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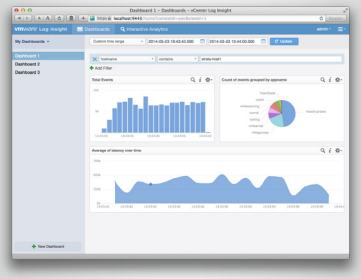
VMware vCenter Log Insight Delivers Immediate Value to IT Operations

The Value of VMware® vCenter™ Log Insight™: The Customer Perspective

VMware vCenter Log Insight

VMware vCenter™ Log Insight™ delivers a powerful real-time log management for VMware environments, with machine learning-based Intelligent Grouping, and high performance search, enabling faster troubleshooting and better operational analytics in across physical, virtual, and cloud environments. It can analyze terabytes of logs, discover structure in unstructured data, and deliver enterprise-wide visibility via a modern web interface.



Introduction

Logs, and log management, have become one of the most important sources of forensic information needed to troubleshoot and remedy IT operations issues. The quantity and size of logs have grown with increasingly complex IT environments. Virtualization and cloud operations are the latest advancements that drive IT equipment efficiency up but also make them extremely sophisticated and more challenging to operate and troubleshoot. As the cost of service interruption to the business continues to rise, can the use of advanced features in log management and log analytics solutions provide more benefit than just problem remediation? Can they save time, reduce cost and prevent downtime?

This report chronicles candid feedback from log management customers using VMware vCenter Log Insight users. Their comments are organized into the three critical areas:

- Saving time
- Minimizing costs
- Preventing downtime

This report covers each of these core areas to determine if Log Insight can deliver benefits that help the business as much as the users.

Project Methodology

VMware commissioned Dimensional Research to interview Log Insight users and gather in-depth feedback on the actual benefits received from usage of the log management solution. Dimensional Research conducted twelve telephone interviews with vCenter Log Insight users, and this report is based on those conversations. All customer quotes were acquired from interview transcripts, although quotes may have been edited for grammar and readability.

VMware compiled a global list of potential participants and then provided their contact information to Dimensional Research. VMware did not participate in the interviews and did not offer input into this report except to clarify certain details of product functionality.

Users were not compensated for taking part in this research project, although a small donation was made to a charity of their choice as appreciation for their time.

IT Teams are More Efficient with Log Insight

Often, the driver for purchasing a log management solution is to gain a tool to decipher forensic evidence to solve elusive problems. The IT professionals interviewed were vocal about Log Insight making finding issues more efficient. Log Insight features simplified searching for errors, by automatically collecting and organizing information, compared to other tools or manual processes.

> "We had no system wide visibility and that forced us to spend about 20% of our time manually reviewing logs. Now [with Log Insight], we spend just a few minutes each day."

> "Our team identifies issues 25% faster with Log Insight."

> "With Log Insight our time to review logs has been reduced by 70 to 80%."

Participants indicated that the presentation and accessibility of data provided supporting information that allowed remediation of the problem to be much faster. This allowed users to understand and rectify larger and more complicated issues in one pass as opposed to time consuming and frustrating iterative processes.

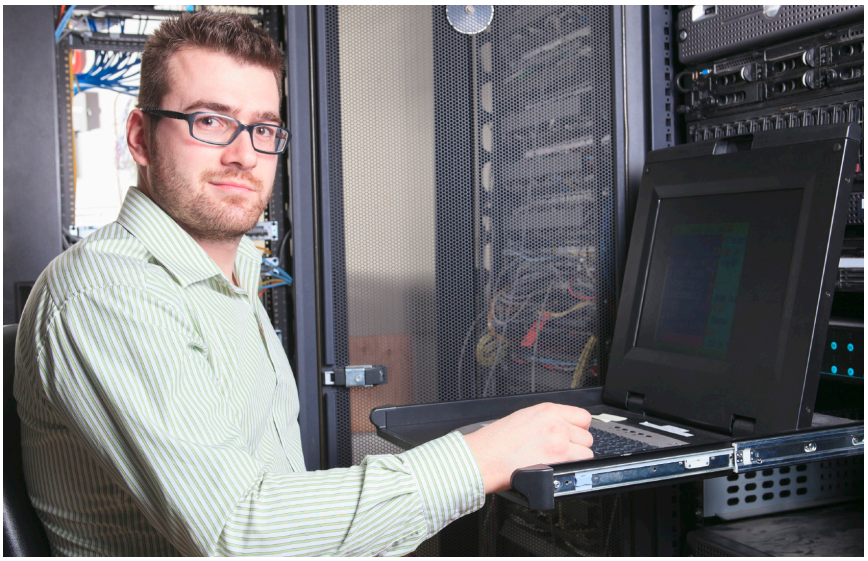
> "For an average issue, Log Insight cuts the resolution time by 50%."

> "Even with a great variety of issues, Log Insight has made our team 50% more efficient at troubleshooting and resolving issues."

Perhaps the most unexpected value Log Insight users identified was that the information was so comprehensive in nature that they were now seeing the big picture in the environment and not just isolated metrics that trigged alarms. This provided immediate benefits of a comprehensive fix and is improving the IT system's overall reliability.

> "Log Insight allows us to see the big picture, not just an individual log alert. We can solve the problem not just a symptom."

> "The duration of our average outage has been reduced by 30% because we are improving our system operation with information from Log Insight."



VMware Cloud Operations Management Vision

Highly virtualized infrastructure as the foundation for cloud exceeds the capabilities of traditional management tools and processes. A new approach to IT Operations Management is needed that is based on analytics, policy-based automation and unified management disciplines across infrastructure and applications. This new approach enables IT Operations Management to achieve higher service levels, operational efficiency and compliance with IT policies and regulatory requirements.

VMware vCenter Operations Management and vCenter Log Insight together enable IT organizations to optimize capacity and utilization of infrastructure resources, proactively detect and eliminate performance bottlenecks, and enforce configuration standards. Tight product integration enables seamless transition from monitoring all datacenter activity to troubleshooting and automated remediation of issues in the environment. VMware simplifies and automates cloud operations management and enables IT to focus on delivering business value to their organizations.

Proactive Operations Moves Teams to More Strategic Tasks

Participants who had been using Log Insight for more than a few months said that they were changing from using the tool as only a reactive mechanism to actually using it to spot potential problems and track infrastructure whose log values were out of normal operation.

> "After resolving issues, we now set alerts in Log Insight that gives us a warning and the ability to resolve potential issues before they occur."

> "We were always reactive based on some other system alert. After six months with Log Insight we are almost always proactive in preventing system downtime."

Those interviewed indicated that they are now using Log Insight to provide automated alerts to the team. Previously, teams had gathered basic speed and feed metrics from an infrastructure monitoring and application performance monitoring solutions. After using a log management solution they realized that there are metrics that provided a new view into the IT system and allowed them to visualize the causes of future issues. Teams are now adding log monitoring as part of their overall maintenance and operations strategy.

> "Setting up alerts in Log Insight fills a void that neither the system infrastructure monitors nor the applications monitors cover."

> "We have a custom dashboard on a big screen so we can monitor key information constantly and prevent issues from happening."

Whether it was using Log Insight for the first time or after nearly a year of use, these IT professionals indicated that Log Insight helped them find unknown issues. Some issues were discovered while resolving another problem and other potential issues were uncovered from a proactive monitoring approach. Prevented issues ranked very high when IT professionals articulated the value Log Insight provides their company.

"We had problems with Ethernet storage and thought it was a single host issue, but it was happening globally across 2000 virtual servers but crashing just one host. We uncovered a systemic network card firmware compatibility problem. Solving this one issue had Log Insight pay for itself."

"We had an admin remove a piece of our fiber channel storage but the ESX hosts didn't know it was gone and began generating a lot performance issues. Log Insight pointed it out and helped resolve an unknown issue in a few minutes."

"Log Insight helps the network operation teams find issues they didn't even know about."

The result of this proactive approach is that their systems are actually performing better. Participants directly correlated a proactive operation with reduced downtime and better availability of applications.

"We can see our whole system at a glance and we use Log Insight to proactively maintain and optimize performance."

"Log Insight has played a significant part in improved performance and reliability. It is a big deal for us we didn't expect."

"A canned report in Log Insight highlighted a few hosts logging 10,000 errors a day and causing performance issues. That's value."

IT Professionals Minimize Costs

Based on this report's findings, one can see how Log Insight can reduce downtime, improve performance and create faster problem resolution that raises savings at a company's top and bottom line. These benefits are the "R" in ROI, but the cost of the solution itself needs to be analyzed to understand Log Insight's true return. Every IT professional interviewed cited that Log Insight was cheaper than alternative solutions.

"We will save about $50,000 a year by moving to VMware's Log Insight from Splunk."

"Log Insight is less expensive than Splunk by a lot. A bad day would raise the price of using Splunk and that doesn't happen with Log Insight"

Two basic price models for log management and log analysis tools are on the market today. One model is based on the data that is aggregated, stored and analyzed. The other model is based on the number of endpoints that logs are gathered from. While initially it may seem that the model differences are immaterial and would yield a similar price, participants vehemently disagreed. They stated that when a problem crops up, logs generate a lot more data. In the first model that will cost you an additional amount.

"When we have an issue, the amount of data in our logs goes up 10X. I don't want my tool becoming 10 times more expensive every time there is an issue. The end point model is the only way to go."

"To save costs with Splunk we are actually incented to turn a lot of logs off until we have an issue. Sometimes that bites us."

"To contain costs with Splunk, we were pondering which logs to exclude to keep the price down. That is a bit like taking parts off an airplane and hoping you don't need them."

Perhaps the most unexpected finding in this research is with respect to the pricing model. Many of those interviewed expressed that all tool costs need to be budgeted. But with the data pricing model, they were unable to predict how many issues would occur and by what multiple that would increase data volumes, and thus costs. A model based on a number of end points provides a simple way to know the cost today and understand the exact future cost of growth. Having a clear and fast way to understand the tool cost provides significant value from the perspective of those interviewed.

"I didn't want to calculate the log volume variances to determine the maximum ingestion rate and the ensuing cost increase. That made Splunk and the data pricing a nonstarter."

"The end point model is very easy to budget and predict. That means less work and effort on our team which just saves resources."

Conclusion

In reviewing the data and the testimonies of the participants, it is evident that Log Insight delivers a positive ROI. It saves time, reduces costs, minimizes downtime and moves organizations from a reactive mode to that of a proactive one. The pricing model has a large impact in reducing the cost to obtain these kinds of benefits while also reducing the headache of predictive budgeting. As IT teams become proactive, they are able to focus on architecting and building the environments they need to grow the business and not just maintain it. Log Insight is making IT professionals more productive and likely happier.

"We got our money's worth in the first twelve days with Log Insight."

"For a virtual environment vCenter Log Insight is a much better choice than other log search tools."

Participant Profile

Interview participants were employed at large companies representing a wide range of industries including:

- Leading shipping and transportation company
- International telecommunications firm (2)
- Multinational retail chain
- Domestic oil exploration and gas company
- Global travel and hospitality company
- IT Services provider
- International Financial Services Company (2)
- European Service provider
- Leading Technology Company (2)

Each participant personally deployed and used the vCenter Log Insight product. Although their roles varied from virtual environment administrators to senior architects, they were all responsible for hundreds to thousands of devices and virtual machines spanning multiple data centers. In each case, the deployed solution was used in a subset of every participant's environment.

Participants were promised anonymity during the interview process to encourage candid and factual feedback.

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About Dimensional Research

Dimensional Research provides practical market research services that help technology companies make smarter business decisions. Our researchers are experts in technology and understand how corporate IT organizations operate. We partner with every client to deliver actionable information that reduces risk and increases customer satisfaction. Our research services deliver a clear understanding of customer and market dynamics. For more information visit www.dimensionalresearch.com.

About VMware

VMware is the leader in virtualization and cloud infrastructure solutions that enable businesses to thrive in the Cloud Era. Customers rely on VMware to help them transform the way they build, deliver and consume Information Technology resources in a manner that is evolutionary and based on their specific needs. With 2013 revenues of $5.21 billion, VMware has more than 500,000 customers and 75,000 partners. The company is headquartered in Silicon Valley with offices throughout the world and can be found online at www.vmware.com