

CASE STUDY

Forbes adopts Datadog to enable observability across its entire technology organization


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Media

500 Employees

Jersey City, NJ


“Datadog gives me—and now, our entire technology organization—invaluable insight into how our site and the systems that support it are performing to ensure they’re available, performant, and reasonably priced.”

JD Weiner
Director of DevOps
Forbes

WHY DATADOG?

- Expands access to observability data to their entire technology organization, enabling engineers to troubleshoot performance issues on their own
- Simple setup and ease of use provide quick time to value and allow them to onboard new users in minutes
- 35+ easily-configurable integrations with Google Cloud services like Google Kubernetes Engine (GKE) provide deep visibility into their stack and support optimization efforts

CHALLENGE

Forbes faced challenges troubleshooting and optimizing its website. Observability data was siloed, creating bottlenecks, and the company’s existing solution was challenging to set up and navigate.

USE CASE

Google Cloud Integrations

Application Performance Monitoring

Continuous Profiler

Infrastructure Monitoring
KEY RESULTS
33%

Reduction in GKE costs from workload optimization

37%

Reduction in homepage load time

5 → 88

Number of employees using an observability tool

Incumbent observability tool limits visibility into Forbes' stack

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JD Weiner, director of DevOps, and Sameer Patwardhan, senior vice president of technology, are tasked with keeping the Forbes website available and performant. The company is a heavy user of Google Cloud and Google Kubernetes Engine (GKE) in particular. "From a developer productivity perspective, GKE is very conducive to the way we deploy our workloads," explains Patwardhan.

To ensure its website performs as expected, the Forbes team needs consistent, cross-stack visibility into their applications and infrastructure. The company had an existing observability solution, but its per-seat pricing meant not all teams had access to observability data. Observability data was siloed and the solution was challenging to set up and navigate. As a result, troubleshooting was a lengthy, cumbersome process. "Having [the data] siloed was a huge headache," says Weiner. "I know how a lot of our stack works, but I'm not an expert in certain aspects of it, and I wasn't able to expose this information to the people who were."



Expanding access to observability data with Datadog

Forbes sought a new tool that would enable it to break down these silos, and Datadog was a natural fit. With Datadog, Forbes was able to expand access to observability data from a select group of operations staff to its entire technology organization. Without the constraint of per-seat pricing, the company went from 5 users with their old tool to 88 users—its entire technology organization—with Datadog.

Now, engineers can self-serve and use Datadog to see which services are taking longer to complete, perform due diligence around performance, and deliver superior software at the delivery phase. “One of our vice presidents told me he loves this tool because he’s able to search easily and diagnose problems himself,” says Patwardhan. “He no longer has to go through the operations team to get help.”

Making Google Cloud observability simple

Another key factor in Forbes’ selection of Datadog was its ease of use. Datadog comes with 800+ out-of-the-box integrations, including 35+ with Google Cloud services. “There are a ton of them, and they’re simple to set up. The documentation is very clear,” says Weiner.

With the help of these integrations, the Forbes team was able to set up Datadog in less than a day—a quarter of the time their previous solution required.

Weiner and Patwardhan have also received feedback from engineers that it’s now easier to analyze data and create the views they need, including dashboards. “Datadog’s intuitive user experience has simplified the process of optimizing applications and infrastructure,” says Weiner. “It’s a great feeling when I hear somebody else say, ‘Look at this data,’ and provide a link to the dashboard they’re looking at.”

This ease of use has also helped Forbes’ efforts to expand observability across its technology organization. Patwardhan estimates it takes only minutes to onboard a new user on the Datadog platform, due in large part to its intuitive user experience. “Datadog is easy to use because there’s no query language required,” says Weiner. “The whole platform is much more modern and flexible. It’s a lot easier to work with.”

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JD Weiner
Director of DevOps, Forbes

Delivering an optimized, performant user experience

By making observability data easily accessible to its engineers, Forbes has achieved performance and optimization improvements across its Google Cloud stack, including reducing homepage load time by 37 percent.

In another notable example, Forbes’s DevOps team discovered that some of their GKE nodes were scaling to the maximum number of pods. They suspected the scaling was unnecessary, and with Continuous Profiler, they were able to identify that the cause was a specific problematic Java method. The engineering team was then able to reference these findings to identify what parts of their codebase would need refactoring. Weiner estimates that by making this change, they will be able to eliminate unnecessary scaling and bring GKE usage down by 65 percent.

This is just one piece of broader GKE optimization efforts that have reduced Forbes’ GKE costs by 33 percent to date. Weiner cites the interoperability of Datadog’s various products—driven by the auto-correlation of its telemetry data—as indispensable in enabling these efforts. “Being able to easily switch between APM and Infrastructure views of our GKE clusters has been immensely helpful,” he says.

Growing their business with confidence

Forbes is now better equipped to grow and deliver the best possible experience for millions of readers and website visitors. The company continues to innovate and introduce new capabilities, and Datadog's growing number of integrations ensures it maintains constant visibility into its stack. "As we release new features like AI search powered by Vertex AI, we know Datadog will be there to ensure that our AI capabilities are as performant and efficient as the rest of our stack," says Patwardhan.

No matter how Forbes' stack evolves, Datadog ensures that observability data is democratized, making troubleshooting and optimization full-team efforts. As Weiner summarizes, "Datadog gives me—and now, our entire technology organization—invaluable insight into how our site and the systems that support it are performing to ensure they're available, performant, and reasonably priced."

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