SEDNA's Product Team Reduces Reliance on Internal Team Knowledge with Honeycomb

ABOUT

SEDNA delivers a transaction-focused, smart, shared inbox for teams to collaborate with others, organize information, and manage a job from start to finish.

ENVIRONMENT

AWS

react-redux/typescript

REST API

Backend served in 2 places: Kotlin and Node

GOALS

The Product team at SEDNA recently started an effort to consolidate and bring consistency to their monitoring and alerting. While reviewing records of past incidents for context, they realized that some of the most critical institutional knowledge for troubleshooting issues was bound up in a few individuals. This made it difficult for newer team members to find the information they needed during incidents.

> "For a lot of our recent incident reviews, we were talking about the same things, over and over, and not capturing the info needed to resolve them" **–Ammar, Developer**

Without the full context of high-cardinality events, the product team was heavily reliant on the deep institutional knowledge of one or two people when it came time to dig into the data around an incident. These individuals were not always available to provide the necessary context to identify and resolve a given issue. As their team and business grew, this gap began to fail them more frequently.

WHAT THEY NEEDED:

- A platform that allowed them to consolidate the experience and query history of the entire team into one easily searchable interface
- An observability tool that supports fast querying of full context, high-cardinality events, so any team member can get to the causes of a given incident.

HONEYCOMB @ SEDNA

As soon as the team at SEDNA began to deploy Honeycomb, they made major headway. They began by sending in their ALB logs.

"We actually got a lot to start with, without putting any new instrumentation in the app." —Grace, Developer

Right away, they noticed useful application information:

"We discovered that a bunch of 403s come from this one customer; we couldn't tell you that before." —Ammar

They immediately moved on to adding further context (tenant ID, user ID, message ID, client version) to their HTTP requests, focusing on their biggest endpoint, Search.

While Grace, one of the aforementioned single sources of institutional knowledge, was on vacation, Ammar solved a major issue that had been plaguing the Dev team and their users:

SEDNA offers a list view of emails received. It populates the list based on the customer's search through their emails. With batched infinite scrolling, every once in a while, the list would appear to suddenly miss a chunk of messages. Lots of users were experiencing it, but no one was able to reproduce it internally.
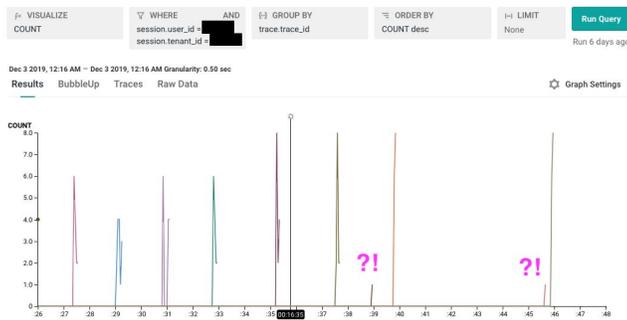
"I started playing around with the Honeycomb interface and realized I knew enough to be able to narrow it down based on request path, user ID, and some other fields. We had originally thought the back-end was returning bad data—but we figured it out immediately with Honeycomb, unexpected web sockets were the cause. This was the first time we had records for a search request and what message IDs were returned, and that instrumentation/traceability is what solved the problem. I didn't have the institutional knowledge to tie the request parts together, but tracing got me there!" —Ammar

From Grace's point of view:

"I was on vacation last week, but I got a text from Ammar one day because he was over the moon about a really difficult bug for which Honeycomb helped identify the cause. It had been reported for ~2 months, there were ~15 customer tickets, and multiple red herrings in our investigation. We have a weekly demo meeting, and this morning Ammar was able to show everyone how he could finally understand the issue via Honeycomb and then demonstrate the fix. There have been other smaller wins, too, but I suspect this one in particular was a big relief for many."

With their newfound Honeycomb powers, Grace finds herself wondering:

"I keep thinking back to older problems, many took days or weeks to understand--we could have solved them in moments with Honeycomb."

Moving forward, the entire team at SEDNA will be confident in their ability to find and solve the trickiest issues their customers experience, even if the most senior or experienced developers are on vacation.

"We had so much reliance on institutional knowledge, and now we feel more powerful." —Grace