

Going, Going, Gone: How Bonhams Cut Observability Spend by 50%



Bonhams

⚠️ The Problem:

Metrics, logs, and traces were spread across different tools, and developers struggled to understand complex dashboards.

💡 The Solution:

Dash0 brought metrics, logs, and traces together in a single platform, providing a unified view of the entire request lifecycle.

✅ The Result:

Bonhams reduced observability costs by 50% while giving every developer full visibility.

In the high-stakes world of fine art and luxury auctions, provenance is everything. The same applies to modern software: if you can't trace a request from load balancer to database, you're operating in the dark.

For Bonhams, one of the world's oldest and largest auctioneers, bridging a heritage founded in 1793 with a cloud-native future was a major undertaking. Behind the scenes runs a complex infrastructure of Azure VMs, Docker containers, and Kubernetes clusters powering Node.js frontends and Django backends. As their infrastructure modernized, their observability lagged behind. High costs, complex interfaces, and restricted access slowed down the SRE team.

This is the story of how Bonhams broke free from vendor lock-in, embraced OpenTelemetry, and partnered with Dash0 to achieve full-stack visibility while cutting observability costs by 50%.

The Challenge: A High Price for Limited Visibility

Julián García-Sotoca Pascual, SRE at Bonhams, was managing a migration from on-premise systems to Kubernetes. However, their observability tool, New Relic, was becoming a barrier rather than an enabler.

The friction points were clear:

The Clarity Gap:

"It was a classic case of too much information and not enough insight," says Julián. "Developers would stare at these complex dashboards and ask, 'What am I even looking at?' The value was hidden behind the complexity."

The "Restricted User" Bottleneck:

To manage costs, full access was limited to just two power users - Julián and his manager. Everyone else was restricted, forcing developers to escalate troubleshooting to the SRE team.

Fragmented Workflows:

Metrics, logs, and traces were disjointed. Some data lived in New Relic, logs were reviewed in Grafana, and teams constantly switched between tools.

The breaking point came during contract renewal. The proposed budget to maintain their setup was simply too high.

The Search for a Modern Solution

Bonhams evaluated three main contenders: renewing with New Relic, moving to Grafana Cloud, or partnering with Dash0.

Grafana offered a robust feature set, but ultimately wasn't the right fit for the team's needs. New Relic, sensing the churn, attempted to negotiate, but the trust had eroded.

Dash0 stood out for two reasons: Being **OpenTelemetry native** and the **transparent value**. Unlike proprietary agents that lock you into a vendor's ecosystem, Dash0 is built on OpenTelemetry (OTel). This meant Bonhams could own their data standards. If they instrumented their code with OTel, that effort would belong to them, not the vendor.

The Migration: Zero to Observability in One Month

Deploying the Operator

The technical heavy lifting was handled by the Dash0 Kubernetes Operator.

» Deployment was effortless. We installed the operator and Dash0 started populating with data right away. The reliability was there from day one. «

Within 24 hours, three clusters with 15 nodes each were online with full telemetry coverage.

Solving Real-World Hurdles

During rollout, the team identified a file log offset issue and excessive span volume from Traefik. This is where the Dash0 partnership model truly differentiated itself. Rather than navigating a "support bot maze," Julián had a direct line to Dash0's engineering team via Slack.

» Working directly with the Dash0 engineering team allowed us to move at a pace most vendors can't match. We implemented a file log offloader solution that resolved our issues in real-time. That level of direct technical partnership is rare and, frankly, invaluable. «

By upgrading Traefik and applying Dash0's intelligent filtering, the team normalized data volumes and dramatically improved trace clarity.



The Transformation: Full Visibility, Half the Cost



The impact of switching to Dash0 was immediate and transformative. The previous limitations on APM coverage were removed.

The results spoke for themselves:

50% Cost Reduction

» Dash0 has allowed us to cut our observability spend in half compared to New Relic's trajectory, delivering the same visibility with significantly greater cost-efficiency. «

says Julián.

Dash0's cost estimator gives the SRE team proactive control over observability spending. By tuning trace and log sampling and applying spam filters, the team can manage telemetry volumes and control costs within the current invoice period.

Democratizing Data Access

By integrating with Active Directory, Bonhams granted every developer full access to Dash0.

» We've completely leveled the playing field; every developer now has full visibility «

says Julián.

This removed the SRE bottleneck and empowered the backend team to monitor their Django applications directly, strengthening ownership and real-time accountability.

The "Aha!" Moment: Full Trace Correlation

» For the first time, we have a unified view of the entire request lifecycle, something we never achieved with New Relic, allowing us to see a request flow from Traefik all the way to the database in a single, correlated trace with a level of precision that is truly a game-changer. «

This seamless visibility transforms troubleshooting from a reactive guessing game into a data-driven, guided investigation.

Future-Proofing with OpenTelemetry

By partnering with Dash0, Bonhams adopted a global standard rather than just another vendor.

» One of the greatest advantages of Dash0 is its native alignment with OpenTelemetry, because we are building on an open standard, our work is never wasted. We have the peace of mind knowing that our instrumentation is portable and adds permanent value to our stack, regardless of the tools we use in the future. «

Julián explains.

The results spoke for themselves:

- » 50% Reduction in Observability Costs
- » 100% Trace Visibility (Ingress to Database)
- » 1 Month Total Migration Time
- » Unlimited Power Users for Engineering Teams

Ready to Modernize Your Observability Stack?

If you are tired of restricted user licenses, opaque billing, and proprietary agents that lock you in, it's time to see what OpenTelemetry-native observability can do for your team.

Start your free trial with Dash0 today

