Red Hat

The Met Office optimizes server outlook with Red Hat Insights

Overview

The Meteorological Office, the U.K.'s national weather service, provides weather- and climate-related services daily to people around the world. Seeking to establish a comprehensive approach to server management, the Met Office adopted Red Hat® Insights to complement its use of Red Hat Satellite. With the support of a Red Hat Technical Account Manager, the Met Office has now significantly improved visibility into its server environment.

Question: What are your primary responsibilities within the Environment team at the Met Office?

Chris Wilkinson, Senior Systems Engineer: We're responsible for the Met Office's on-premise Red Hat Enterprise Linux® estate. That can include new builds, fill-ins, or adding capacity if a web server is stressed, for example. We have a diverse estate with physical and virtual servers. I'm the prime resource on the security, compliance, and assurance side, looking after day-to-day system maintenance and management.

Question: As a Red Hat Satellite customer, what led the Met Office to adopt Red Hat Insights?

Wilkinson: I saw that Red Hat Insights could help to provide a top-down overview and allow us to adopt a more holistic approach to our estate management. Red Hat Satellite does a great job at surfacing issues on individual machines, whereas Red Hat Insight's strength lies in tying in common issues across the estate rather than treating it on a machine-by-machine basis.

I started by putting the client on some test machines and looking at areas where I knew there were issues—and Insights surfaced them straight away. I decided there and then that this is a very useful product that we should start using.

Question: How straightforward was the installation and deployment process?

Wilkinson: We have Satellite, so the installation of Insights could not have been easier. With Satellite's remote execution function, I could have installed Insights across our entire estate in just a couple of days had our internal change process allowed it. It was a matter of installing the Insights client and client register, and it was done. I could then roll that out as a job across several systems in one go.

In the end, I needed to follow internal change management processes and avoid putting too much stress on our systems, so I broke the installation into smaller chunks of activity before development testing and putting it into production.

Question: How did Red Hat's Technical Account Management (TAM) and support help?

Wilkinson: The installation was so simple that our TAM didn't need to be involved. The remote execution feature took out all the pain from that process. Our TAM has, however, been very proactive in liaising with the Insights team and resolving issues as the implementation and the first usage have progressed. A very useful part of Insights is the ability to give our TAM read-only access to our view of Insights. That's given me a second pair of eyes and allowed me to check my understanding of some issues.

Question: How does Red Hat Insights make your role easier?

Wilkinson: Insights has made it much easier for me to prioritize tasks. It's now a lot easier to see if there is an issue, how much of our estate is affected, and how serious the issue is. It's also a lot easier to pass tasks on to my team; the improved visibility means I can give them clearer directions on what needs fixing where. I can focus on the analysis and then raise tickets for other team members to pick up the actual implementation.

Question: What benefits does Red Hat Insights bring to your wider organization?

Wilkinson: One of the most important aspects is that Insights is helping me to bring the Met Office server estate to the standard I want. We're a little behind the curve in certain areas, and that's very much where I'm using Insights to help us catch up. The Advisor and recommendations functions, for example, have been particularly useful in surfacing some configuration issues that we quite likely would not otherwise have been aware of.

Question: What's next for the Met Office and Red Hat Insights?

Wilkinson: We'll continue to use Insights as a tool to manage the overall environment and improve our security posture. I'm particularly interested in the CVE [Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures] data we get in; that will enable us to become even less reactive and more proactive. That's the direction I would like us to push towards.

Question: Is the Met Office looking to use any other Red Hat products?

Wilkinson: We're looking to take full advantage of Red Hat Ansible® Automation Platform with Satellite to coordinate with the change management system and remediate issues that Insights bring up. We can then pick and choose when to schedule and run these jobs. Ansible Automation Platform also has the potential to alleviate issues such as populating our configuration management database. We currently use extra software for that, but the Insights integration would mean it's not something we have to worry about. There are also Ansible Roles being written for our Azure deployments, and I'm also very interested in the ServiceNow integration.

About the Met Office

The Meteorological Office, commonly abbreviated as the Met Office, is the UK's national weather service. An executive agency of the UK government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Met Office makes meteorological predictions across all timescales, from weather forecasts to climate change. Using cutting-edge technology, it collects and analyzes massive amounts of data every day. https://www.metoffice.gov.uk.

About Red Hat

Red Hat is the world's leading provider of enterprise open source software solutions, using a community-powered approach to deliver reliable and high-performing Linux, hybrid cloud, container, and Kubernetes technologies. Red Hat helps customers develop cloud-native applications, integrate existing and new IT applications, and automate and manage complex environments. A trusted adviser to the Fortune 500, Red Hat provides award-winning support, training, and consulting services that bring the benefits of open innovation to any industry. Red Hat is a connective hub in a global network of enterprises, partners, and communities, helping organizations grow, transform, and prepare for the digital future.

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