things?

Ramin Sayar:

Yeah, I mean, I think it's pretty clear now more so than ever that this pandemic and potential economic situation is forcing customers to leverage SaaS, cloud and digital transformation more so than ever or be disrupted and risk their businesses. The old world of wait and see and the like just cannot allow customers to survive for long. And customers need to find new ways of effectively delivering their business services, and in order to survive, they're going to have to leverage things like cloud services that provide you that elasticity scalability versus the on premise infrastructure, for example, that you need people to be able to scale up and scale out versus dynamically getting that as a service, right.

The second thing we see that's really critical is the fact that architecture matters here. And as we're fortunate to be a cloud native company that started this way many years ago, but there's a famous saying that preparation meets opportunity. And for those companies that have prepared for business continuity, disaster recovery, scalability, reliability because they're already in the cloud, they're going to continue to do well and they can manage their costs down if needed, as well as be able to deliver high-quality services. Those that have not yet and are just embracing a cloud native architecture that's delivered and consumed as a service, because they're not going to have the resources to go build that themselves.

They're not going to have the ability to go into the data center and stack and rack more machines and hardware and be able to configure those. They're going to have to learn now how to do that in the cloud more aggressively. And so more customers are going to be forced to leverage the cloud services, their SaaS application partners, their PaaS providers and the like to get through not only this crisis, but also through this next stage and journey of their own existence as a company.

Mike Kavis:

Yeah, I agree. My colleague, Dave Linthicum, wrote a great article about this a couple days ago, and he had an example where an old friend of his who's a CIO at a company had a down system on prem and he had the necessary infrastructure shrink wrapped and ready to go sitting next to it, but everyone's quarantined. No one could show up and actually implement that, so they had a down system for a while because of that, and that was one of his examples of why people might start rethinking moving more stuff to the cloud, so what are some – without naming the customers, what are some of the customer examples where you see customers leveraging continuous intelligence? And if there's any more recent ones that have sprouted out of the circumstances we're in today, that would be good as well.

Ramin Sayar:

Well I have two young boys, and like many of us, they're at home now and they're having to do their online studies, but they're on spring break this week, and naturally what do kids do, two boys? They play video games. And so we do a lot for the gaming industry as one of the verticals. And interesting thing here is they early on realized that they needed an elastic, scalable platform that's consumed as a service because there's a lot of seasonality in their businesses.

Vacations, during the end of the year, or summer, or when they roll out a new game or roll out a new version of a game. And so they have unpredictable loads and uncertain usage. And so those companies are thriving right now because they're able to constantly deliver new updates through these games and see that consumption and usage constantly go up while not jeopardizing the experience and providing a means to have an outlet for young kids.

But outside of that, we see day-to-day impact on our other parts of our lives. You can't really go to the store or Costco or this place or that place that much anymore because we're all quarantined, and so a lot of shopping has to be online. And so a lot of the verticals that we support are also in retail or consumer packaged goods that need to ship to others. And so those are examples where their digital online services and applications that they had started need to continue to scale out and be able to get operational metrics and analytics, but also security because they take payments. And so they're obligated through PCI to ensure privacy. So this yet another example for them to turn on a service versus having to go try to build that out themselves with people that can't get to the office or the data centers like we talked about.

And then I think another area that it's obviously probably close to all our hearts, and those particularly with kids, educational institutions, not just higher ed, have decided in a lot of cases to study from home a little bit longer. And so how do they provide reliable service for a lot of the educational content that they were teaching in the classroom online through video? And so that creates a whole new way of actually interacting with these kids that needs to be secure.

Mike Kavis:

Yeah, I think that's one of the value of cloud and cloud service providers, and that will include SaaS and PaaS along with IS and that is that you leave the plumbing to the plumbers and focus on what you do best, in this case online testing, and leave all the really, really hard stuff to the companies that are dedicated to doing that. So I think – go ahead.

Ramin Sayar:

The interesting thing about this is that this has effectively been our mission, and that mission is to empower the people, empower modern business. Modern business is not just those who are selling goods and services, but it's impacting those that are providing healthcare services, educational services, and those are verticals that we serve and have served for many years. And so we are trying to effectively break down the silos that exist across these disparate parts of IT operation security, or from a teacher to a student, or from a data scientist to a developer, so that they can communicate and collaborate much more effectively using machine learning and AI-powered service that they can learn and leverage to do what they do best, which is teach, provide healthcare, provide other means and services for us to live and get by.

Mike Kavis:

You said one thing earlier that I might have to make my tagline for this show, architecture matters. Brought a tear to my eye as an architect. So last question. How do we train or how do we get the word out on how to architect this stuff? I see a lot of companies moving to the cloud, but a lot of times, especially early on in their journey, the cloud looks and feels more like another data center, so it's – I used to have a server, now I've got a VM, and the real value in the cloud is leveraging those cloud native services. So how can we help the community get smarter about making architecture matter?

Ramin Sayar:

Well, the good news in this day and age there is an abundance of educational material and content. The question is where to go depending on where you are in that maturation or journey yourself. So what we do from the Sumo perspective is you can set up a free trial and you start to get the full value of the service, but then we meter that. For example, what data sources you're feeding in, what types of queries or services are you using from us and your third-party providers? And we use various algorithms to suggest things that you should be considering using. That's the first part of it.

But most importantly, during that initial onboarding, what we try to do is, there's, self-certification and testing that you can go through to become much more proficient, and there's different levels that you go through so you can start to utilize more and more of those services that you're going to have to rely on in the cloud for these new architecture of applications and infrastructure that you're starting to adopt, versus the traditional on-prem services that you had to build yourself. So for example, what we often see when a customer starts to migrate to the cloud, let's use AWS as an example, they're using standard services like EC2 and S3 and others, which are basically compute and storage.

And then they start to become more proficient as they adopt Dynamo DB or various VPC types of deployment architectures. Then they'll start to use things like container and orchestration technologies, and we meter that and start to provide suggested apps and capabilities out of the box, but also we provide all that for you with the click of a button that instantly connects and pulls all that data in in an app so you don't have to go figure out what to instrument, what to collect, what to write an alert on or create a dashboard or what to monitor or make sure it's secure. So as you go through that maturation and journey of basic infrastructure as a service, to more advanced infrastructure and platform services, to more advanced application architecture things like Kubernetes and Docker and microservices, the platform provides those services for you out of the box, and so you can learn through us because we have a lot of those self-help guidelines and tutorials, or through the cloud service providers that often also provide the same content.

Mike Kavis:

Good stuff. So that's our show for today. I know you guys blog a lot and have a lot of good content. Where can we go find that, and more importantly, where can we find you on Twitter?

Ramin Sayar:

Well, I'm on Twitter @rsayar, and that's R-S-A-Y-A-R. We actually have strong social media presence, so whether it's LinkedIn, whether it's Facebook, whether it's Twitter, we try to make sure that we are connected to our community, and so a lot of that is through those channels as well as sumologic.com, where we put a lot of our own content out. And we're always open to any suggestions from the community and partners and customers, and we welcome that. And thank you for the opportunity to be here today to help spread the word.

Mike Kavis:

My pleasure. Go check out their content. To learn more about Deloitte or read today's show notes, head over to www.deloittecloudpodcast.com. You can find more podcasts by me and my colleague, Dave Linthicum, just by searching for Deloitte On Cloud podcast on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. I'm your host Mike Kavis. If you would like to contact me directly, you can hit me up at mkavis@deloitte.com. You can always find me @madgreek65 on Twitter. And that's it for today. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on Architecting the Cloud.

Operator:

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