brainlink

RAIDERS OF THE LOST CLOUD SAVINGS



ARE YOU A SITTING DUCK?

How fast could your company be back up and running?

AWS PERFORMANCE

Starts with Discovery Documentation and Recommendations

FINDING EXPERIENCED AWS ENGINEERS...

when they are in high demand and hard to find.

MSP501 AWARD WINNER

ISSUE 12

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BrainStorm | Issue Number: 12

RAJ IN THE MEDIA

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BRAINLINK.COM/TV



Who's next after Facebook?

April 12th, 2018



Should companies ditch Facebook?

April 5th, 2018



Crypto Mining and Bitcoin Security - PBS Nightly Business Report

January 29th, 2018

Channel Futures.
MSP 501
2018 WINNER
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE WORLD'S BEST MSPs

Brainlink Ranked Among Top 501 Global Managed Service Providers by Channel Futures.

- Brainlink ranks among the world's 501 most strategic and innovative managed service providers (MSPs), according to Channel Futures 11th-annual MSP 501 Worldwide Company Rankings.
- The MSP 501 is the first, largest and most comprehensive ranking of managed service providers worldwide.

*We **INCREASE YOUR TEAM'S PRODUCTIVITY** by responding quickly to critical issues, improving systems stability, reducing downtime and resolving long -standing performance issues.*

www.Brainlink.com | **(917) 685-7731** | raj@brainlink.com

COMMON MISTAKES

clients make with AWS backups



1. We don't need backups - we can spin everything up from GitHub

- Problems in spin-up script
- The webserver is v1
- App server is .9
- Database has data from 6 days ago
- And the entire stack doesn't integrate

2. We take snapshots

Taking a snapshot of a volume is good if I want to restore a file from the volume or if I'm spinning up a new instance just like the current one.
But when you have to start spinning up multiple machines & they need to be integrated - you really need a POINT-IN-TIME backup and most of the time, that info is missing.
You need:

- Good network diagrams - a map of the VPC
- Good Network documentations - security layers
- Proper instance information - proper server versioning

For example:

- I am using my app server from yesterday 6 pm
- Database from yesterday 6:05 pm
- Web server from yesterday 6:10 pm
- And NOT from 3 weeks ago.

3. Tagging is too complicated – we don't need it

If you don't have information on:

- Actual instance
- It's security groups
- What networks it belongs to
- Does it have a public IP
- Name of instance

Then recovery becomes challenging. Some of the AWS-created automatic tags will propagate down to the snapshots IF you've used the correct command-line.

A best practice is to build a **TAGGING TAXONOMY** and apply that to every object, snapshot, instance, etc. When you create snapshots - you need to examine the tag values and confirm the tags have been applied to the snapshots. You also need to know what other volumes are attached to this device, e.g. server has boot volume & data volume. You need to know what the current snapshot for the DATA volume is, what device it was & where it was mounted.

Some of this can be resolved by creating a PRIVATE AMI from the instance. But you still have to document & tag network settings, security groups, public IP & private IP.

This leads to:

- The old-school backup & recovery for DR is problematic.
- You can make it work but it comes with a lot of headaches.
- This leads to PILOT-LIGHT-DR

Snapshots are 1/4 of what you need to restore your firm in a DR environment. **You need someone who understands DR in an AWS environment & has done this before.**

Get in touch with us right away at (917) 685-7731 or raj@brainlink.com for more information.

HAVING TROUBLE FINDING EXPERIENCED AWS ENGINEERS?



Experienced, trained AWS engineers are in high-demand… and hard to find. We hear from clients daily that they have 2-6 positions open paying $150,000-$250,000 per year and they haven't been able to hire good candidates for 6 months or more.

If this sounds like you, Brainlink can help.

While you're searching for your next rock stars, your cloud still needs:

- **Security assessments**
- **Cost management**
- **Performance management**
- **Backups**
- **Disaster Recovery Testing**
- **Business Continuity Testing**
- **Upgraded & Updates**
- **IAM management**

Why not outsource these to our experienced team of AWS & operations experts?

We work on a fixed-fee basis – often less than 50% of a Tier-2 Engineer's salary.

Beset of all, you don't pay for vacations, sick days, benefits or HR issues.



You pay for, and get, phenomenal results.

And when you finally hire your new rock stars, we can step aside. Or we can work with you & time to upgrade their skill-sets. After all, we have CISSPs and AWS 5-stars on staff who love training…and you don't.

Get in touch with us right away at (917) 685-7731 or raj@brainlink.com for more information.



AWS PERFORMANCE STARTS WITH DISCOVERY

DOCUMENTATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to ensure the ideal performance of Amazon Web Services at your business, our team starts by evaluating and learning about your current environment.

Everyone knows that double-checking your math is a basic part of life. Shouldn't the same be true of your AWS environment? Many DevOps, SecOps and FinOps teams spin up resources, setup automation...and then forget about it. Until an adverse event occurs. It could be an unplanned outage, an excessive bill...or an unintended disclosure of data due to improper security implementation.

That's exactly why the Brainlink team offers Amazon Web Services (AWS) Discovery for your business.

The Discovery Service allows our expert engineers to inventory your current AWS environment. We take an outsiders view of your AWS assets, discover systems, policies and objects your teams may have forgotten about; discover suboptimal backups, BCDR or security practices and identify opportunities for further automation, security improvements and cost optimization.

How Does Discovery Work?

During the Discovery engagement, we create a utility system using read-only administrative privileges that you provide to us. Within this system, a number of tools will be utilized to examine your environment, and our team will compare the results and reports against Generally Accepted Systems Practices, after which recommendations will be generated and delivered.

After this stage is complete, you're welcome to keep the discovery server running so that you can receive ongoing reports as a benchmark to gauge ongoing remediation work, or to discover new resources or services instantiated within the environment.

What Does Discovery Take Into Account?

Resource Tagging and Standards

Resource tagging allows for the quick identification of information associated with a resource so that resources can be easily sorted and viewed by a specific instance or instances. For example, the tagging system would help to locate all resources used by a specific project, or a group, or a user, or if one wanted to calculate the cost of running those resources or to flag resources for backup. By using a structured tagging system, those sorts and filters can be applied to rapidly locate the desired resource set.

During Discovery, our team will compare your resources for tagging and values against best practices, and will note instances of poor tagging, and failure to tag at all. The findings will be published in a report for your review, along with our recommendations.

What's Included In The Discovery Process?

- Sweep of all regions for orphan / forgotten resources
- Resource utilization report for last 90 days on a 1-hour granularity
- Cost Optimization Review
- BCDR (Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery) Review
- Generate Reports / Recommendations

Which Security Aspects Will Be Reviewed?

- S3 Policies
- Security Groups
- Root API Keys
- API Key Usage
- MFA on root
- MFA on all accounts
- Wide Permissions / Policies on Accounts / Roles
- Note Accounts / Roles with Admin Policies
- Review CloudTrails and filter for Account / Role Creation / Modification
- AWS Config
- EC2 Roles
- STS for users
- Security Best Practice Review
- Generate Reports / Recommendations

Which Network Resources Will Be Reviewed?

- IP Schema
- IP Blocks
- VPC Peering
- Routing
- VPN's
- Network Diagrams
- Subnet Map
- DHCP Setup
- Nat Gateways
- VPN's
- NACL's

Which Architecture Resources Will Be Reviewed?

- AWS Architecture Best Practices Review
- CIS Architecture Review
- MultiAZ
- NTier
- MicroServices
- Decoupling

Which Best Practices Are Reviewed?

- AWS Published Best Practices
- CIS AWS Foundation benchmark
- CIS Governance benchmark

What's Next?

Once our Discovery process is complete, the Brainlink team will compile our results and recommendations into a comprehensive report for your review. By comparing the state of your AWS resources against best practices, we can show you where you need to improve.

Whether you'll handle the resolution process on your own, or have our team of AWS experts carry out our recommendations for you is the next step. Given that we will have carried out the Discovery process already, our team will be prepared to seamlessly move on to the next step in shoring up your AWS practices - all you have to do is ask.

For more information about Brainlink's comprehensive suite of AWS services, get in touch with our team right now at (917) 685-7731 or raj@brainlink.com.



ARE YOU A SITTING DUCK?

How Fast Could Your Company be Back Up and Working?

You hear it all the time from us—back up your data, keep your virus protection current, and install and maintain a firewall to protect yourself from hackers and other online threats.

However, while these precautions will certainly help you avoid problems, they CAN'T do anything if you don't have a good backup and disaster recovery plan in place.

What if Disaster Strikes?

We all know that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure; yet, disaster recovery planning often takes a distant second to the daily deadlines and pressures of running a business.

That means that most businesses, including your own, may end up offline and without your data after a simple lightning storm.

Don't think that could ever happen to you?

Consider this: "data-erasing disasters" can also take the form of office fires and broken water pipes, not just earthquakes, floods and tornadoes. If a fire started in your building, the parts that weren't burned beyond recovery would probably be destroyed by the fireman's efforts. But even more common is software corruption, hardware failures and human error!

DISASTER RECOVERY
QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ANSWER

A disaster recovery plan doesn't have to be complicated, time-consuming or expensive.

Start by asking yourself the following questions...

1. Do you back up your company's data daily to both an onsite and offsite location?
2. Are you absolutely certain that your backup copy is valid, complete and not corrupt? How do you know for sure?
3. If disaster strikes, HOW would you get your data back, and how long would it take? In many cases it takes days and often weeks; what would you do during that period of time?
4. Do you have copies of all the software licenses and discs in a safe location that could be accessed in the event of having to rebuild your server?
5. Would you and your employees have a way to access your network remotely if you couldn't get to the office?
6. Do you store important passwords in a secure place that company officers can access if you are unavailable?
7. Do you have a UPS (uninterruptable power supply) device in place to keep your network and other critical data operations running during a power outage?

This is NOT a complete list, but it is a good start to get you thinking in the right direction.



CONCERNED ABOUT

CYBER SECURITY IN YOUR FIRM?

It's common practice in the financial industry to get a second opinion on portfolios, asset management, and other matters. Regardless of how trustworthy your current advisors are, it's simply the wise move to double check their recommendations with another reliable source.

It's just as common when it comes to healthcare, or with requests -for-pricing in basic commerce, so why wouldn't this prudent tactic extend to your business' IT as well?

It's better to be safe than sorry.

Reach out to the Brainlink team of IT professionals at (917) 685-7731 or raj@brainlink.com today to get an expert assessment of your current IT services.

You routinely check market risks and re-balance in order to compensate for your finances; why wouldn't you apply the same level of scrutiny to something as vital as your IT?

Financial firms like yours rely dearly on their IT. Inadequate digital security, temperamental backups and other IT issues can put a firm and its clients' assets at serious risk, so why wouldn't you take extra measures to ensure your technology is up to snuff?

Brainlink can help.

We can act as the universal translator between you and your IT vendors to ensure that your digital security, data backups and other crucial IT aspects meet your expectations. Our team will fill in the gaps in your current vendor's IT capabilities so that you don't have to worry about the security and integrity of your business' IT any longer.

Isn't it time you got a second opinion on your firm's it?

Have Raj speak to your staff or your next corporate event.

VISIT

http://www.rajgoel.com/speaking/

BUY AWS VPSA SERVICES LIKE YOU BUY AWS RESOURCES!

Brainlink is bringing per-minute pricing to our vPSA engagements.

vPSA RESERVED:	vPSA SPOT:	vPSA ON-DEMAND:
$0.19/minute (19 cents per minute)	$0.35/minute (35 cents per minute)	$0.46/minute (46 cents per minute)
1 year commitment	3 month commitment	5 days commitment

Which Option Would You Like?

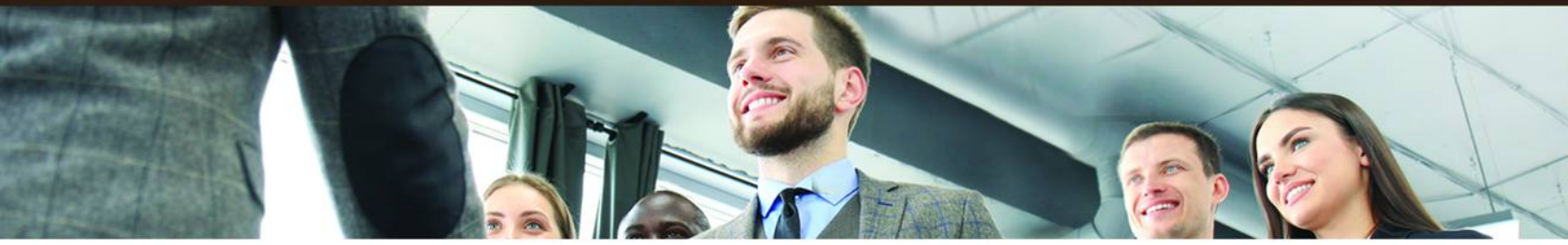
19 cents per minute, 35 cents per minute or 46 cents per minute?



If you'd like to discuss an AWS vPSA engagement, call me at 917-685-7731 or raj@brainlink.com

"REMEMBER: YOU CAN'T RUN AWS ALONE!"

MAXIMIZE THE RETURN ON THE INVESTMENTS MADE IN YOUR EMPLOYEES



As important as technology is, it's not a business's greatest investment; a business' greatest investment is in its people. The time and resources your business spends on interviewing, hiring, and training new employees are considerable. That's why it's so important to ensure that you get the right return on those investments.

Unfortunately, doing so isn't a simple task. From hiring to training, bringing a new employee into your business can take months, and what's worse, all of it can be undone if that employee doesn't end up staying with your business. Whether they're let go at the end of their probationary period, or they move on to a different position, it will often be just as you were about to see a return on the time you invested in their training.

Isn't there a better way?

Don't worry, you're not alone. Brainlink struggled with diminishing returns on our new personnel for a long time before we decided that enough was enough. We developed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Culture as a way to clearly and effectively document every task our business undertakes.

Why shouldn't this include our hiring and training processes as well? By developing SOPs that document every single step in the hiring and training process, we drastically cut down the time needed to onboard a new employee.

Regardless of who is managing the process or who is being hired, there's now a clear roadmap for objectives and expectations right from the very start. Instead of waiting up to two months for an employee to become effective, we can expect them to have a comprehensive understanding of their position in less than half that time.

Are your hiring and training processes costing too much money?

Reach out to Brainlink today at (917) 685-7731 or raj@brainlink.com to discover a better way to bring new employees into the fold.

SOPCULTURE

CULTURE EATS STRATEGY FOR BREAKFAST

That's because the minute they're hired, we give them a 97-page SOP mandatory training manual. SOP Culture can provide a number of benefits to your hiring and training processes, including:

- **Simplification:** A properly developed SOP makes it easy for both you and the new employee to see what expected of them in any given time interval, whether it's after their first day or after three months. This helps to avoid miscommunication of expectations and results (which quickly weeds out the lazy and incompetent).
- **Consistency:** With a single -- if long -- SOP for each and every employee, it's easier to ensure that everybody on staff knows what they need to know and when they're expected to know it.
- **Results:** The less time you have to spend hiring and training, the sooner your new employees will start benefiting your business.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT SOP CULTURE?

Check out these resources:

- Discussing the foundation of SOPCulture with Sweet Process
- How & Why Your Team Should Be Creating Obvious SOPs
- Accelerating & Improving Employee Training Using SOPs
- An Influential Blogger's Take On SOPCulture

BRAINLINK'S SOPHOS IMPLEMENTATION BOOSTS NETWORK PERFORMANCE

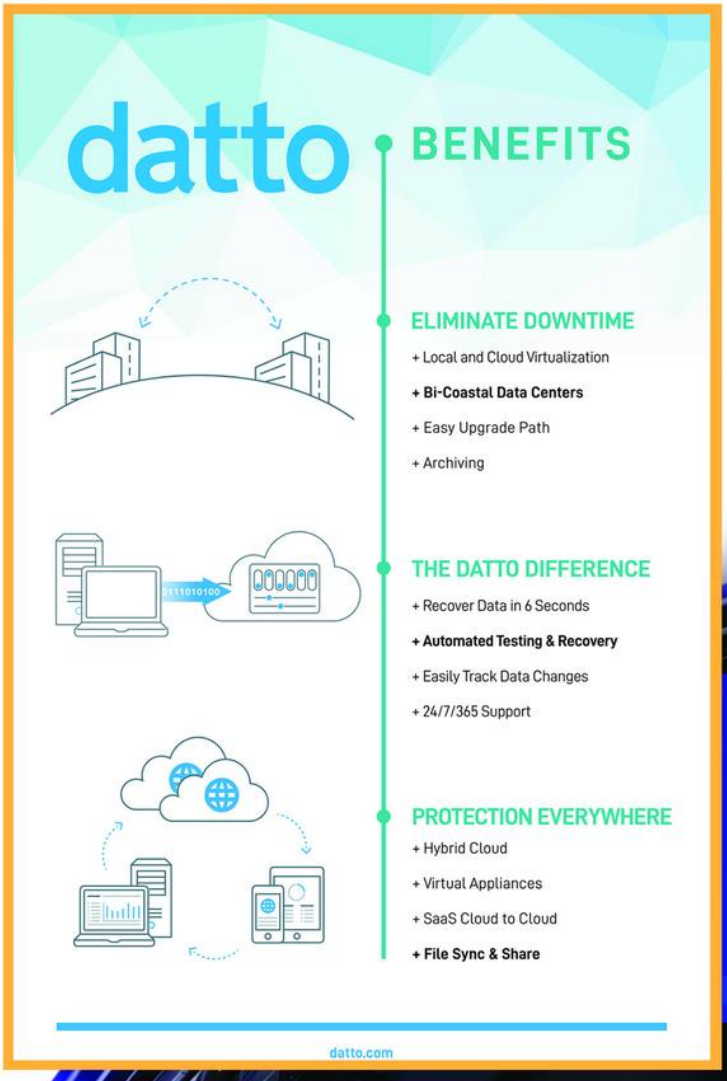
Brainlink's Sophos Implementation at NYC Private Equity Firm Boosts Network Performance While Providing Unparalleled Analytics.

Brainlink International, an IT and managed security services provider (MSSP) headquartered in New York City, NY, has been in business for 22 years and became a Sophos partner in 2014.

Brainlink focuses on industry-specific, customized services for private equity and wealth management firms that manage portfolios valued up to $4 billion. Brainlink's clientele also includes large-scale construction, architecture, and property management companies. Brainlink has successfully leveraged Sophos network solutions to solve the unique security and policy compliance challenges of divergent environments.

Goel and the Brainlink team understand the sensitive and personal nature of the data held by private equity firms.

One of Brainlink's private equity firm customers was wrestling with multiple issues: poor network performance; failing and unstable firewalls; continual loss of connectivity to the Bloomberg Professional service, which provides traders with up-to-the-minute market data; and risky employee behaviors. The firm, which had been a longtime Checkpoint user, discovered that its traders were losing access to Bloomberg throughout the course of the day, which was a serious business concern. While Brainlink tried to do some troubleshooting, "the Checkpoint product did not allow us to drill down and find out where their bandwidth was going," says Goel. Brainlink also discovered that the firm's Checkpoint firewalls, which were deployed five to six years ago, were, as Goel puts it, "dead and dying,"—they were constantly failing and locking up, putting the company network at tremendous risk.



Brainlink resolved these issues and recommended that the private equity firm implement Sophos

Over a period of nine months, Brainlink resolved these issues and recommended that the private equity firm implement Sophos Unified Threat Management (Sophos UTM), enhanced with the Sophos iView analytics and monitoring tool. The day after deployment of the high-availability cluster, the private equity firm saw a 40% jump in network performance. As Goel notes, "The capabilities of Sophos really delivered, and the ROI is off the charts. Checkpoint upgrades would have cost our customer four to five times more than the Sophos implementation."

IMPROVE PERFORMANCE BY 40%
REDUCE COSTS 30%



RAJ'S INVITE

Please join Friar Raj Goel at the club for drinks.

(you show up, he gets the bill!)



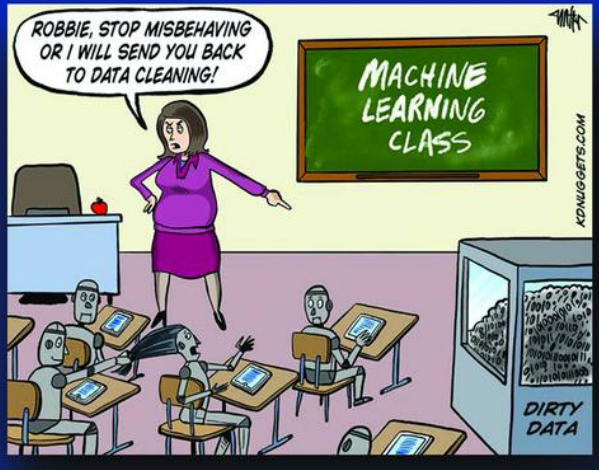
About the Friars Club:

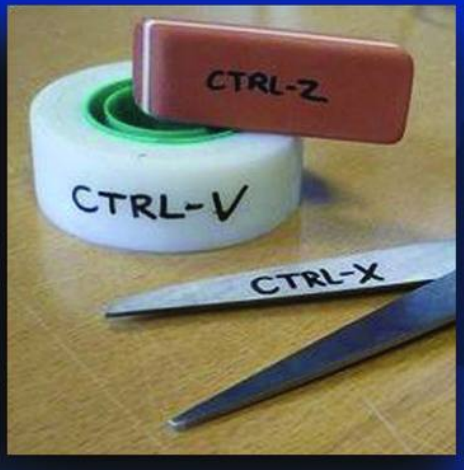
located at: 57 E 55th St, New York, NY 10022:

Located in the heart of midtown, the Friars Club is a private club that caters to the people in the entertainment business and from other professional fields. The Friars Club is famous for their Celebrity Roast, which began in 1949 with Maurice Chevalier as the guest of honor.

Now it is the most imitated event throughout the world. With a reputation of roasts and celebrations, they also dedicate time to charitable events with The Friars Foundation, which was established in 1977 to foster the performing arts.

BRAINLINK FUNNIES





"Success is often achieved by those who don't know that failure is inevitable."

- Coco Chanel