



| Case Study

Better service, bigger margins, and easy expansion for managed service provider Cloud Comrade

MSP streamlines billing to save money and improve customer satisfaction



Key challenges

- Reduce errors and time spent on customer billing for a small accounts receivable team
- Improve customer satisfaction and trust through better billing practices
- Ensure AWS credits are assigned to master account to receive discounts



Key benefits

- Solved 95% of billing errors with CloudCheckr automation and custom billing reports
- Accurately applied AWS discounts and credits to master account to reduce cloud spend
- Improved operational efficiency, resulting in increased profit margins, reduced overhead, and higher customer satisfaction levels

Cloud Comrade helps clients throughout Southeast Asia migrate to the cloud — but without the right tools, billing was error-prone, slow, and opaque. With CloudCheckr, now part of Spot by NetApp, Cloud Comrade has dramatically expanded its client base without increasing resources spent managing the customer invoicing process.

When Cloud Comrade, an MSP based in Singapore, was still a relatively small company of seven, one staff member was dedicated entirely to billing. Still, billing was inefficient and chronically late; it was also impossible to avoid making mistakes.

After determining that there was no way to get the cloud billing data it needed directly from Amazon Web Services (AWS), Cloud Comrade implemented CloudCheckr to [improve AWS billing solutions](#). Now there are more than 70 people working at Cloud Comrade and the company sends out hundreds of invoices per month to hundreds of clients. There's still just one person dedicated to billing; although the company is expanding, there are no plans to add to the accounts receivable staff. With invoices going out on time, Cloud Comrade can answer customers' questions in detail when monthly charges change and everyone feels more confident that invoices are correct. Even better, Cloud Comrade's profit margins have gone up while providing better service for customers

Drowning in Excel

Cloud Comrade has been an Amazon Web Services reseller working with companies throughout Southeast Asia for the past five years. For its first year and a half in business, Cloud Comrade relied solely on AWS native billing tools, like AWS Billing Dashboard and AWS Cost Explorer.



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“It was very manual and time-consuming, and at the time it was myself doing billing,” explains Andy Waroma, Cloud Comrade co-founder. “We subsequently then hired a person to do billing for us. But even for her as a full-time employee it was too overwhelming, because of the way AWS was doing the billing. It cannot be done manually, there’s just too many price points and SKU’s and everything else and also discounts and all kinds of pricing exceptions.”

Amazon billing, Waroma explains, is done per second, which means that every AWS-generated invoice is a CSV file with hundreds of thousands or even millions of lines. Cloud Comrade was trying — unsuccessfully — to have someone manually split up those lines using an Excel sheet to provide accurate bills for its clients.

The constant changes in AWS made spreadsheet maintenance challenging. Even for a relatively small company with a handful of clients, this wasn’t manageable or scalable. Cloud Comrade, and its customers, didn’t feel confident that the invoices were accurate, and invoices were often delivered late. If customers had a question about a specific charge or change in invoice amount from one billing cycle to another, Cloud Comrade was often unable to give a satisfactory answer.

Looking for a third-party solution

After working with AWS directly on these billing issues for more than a year, AWS recommended that Cloud Comrade try out CloudCheckr.

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The first important improvement was the implementation of CloudCheckr’s automated AWS billing solution for MSPs. With programmatically scheduled invoicing and billing, Cloud Comrade no longer struggles to get invoices sent out on time. When customers follow up with questions about increases on their AWS bill, Cloud Comrade references CloudCheckr’s simplified dashboard to provide detailed information about the charges.

Additionally, Cloud Comrade can now provide customers with tailored billing reports that give each customer insight into the exact breakdown of the charges.

This reporting restores customers’ confidence that billing is done accurately and fairly. It also gives both Cloud Comrade’s management team and clients access to useful business insights regarding cloud costs in real-time, in a customized, feature-rich platform.



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Increasing margins

Automating more of the billing process with CloudCheckr has also increased Cloud Comrade’s profit margins. First of all, there’s the staffing: there is still one full-time employee dedicated to billing, but she is handling hundreds of invoices for hundreds of clients, which is several times more volume than when they first implemented CloudCheckr three years ago. This reduced Cloud Comrade’s marginal overhead and costs per customer.

Just as importantly, Cloud Comrade is now able to ensure that all credits from AWS are correctly allocated. When Cloud Comrade resells AWS, it receives credits that can offset its AWS bill. Without CloudCheckr, these credits were applied across all of the 200-plus AWS accounts that Cloud Comrade manages. This made it difficult — sometimes impossible — to ensure that Cloud Comrade was getting an accurate benefit from its AWS credits.

Now, those credits are easily retained by the Cloud Comrade master account through a simple setting in CloudCheckr, and it’s easier to track credits that customers get from Amazon, too. CloudCheckr ensures that Cloud Comrade doesn’t accidentally give customers credits that actually belong to their company master account.

Even with these major cost management benefits, Waroma says he knows Cloud Comrade isn’t taking full advantage of CloudCheckr’s features. Going forward, he’s hoping to start using AWS Reserved Instance (RI) purchase recommendations and other cost management tools — which he expects will give Cloud Comrade even better margins.

Supporting each other

“Not everything always goes as it is intended on either side,” Waroma explains. “We have been very happy with CloudCheckr. They’ve been very responsive, and they try to resolve any issues as quickly as possible so that they won’t affect our billing cycle.”

It’s always hard to know in advance how well the support relationship will work — especially, Waroma says, when you’re dealing with multiple geographic regions. But Waroma says that CloudCheckr’s support has exceeded expectations from the very beginning.

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