



Uncovering the Hidden Cost of AWS Cost Explorer

How Much Are You Really Paying for AWS Cost Explorer's Help?



INTRODUCTION

AWS Cost Explorer wants you to save (but not too much)

Managing your AWS spending with AWS Cost Explorer can be relatively successful. But why stop at “relatively?” You may be missing savings opportunities that can make a huge difference. To find them, you need a tool that aggressively detects problems and alerts you with actionable steps to reduce your bill.

AWS Cost Explorer wants to help you lower your AWS bill. This eBook points up its real-world limitations. Let’s examine the savings you gain from using a dedicated cloud cost management solution. If you conclude that the native AWS tool offers the best value, congratulations! But we’re predicting otherwise.

The smarter way to detect, attribute, optimize, and forecast costs

AWS Cost Explorer works fine with limited scenarios—such as passively managing AWS costs in ad hoc queries. Or historic review of cost drivers at the AWS service level.

But it can’t alert you in real time to cost anomalies, or deal with complex environments like multiple accounts or containers. Once AWS Cost Explorer issues its analytics, you need to figure out next steps. Depending on your cloud footprint, this can be time-consuming.

Meanwhile, costs keep rising.

By contrast, Yotascale delivers advanced, granular reporting straight to individual teams and applications. Engineers can see which costs they’re responsible for and take quick action to reduce them, rather than wading through analytics looking for insights.

Machine learning yields quick, actionable results

Yotascale is all about saving you money. But AWS Cost Explorer makes the same claim, so let’s see how they compare. Yotascale’s machine learning (ML) alerts you to why costs are rising and points the way to fixing that. It’s purpose-built for aggressive cost management from an engineering perspective.

The limitations of AWS Cost Explorer show up as we dig into anomalies, containers and Kubernetes, forecasting, and cost attribution.





THE DOLLAR VALUE OF COST
VISIBILITY

AWS Cost Explorer: “Okay as far as it goes”

What you don't see can cost you. To manage cloud spend, you must align your AWS bill to your infrastructure costs and decisions. That means understanding who generates the spend, where it's allocated, and what business values accrue. With clear, project-level data, you can see where to take action.

AWS Cost Explorer doesn't offer the granularity or precision to maximize cost-efficiency. Rather, it relies exclusively on the constructs that it 'knows' about: tags and accounts.

A recent survey of companies with a significant cloud footprint (>\$200K/month) revealed that, on average, only half of their costs could be tied to business units, teams, or applications. This lack of visibility means that only a subset of your bill is correctly accounted for.

Overlap Hinders Chargeback

Because AWS Cost Explorer can't model a business hierarchy, costs can easily overlap among teams or business units. Result: two owners for the same AWS dollar spend. Accurate chargeback or showback becomes impossible; plus, you miss opportunities to save on orphaned and underutilized resources.

Clear ownership: no noise

Yotascale lets everyone in your organization, from executives to engineers, view the cost portion that's meaningful to them, reducing confusion. With enforced ownership, there's no dispute as to who is responsible for a resource or its outlay. Yotascale takes this even farther when owners are unspecified—using sophisticated inferences to suggest the most likely owner, team, or business unit.

Are You in the 'At Face Value' Comfort Zone?

AWS Cost Explorer can be a worthwhile resource, if you're willing to accept its conclusions at face value. Here are a few situations where it could suffice:

- You're just “keeping an eye” on AWS costs, but not trying to reduce them because they're a negligible portion of your overall expenses.
- You're okay with answering questions about your AWS outlay after receiving the bill.
- Savings opportunities are minimal on underutilized resources and committed use discounts (Savings Plans, Reserved Instances).
- You don't share costs among teams, or leverage containers and Kubernetes for agility and scalability.

If you haven't deployed a modern architecture, and passive cost management works for your organization, then AWS Cost Explorer is your tool!



DETECTING AND ACTING
ON COST ANOMALIES

AWS Cost Explorer's daily update versus Yotascale's real-time alerts

AWS Cost Explorer receives updates from the AWS bill 'at least' once a day. Given the potentially massive impact of anomalies, this is like sending the fire station a daily report on fires. Given that AWS Cost Explorer doesn't have any cost anomaly detection built-in (that's a separate AWS tool), relying on AWS Cost Explorer to detect and prevent anomalies from causing cost spikes is not realistic.

By contrast, Yotascale delivers real-time visibility into the what, where, and how of anomalies—which can arise from a variety of causes, such as testing clusters left on, and are notoriously challenging to track down. Worse is the near-impossibility of identifying these offending resources in a timely way.

Stop runaway costs with actionable anomaly detection

Yotascale's ML-driven anomaly detection uses historical data trends to create a cost expectation. Deviations trigger instant Slack or email alerts to the resource owner, with no manual log searching required. Plus, Yotascale groups anomalies by business unit, context, or other differentiator, enabling instant attribution, triage and resolution by rightsizing, shutting down unused resources or optimizing. Yotascale classifies them by who needs to act and distributes notifications accordingly. If it discovers an error with a known fix, it automates remediation. So you can sleep well.

Zoom Chooses Yotascale Over AWS Tools

Amid explosive growth and 30-fold scaling, Zoom turned to Yotascale to streamline cost allocation. Optimizing costs with easy access to performance and business metrics averted a budget overrun nightmare. Yotascale helped Zoom:

- Find underutilized resources
- Balance performance with cost control
- Set guardrails for engineering while boosting performance
- Deliver an exceptional user experience to customers.

Find out how Yotascale mapped costs to usage more accurately than AWS tools.

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“Yotascale has been a trusted partner to help keep our massively increasing cloud costs in check...”

Yasin Mohammed

Engineering Manager, Cloud Operations
Zoom



MODERN ARCHITECTURES
WITH CONTAINERS AND
KUBERNETES

Automation simplifies cost-allocation

As containerization grows in popularity, it suffers from poor cost attribution. Basic tools like AWS Cost Explorer, can't tell you anything other than your total containerized spend.

Teams working with complex architectures such as multi-tenant Kubernetes clusters lack automated cost-attribution and must spend time learning and configuring services, as well as figuring out how to share account-level information.

Kubernetes presents a particular cost allocation challenge when managing Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2) instances. As shared resources, costs need to be allocated more precisely than the Kubernetes cluster using AWS Cost Explorer. Plus, multiple teams and applications use these environments, further complicating the challenge.

Find the true container cost for each team

The Yotascale platform is particularly good at distributing containerized platform costs to rightful team owners. AWS Cost Explorer cannot deliver that deep support for containers or granular cost reporting.

Yotascale's **Kubernetes Cost Allocation** feature uses reserved instance discounts and spot instance pricing to inform total Kubernetes cost. Accurate information lets you visualize Kubernetes costs clearly in relation to a product, team, or business unit.

Yotascale's automated tagging for dynamic workloads also ensures accurate cost allocation. Specific, actionable options go directly to individuals and teams who can update architecture and service provisioning for peak efficiency. This assignment of costs also delivers visibility into unutilized areas.





OPTIMIZING YOUR OUTCOME

The bottom line on trade-offs: cost vs. reliability vs. speed

Optimizing your infrastructure means managing a series of complex trade-offs among cost, reliability, and speed: flexibility for unit economics, cost for speed, and savings for time investment. The right tool can help you manage those trade-offs and detect, attribute, optimize, and forecast costs.

To do this, an organization must share out savings recommendations to infrastructure subject matter experts (SMEs). Engineering teams can then triage savings opportunities for viability and level of effort: how, when, and where to optimize (or not). Responding to unactionable recommendations and focusing on do-able optimizing is critically important to reduce noise.

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Yotascale is something I wish I'd thought of. It puts cost information in the hands of our engineers...”

John Gerhardt

Director of Engineering
Compass

AWS Cost Explorer can't recommend actions

AWS Cost Explorer leaves optimization to a separate AWS tool, AWS Trusted Advisor. It can't identify owners of decisions or capture outcomes after you make decisions. So the recommendations it surfaces become a task for your organization to clean up, distribute, manage, and maintain. Questions like, “Are we going to act on these utilization recommendations?” get lost in emails or Slack messages.

Yotascale distributes AWS costs to SMEs at the edges of your organization. That simplifies collaborative decision-making on when, where, and how to optimize.

Additionally, Yotascale cost attribution speeds cost information to the right people, so every user sees the resources they are responsible for. Slack alerts engineering teams to issues requiring their attention. And Yotascale uses MS to adjust forecasts for understanding both upward and downward use trends.

Compass Transforms Cloud Cost Containment

With visibility into cloud costs and utilization a key priority, Compass chose Yotascale to map cloud resources to business units. They identified underutilized or abandoned cloud infrastructure, tracked root causes, and raised awareness to:

- Reduce cloud spend by 45 percent
- Empower engineers to make smart, accountable decisions
- Gain visibility into cloud costs and resource utilization
- Allocate shared costs for Kubernetes clusters by business unit for precise cost breakdowns

[Read how](#) Compass gave engineers control over cost spikes and dramatically optimized spend.



STREAMLINING COST MANAGEMENT

**Choose automation,
insights, and
simplicity—or
AWS Cost Explorer**

Visibility after the fact is more painful than helpful. If you're in a cloud growth phase—or just migrating to the cloud, a robust cost management platform can proactively track spending. That prevents rude awakenings and shocks. Early adoption of optimizing best practices lets you capitalize on the cloud cost benefits, preventing “runaway cloud spend” events and organizational whiplash. You keep critical access to provision and manage infrastructure and prevent future overages.

To manage cloud spend, you need to align your AWS bill to infrastructure costs and decisions. Yotascale is custom-built to help you make sense of your AWS bill. So its ability to break down and assign costs is much richer than AWS Cost Explorer's. While AWS Cost Explorer offers some analytics to help understand and control your resource use and spend, its drawback is in what it doesn't provide. Those shortfalls can be costly, both in money and time.

**Advance your cost-savings
management beyond
AWS Cost Explorer.
Contact Yotascale for a
free trial today!**

