

MEET UP

CODE MONITORING

SENTRY

Sentry is an open source error tracking platform that helps users identify and debug errors. It is currently used for two applications created by Bi4 Group. Their frontend has been written in JavaScript and uses the Angular framework, while the backend uses

Python. Of all three, it's the most pro-active system that alerts through email, SMS or chat when production errors are found. A weekly email shows if there's an increase of errors over time, so that users can monitor whether a debugging process has had the desired effects.

3 Code Monitoring Platforms Compared

Exception tracking tools help developers find problems before users do. In a recent meetup at Bi4 Group, three tools for identifying and debugging errors were introduced and compared with each other.

Code monitoring platforms can improve application performance and customer satisfaction. These platforms use lightweight agents to collect information about the health and quality of a technology stack, that is presented next through dashboards and other reporting mechanisms.

Sentry, Airbrake and New Relic are three code monitoring platforms that are currently used by Bi4 Group. A company meetup was held to share user experiences with each platform, and make comparisons concerning different licensing plans, product offerings and installation procedures.



A list of unresolved issues per project is shown on the "Issues" tab in the user interface. It not only shows the type of error that occurred, but also in how many instances and to how many users. It's possible to filter more specifically between issues, but this functionality is rather limited. By clicking on a specific issue from the list, a new page opens with information tags about the context that contributed to errors, such as software (browser, operating system),

environment (production) and users (name, email).

Overall, user experience with the platform is positive as it gives a lot of information on errors, enables quick debugging, and integrates with many languages and frameworks. A disadvantage is the frontend connection, which fails oftentimes. Also, Sentry offers a free trial period for hobby projects and early stage projects.



MEET UP

AIRBRAKE



The Airbrake platform is very similar to Sentry: the reporting service provides error monitoring functionality showing in which stack an error occurred, the error type, how many times and so on. It has less functionality than Sentry and looks somewhat like a simplified version of it. An example is the option to solve an error, that works similar as resolving an issue. The choice between Sentry and Airbrake is a matter of personal preference, as both offer more or less the same functionality.

NEW RELIC



New Relic is a total different animal than the first two platforms. It offers deep performance analytics for software environments, so that errors can be found and fixed quickly. The platform consists of six different products, offering a wide range of functionality. This is also reflected in the price, as it's the most expensive platform of the three. The installation of the platform for Python requires only one single file and it auto detects the technology that an application is using.

Most of the presentation focused on the New Relic APM product, that offers performance measurement for web applications. The amount of graphics and information for every step is very detailed and offers high value - there are many variables that can be monitored, measured, and indexed. For example, the target application can be compared to other applications using similar technology and volumes, creating customer satisfaction indices.



CONCLUSION

Although the added value of all three tools is clear to software developers, this may not be the case for businesses and users of applications where these error tracking platforms run on. The question then becomes how to convince them of installing a product that may not have immediate tangible benefits for them. What has become clear during this meetup, is that error monitoring platforms greatly increase the quality of product support and report errors before users do.