**APPDYNAMICS**

Four reasons why virtual war rooms are essential to APM

BY JOHN RAKOWSKI

Just over a year ago in our 4.0 or Fall '14 release we announced 'The AppDynamics Virtual War Room' feature that enables business, IT development and operations teams to easily collaborate through the AppDynamics console. With applications increasing in complexity due to Microservices architecture techniques, container technologies and reliance on third party systems, the need to be able to see application information in context and collaborate seamlessly via an APM solution is critical for any digital business and this is the capability that our Virtual War Room' provides. With our 4.2 release we are further refining the Virtual War Room with the following feature enhancements:

– **Save room as a template:** This was one of the features that was requested by our customers over the last year. It means that you can save a Virtual War Room that you have created as a template and then open it up again with all the widgets that you created. This is incredibly useful for troubleshooting repeating application issues or collaborating during a major application change or release as the right data will already be in your Virtual War Room.

– **Create widgets using application analytics**: In our 4.2 release, Application Analytics is embedded within the Application Intelligence platform (note: licensing is separate though) which means that from the virtual war room you can create analytics based searches and charts based on transaction, log file, browser request, mobile request and mobile crash reports (see below). This means that it is easier to tie technical metrics to business metrics, so for example, with an eCommerce application, how is a performance problem impacting the number of checkouts? This enhances the virtual war room as participants can not only see the technical performance impact of a problem as it unfolds but also the business impact.
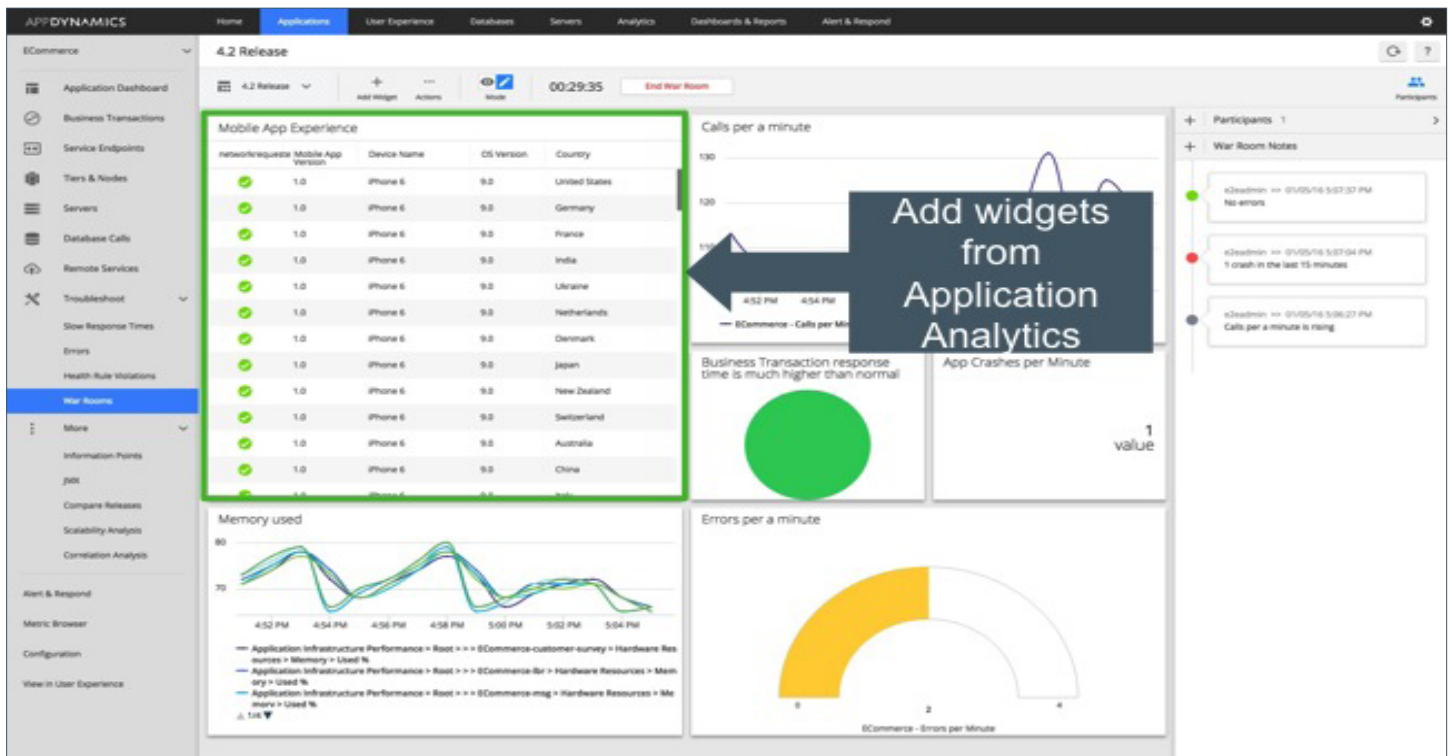

Adding Application Analytics widgets into your virtual war room

Through 2015, I spoke to a number of enterprise customers about their use of the virtual war room feature and here are four specific use cases that highlight the value of this feature:

1. Speed up mean time to resolution (MTTR)

During an emerging high priority application performance issue there are two goals: 1) Resolve the root cause before it impacts your customers and your business (MTTR), 2) Understand and learn why the issue happened to avoid it happening again. AppDynamics APM automatically baselines all important application performance metrics and creates alerts based on standard deviation which means that emerging application issues can be identified immediately by application support teams. Alerts are displayed in the AppDynamics console and from the alert a 'virtual war room' can be launched to troubleshoot this further:
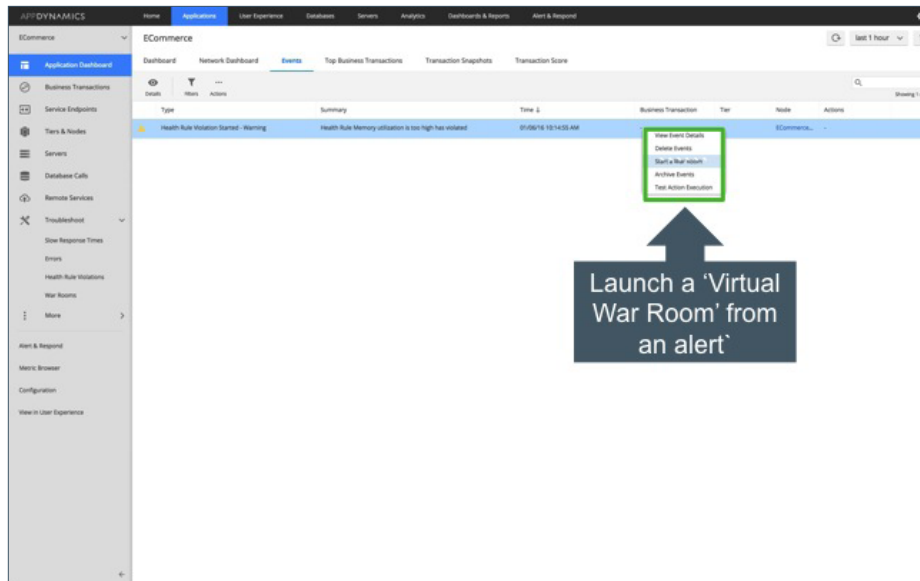
Launching a Virtual War Room on an emerging issue

The Virtual War Room then provides one dashboard that various support (application, operations, database etc) and line of business teams can then use to understand the root cause, fix and then verify that the app is working again. Each participant, so long as they have the appropriate permissions, can create their own widgets (real time streaming data (including log files), charts and graphs) and can communicate with each other. With complex applications this means that all professionals working on resolution have access to the information and colleagues they need which helps to speed up MTTR:
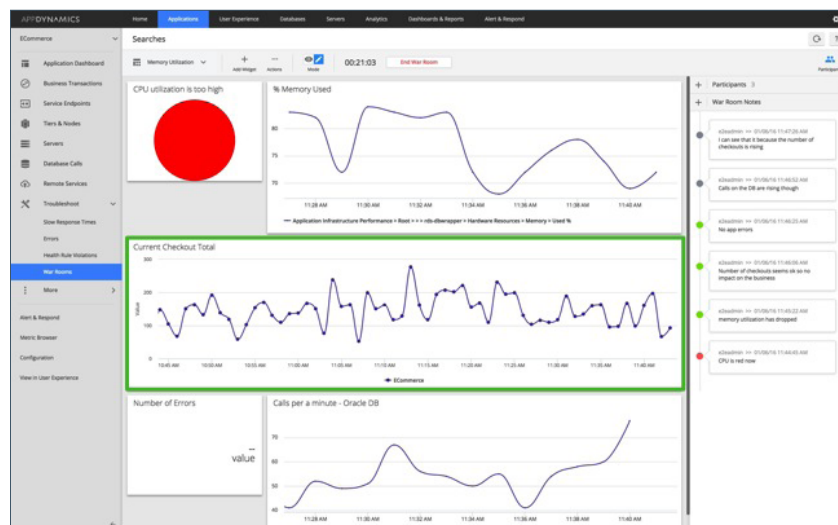

Collaborate together on an emerging incident and understand the business impact

The ability to bring in Application Analytics widgets into the Virtual War Room in 4.2 means that it's easy to bring in live business performance or outcome widgets (the screenshot above shows live checkout value $ data). This means that participants can quickly understand how an emerging problem is beginning to impact the business.

2. Provide application performance visibility to 3rd parties

Last year I worked on The performance blame game report which highlights that the difficulties that an enterprise faces when managing the "software-defined supply chain". In short, it's not just technical complexity but increasing process and people complexity that needs to be managed, as many enterprise applications rely on third party systems to deliver an overall service to a customer or employee.

AppDynamics APM can monitor Business Transactions as they span third party systems as we are able to track and monitor asynchronous transactions. Additionally the Virtual War Room allows support teams to invite third parties, outside your organization, to view (third parties have view only rights) information and participate in troubleshooting or optimizing an app. This helps to make sure that everyone has the same facts and source of truth.
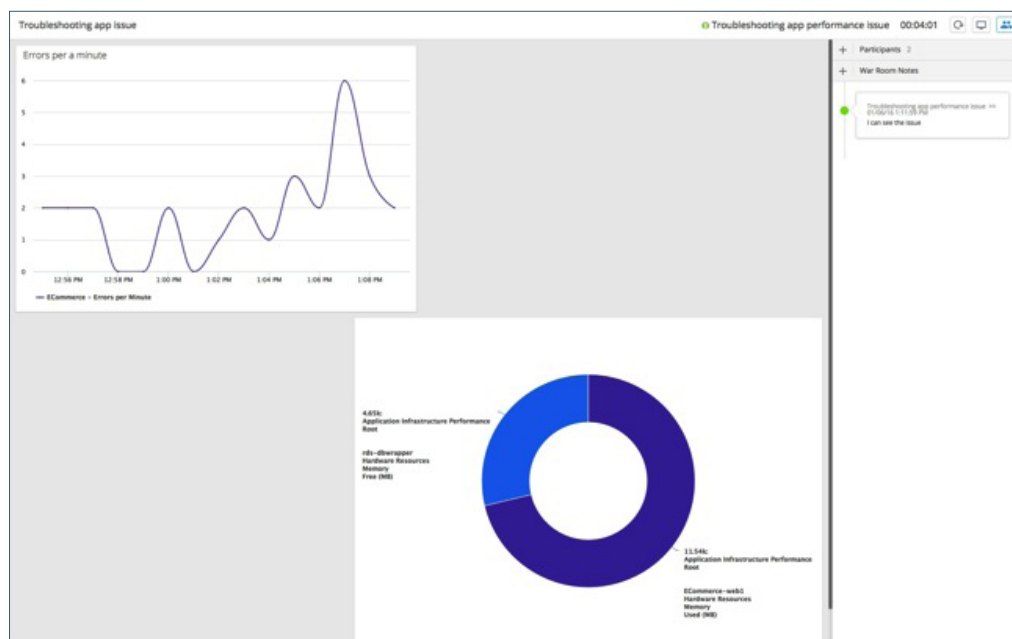

Invite third parties into your Virtual War Room so that everyone sees the facts

3. Train new support staff on what metrics are critical to an app's performance

During one DevOps conversation with a large retail bank last year we discussed the fact that a number of new people were being hired or moved to support the new 'digital efforts'. We talked about how the AppDynamics console could be used to bring new support staff up to speed about how important applications are architected and what metrics are key to technical and business performance. While the AppDynamics flow maps show clearly how an application is architected, a Virtual War Room, in real-time, can show new support staff which metrics are important to track and why they are monitored. The fact that new charts can be added easily and the Virtual War Room shared with many people means that that this feature can be very useful during an interactive training session. With 4.2, the ability to save the Virtual War Room as a template means that these dashboards can be reused easily during new staff induction or orientation activities.

4. Collaborate in real time during an application release or change

My colleague, Jonah Kowall, in a recent underline article highlighted how APM played an important role in continuous integration and release. Jonah mentions how one of our customers, The Container Store, uses AppDynamics in their development lifecycle (see a video here from AppSphere 15) by utilizing features such as 'Compare Release' to easily understand the performance of two different releases. Another use case for a 'Virtual War Room' is during a major application release as it can be used as a temporary dashboard to display key technical and business metrics prior, during and after release activity, to make sure that the release went as planned. The fact that participants can chat to each other using 'War Room Notes' function means that everyone involved in the release can be made aware of any abnormalities quickly.
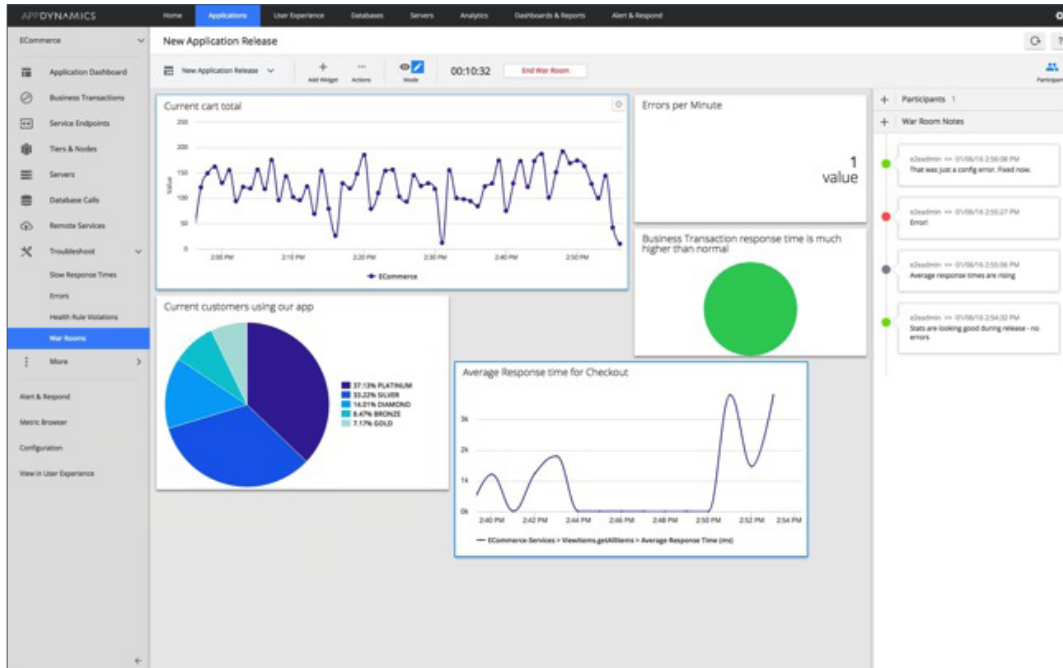
Check in real time application performance during a major release and collaborate with the release and support professionals

So as you can see there are a number of use cases for our Virtual War Room and our 4.2 release brings a number of enhancements. I would love to hear about any more use cases for this feature if I missed any.

About the author

John Rakowski is Director of Product Marketing for Application Performance Management (APM) and analytics at AppDynamics. Prior to his current role, John was the lead analyst for APM and IT Operational Analytics (ITOA) at Forrester Research helping clients with their APM and analytics strategies. Earlier he worked at Fujitsu and Capgemini architecting and implementing systems management technologies for enterprises in the financial and utilities sectors plus UK government. John has more than 10 years of experience with systems management and monitoring technologies. You can follow John on twitter at https:// twitter.com/momskij

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