

On the Radar: Runecast provides analytics to help mitigate risks in virtualized environments

Using the extensive VMware Knowledge Base to become proactive in IT operations

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Summary

Catalyst

The vast majority of organizations are highly virtualized, and VMware has a market-leading position in providing the majority of the technology supporting this. The VM administrators, or operators, have access to a wealth of information on best practice and known issues produced by VMware as knowledge articles on its website. However, finding actionable information from this repository is time consuming as these knowledge articles are specific to configurations and environmental design. Runecast has developed a solution to analyze the VMware environment and identify any relevant knowledge articles that correct problems so that operators, or VM administrators, can quickly see the issues specific to their environment and work on preventing them.

Key messages

- Runecast focuses on the ability to provide real-time actionable information to IT departments.
- It provides a solution that can analyze a VMware environment and document all the different configurations it discovers.
- Runecast Analyzer runs on-premises and can operate even in offline mode, depending on the company security policies.
- It uses the current VMware Knowledge Base articles to scan the customer vSphere environment and proactively discover potential issues.

Ovum view

Whether the IT resources are on-premises or cloud-based, the role of IT operations remains important to any organization. IT operations, or VM administrators, provide the resources to ensure the technology remains compliant and operates a good service in terms of availability, security, and performance. The role of IT operations has evolved as the technology has evolved, and so has the skills and number of people employed in IT operations. However, as organizations look to improve efficiency and deliver cost-saving objectives, IT operations must work smarter and not just harder. Organizations need to consider IT operations like they do any other significant function, and Ovum recommends defining an architecture for IT operations, like most other functions. The critical change that is impacting IT operations is the rise of AI and machine learning. This approach to using a data-driven management paradigm, where many decisions are automated, is making IT operations an area of rapid change.

Recommendations for enterprises

Why put Runecast on your radar?

The challenge for many in IT operations is how to deliver the required level of availability, reliability, and security from the virtualized estate. The complexities of virtual environments and scale of many deployments mean that keeping abreast of the latest known issues is not a simple task, particularly as many of the known issues are specific to a combination of configurations and architectural design.

Runecast has developed an analysis capability that uses the information from the current Knowledge Base articles to interrogate the VMware environment that proactively discovers risks in the environment.

Highlights

Runecast focuses on the ability to provide real-time actionable information to IT departments. While analytics is not new, it is a rapidly growing segment. Runecast has focused on two key differentiators. First, making the analytics capabilities available in an easy-to-consume and practical way by delivering company-specific advice on ways to correct known problems. Second, applying best practice to tasks carried out by IT operations, particularly around managing VMware environments. Runecast provides the ability for IT departments to become more agile and better equipped to meet business demand by ensuring the virtual environments have the latest known issues fixed in a timely manner.

Background

Runecast raised €1.6m in a series of seed funding in 2016, with support from leading central European investors Credo Ventures, Prague, and Limerock Fund Manager. Runecast Analyzer has already been deployed across four continents and within large enterprise customers such as Verizon Wireless, German Aerospace Center, Brigham Young University Idaho, FujiSoft, Telit, Zoner, and NCC Media. Previously, the start-up had been financed with a €140,000 investment from pre-seed investor Opifer in 2014. The investment brought together an international team of VMware experts, who, together, have a combined experience of more than 40 years in running VMware environments and integrations. Stanimir Markov is the CEO and co-founder of Runecast.

Current position

Runecast provides a solution that can analyze a VMware environment and document all the different configurations it discovers. Using this information, Runecast has the ability to perform three key capabilities: VMware Knowledge Base scanning, compliance management, and analysis of logs. Runecast Analyzer runs on-premises and can also operate in off-line mode, depending on the company security policies. Runecast also requires only read-only access to VMware vCenter to understand and catalog the environment.

VMware Knowledge Base scanning

The VMware Knowledge Base (kb.vmware.com) is a publicly available repository that has information on known problems and fixes for thousands of different VMware deployment configurations, and is constantly being updated. VM administrators use this knowledge base when troubleshooting or searching for best practices. Runecast Analyzer uses the current VMware Knowledge Base articles to scan the customer vSphere environment and proactively discover potential issues.

Checking compliance

VMware has developed, with its wider community, a security hardening guide for each release of its vSphere product. This guide provides a wealth of information on best practice advice for securing a VMware environment, which Runecast uses with its knowledge of the specific configuration to provide

a continuous compliance report. Ovum considers that the compliance checking capability has two main advantages: it allows security audits to be performed quickly and easily, and it avoids the manual work needed to ensure a VMware environment is security hardened.

Additionally, Runecast Analyzer analyzes the vSphere environment against the standard VMware best practices and exposes any deviations, risks, and non-optimal configurations.

Log analysis

Logs are a great source of information, but they are not the easiest of information to read and understand quickly. Runecast acts as a syslog server so it can access all the ESXi logs, as well as the VM log files. Runecast's main strength is not in reading these logs and pulling out the critical events, but it is in correlating these to the appropriate Knowledge Base article.

Data sheet

Key facts

Table 1: Data sheet: Runecast

Product name	Runecast Analyzer	Product classification	Real-time analytics
Version number	1.5	Release date	March 2017
Industries covered	All	Geographies covered	All
Relevant company sizes	All	Licensing options	Subscription based
URL	www.runecast.biz	Routes to market	Mixed
HQ	London, UK	Number of employees	Currently 20, but rapidly increasing with the investment

Source: Ovum

Appendix

On the Radar

On the Radar is a series of research notes about vendors bringing innovative ideas, products, or business models to their markets. On the Radar vendors bear watching for their potential impact on markets and many are suitable for enterprise and public-sector IT organizations alike.

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