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How Moov gained a valuable IaC partner by switching Terraform vendor

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Summary

All-in-one payments platform Moov seeks to take the complexity out of embedding payment functionality in software, but its own Terraform provider was making IaC management unnecessarily complicated. By migrating to Spacelift, they've discovered the flexibility and responsiveness they need in a partner.

Company size
100

Engineering team size
58

Stack
AWS, Terraform

Spacelift's straightforward pricing model makes it easy for Moov to predict what their costs will be.

Although Moov's primary use case is Terraform, they appreciate the flexibility of being able to use any IaC tool.

Moov highlights the ongoing engagement they have with the Spacelift team and the ease of working with them.

Joel Tosi is CTO at Moov, Brian Ballenger is the company's software engineering manager, and Adam Jackman is a Moov SRE. They spoke to us about the ways Spacelift has enhanced their Terraform experience.

The challenge for Moov

Moov had no issues with the performance of their cloud infrastructure management tool, but they were becoming increasingly frustrated with aspects such as pricing and communication. Indeed, CTO Joel Tosi is keen to highlight his enthusiasm for their Terraform provider, but issues had arisen around the billing and relationship side. "It felt kind of adversarial. I'm a huge fan of the company, and they do a lot of great work, but we are a small company: We want partners, not vendors."

Software engineering manager Brian Ballenger cites the complexity of the pricing model as a key reason for Moov's migration. A specific parameter was the adjustments they had to make just to stay within the accepted range for admin users. Having to manage a pricing system based on applies, admin users, the number of runners, and other factors was frustrating. "And we left before they changed their pricing model, which is now even more complex," says Brian Ballenger.

Why Moov chose Spacelift

Joel met Spacelift CEO Pawel Hytry and Director of Sales Ryan Cartwright at AWS re:Invent in 2022. "We ended up on a foodie tour through Las Vegas, and we started chatting," recalls Joel. They kept in touch, and once the Moov infrastructure team spent some time trying out the Spacelift platform, they discovered it did everything they wanted it to do. "Everybody came back and said 'Yeah, this is the right fit.'"

The team realized that they could do more with the new platform than they could with their existing IaC management tool. "There was more flexibility with Spacelift as far as being able to do things beyond Terraform. Terraform certainly is our primary use case. But that flexibility was attractive," Brian says.

And then there was Spacelift's predictable pricing. "The pricing model was just much more straightforward and easy to understand. You know what your costs will be," Brian points out.

Moov's Spacelift experience

Migrating to a new Terraform provider has been relatively easy for Moov. "We were able to make the transition pretty straightforward and then just start to build out a new layer using Spacelift," recalls Moov SRE Adam Jackman. Whenever the team needs guidance or encounters a stumbling block, support has always been prompt. "We can ask a question in the evening, get it answered overnight, and then be able to continue on the next morning," notes Adam. "And the documentation about the product itself has been fantastic." Brian agrees: "The pricing was easy to understand, the presale engagement was easy and smooth, and the migration was pretty straightforward."

Summing up the Spacelift experience, Adam singles out the great tooling around Terraform. "It provides the structure around Terraform that's needed to really make and expand infrastructure as code, and it's easy to work with."

"Easy" is a word that you hear often in conversations about Spacelift with Moov personnel. As Brian says, "The key thing from an adoption standpoint is that it was all pretty easy. The ongoing engagement we have with your team is a nice touchpoint, and the ease of working with your team alone is a contrast I would highlight."

Spacelift's impact on Moov

From a feature perspective, Spacelift's approach to policy has been a game changer for Moov. Policies have already enabled developers to work more productively, freeing them from manual tasks. Indeed, Adam Jackman cites Spacelift policies as the biggest differentiator for him. He acknowledges that there is a sharp learning curve involved and that there is much more they can do with them, but the potential to use policies to reduce Moov's manual workload and accelerate the deployment process is exciting. Following experimentation, they can now start to restructure their Terraform to enable easier policy management. "This not something you can do quickly, but I think with Spacelift we will be able to restructure it to do it well," he says.

Another significant benefit has been the ability to manage a large number of stacks with ease, something Moov couldn't do with their previous Terraform provider. The facility to have all of Moov's individual resources broken out to their own space makes both permissioning and deployments much easier. As Adam says, "Being able to break things down more finely will speed things up hugely, and Spacelift has the wherewithal to support us having that many stacks."

The Moov team has been using the Terraform registry pretty intensively, and they're looking forward to getting to a stage where they can build their own providers. "We're not quite there yet from our side, but we're using the module registry heavily, and that's really been very helpful in helping us to separate some of our staging and prod environments."

Ultimately, the technical excellence of the IaC offering combined with highly responsive support elevates Spacelift to more than just a vendor. As Joel describes the relationship, "I think our team feels like we can ask anything — and as a result, we do. Those responses are incredibly fast, so it feels more like a partnership. It's not just the technical capabilities. It's also the relationship — and that translates into our ability to go fast." And for an ambitious startup like Moov, that speed is key to gaining and maintaining their competitive edge.

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