Third Edition

AWS Certified Solutions Architect

STUDY GUIDE

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Associate (SAA-C02) Exam

Third Edition

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Copyright © 2021 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

ISBN: 978-1-119-71308-1

ISBN: 978-1-119-71309-8 (ebk.)

ISBN: 978-1-119-71310-4 (ebk.)

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2020947039

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following people who helped us create *AWS Certified Solutions Architect Study Guide: Associate SAA-C02 Exam, Third Edition*.

First, a special thanks to our friends at Wiley. Kenyon Brown, senior acquisitions editor, got the ball rolling on this project and pushed to get this book published quickly. His experience and guidance throughout the project was critical. Stephanie Barton, project editor, helped push this book forward by keeping us accountable to our deadlines. Her edits made many of the technical parts of this book more readable.

Todd Montgomery reviewed the chapters and questions for technical accuracy. Not only did his comments and suggestions make this book more accurate, he also provided additional ideas for the chapter review questions to make them more challenging and relevant to the exam.

Lastly, the authors would like to thank each other!

About the Authors

Ben Piper is a networking and cloud consultant who has authored multiple books, including the *AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner Study Guide: Foundational CLF-C01 Exam* (Sybex, 2019) and *Learn Cisco Network Administration in a Month of Lunches* (Manning, 2017). You can contact Ben by visiting his website: benpiper.com.

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In a "previous life," David spent 20 years as a high school teacher. He currently lives in Toronto, Canada, with his wife and family and can be reached through his website: bootstrap-it.com.

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Introduction

Studying for any certification always involves deciding how much of your studying should be practical hands-on experience and how much should be simply memorizing facts and figures. Between the two of us, we've taken dozens of IT certification exams, so we know how important it is to use your study time wisely. We've designed this book to help you discover your strengths and weaknesses on the AWS platform so that you can focus your efforts properly. Whether you've been working with AWS for a long time or whether you're relatively new to it, we encourage you to carefully read this book from cover to cover.

Passing the AWS Certified Solutions Architect – Associate exam requires understanding the components and operation of the core AWS services as well as how those services interact with each other. Read through the official documentation for the various AWS services. Amazon offers HTML, PDF, and Kindle documentation for many of them. Use this book as a guide to help you identify your strengths and weaknesses so that you can focus your study efforts properly.

You should have at least six months of hands-on experience with AWS before taking the AWS Certified Solutions Architect – Associate exam. If you're relatively new to AWS, we strongly recommend our own *AWS Certified Cloud Practitioner Study Guide: CLF-C01 Exam* (Sybex, 2019) as a primer.

Even though this book is designed specifically for the AWS Certified Solutions Architect – Associate exam, some of your fellow readers have found it useful for preparing for the SysOps Administrator and DevOps Engineer exams.

Hands-on experience is crucial for exam success. Each chapter in this *AWS Certified Solutions Architect Study Guide: Associate SAA-C02 Exam, Third Edition* contains hands-on exercises that you should strive to complete during or immediately after you read the chapter. It's vital to understand that the exercises don't cover every possible scenario for every AWS service. In fact, it's quite the opposite. The exercises provide you with a foundation to build on. Use them as your starting point, but don't be afraid to venture out on your own. Feel free to modify them to match the variables and scenarios you might encounter in your own organization. Keep in mind that some of the exercises and figures use the AWS web console, which is in constant flux. As such, screenshots and step-by-step details of exercises may change. Use these eventualities as excuses to dig into the AWS online documentation and browse around the web console on your own. Also remember that although you can complete many of the exercises within the bounds of the AWS Free Tier, getting enough practice to pass the exam will likely require you to spend some money. But it's money well spent, as getting certified is an investment in your career and your future.

Each chapter contains review questions to thoroughly test your understanding of the services and concepts covered in that chapter. They also test your ability to integrate the concepts with information from preceding chapters. Although the difficulty of the questions varies, rest assured that they are not “fluff.” We've designed the questions to help you realistically gauge your understanding and readiness for the exam. Avoid the temptation to rush through the questions to just get to the answers. Once you complete the assessment in each chapter, referring to the answer key will give you not only the correct answers but a detailed explanation as to why they're correct. It will also explain why the other answers are incorrect.

The book also contains a self-assessment exam with 39 questions, two practice exams with 50 questions each to help you gauge your readiness to take the exam, and flashcards to help you learn and retain key facts needed to prepare for the exam.

This *AWS Certified Solutions Architect Study Guide: Associate SAA-C02 Exam, Third Edition* is divided into two parts: “The Core AWS Services” and “The Well-Architected Framework.”

Part I, “The Core AWS Services”

The first part of the book dives deep into each of the core AWS services. These services include ones you probably already have at least a passing familiarity with: Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2), Virtual Private Cloud (VPC), Identity and Access Management (IAM), Route 53, and Simple Storage Service (S3), to name just a few.

Some AWS services seem to serve similar or even nearly identical purposes. You'll learn about the subtle but important differences between seemingly similar services and, most importantly, when to use each.

Part II, “The Well-Architected Framework”

The second part of the book is a set of best practices and principles aimed at helping you design, implement, and operate systems in the cloud. Part II focuses on the following five pillars of good design:

- Reliability
- Performance efficiency
- Security
- Cost optimization

- Operational excellence

Each chapter of Part II revisits the core AWS services in light of a different pillar. Also, because not every AWS service is large enough to warrant its own chapter, Part II simultaneously introduces other services that, although less well known, may still show up on the exam.

Achieving the right balance among these pillars is a key skill you need to develop as a solutions architect. Prior to beginning Part II, we encourage you to peruse the Well-Architected Framework white paper, which is available for download at d0.awsstatic.com/whitepapers/architecture/AWS_Well-Architected_Framework.pdf.

What Does This Book Cover?

This book covers topics you need to know to prepare for the Amazon Web Services (AWS) Certified Solutions Architect – Associate exam:

Chapter 1: Introduction to Cloud Computing and AWS This chapter provides an overview of the AWS Cloud computing platform and its core services and concepts.

Chapter 2: Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud and Amazon Elastic Block Store This chapter covers EC2 instances—the virtual machines that you can use to run Linux and Windows workloads on AWS. It also covers the Elastic Block Store service that EC2 instances depend on for persistent data storage.

Chapter 3: AWS Storage In this chapter, you'll learn about Simple Storage Service (S3) and Glacier, which provide unlimited data storage and retrieval for AWS services, your applications, and the Internet.

Chapter 4: Amazon Virtual Private Cloud This chapter explains Amazon Virtual Private Cloud (Amazon VPC), a virtual network that contains network resources for AWS services.

Chapter 5: Database Services In this chapter, you will learn about some different managed database services offered by AWS, including Relational Database Service (RDS), DynamoDB, and Redshift.

Chapter 6: Authentication and Authorization—AWS Identity and Access Management This chapter covers AWS Identity and Access Management (IAM), which provides the primary means for protecting the AWS resources in your account.

Chapter 7: CloudTrail, CloudWatch, and AWS Config In this chapter, you'll learn how to log, monitor, and audit your AWS resources.

Chapter 8: The Domain Name System and Network Routing: Amazon Route 53 and Amazon CloudFront This chapter focuses on the Domain Name System (DNS) and Route 53, the service that provides public and private DNS hosting for both internal AWS resources and the Internet. It also covers CloudFront, Amazon's global content delivery network.

Chapter 9: Simple Queue Service and Kinesis This chapter explains how to use the principle of loose coupling to create scalable and highly available applications. You'll learn how Simple Queue Service (SQS) and Kinesis fit into the picture.

Chapter 10: The Reliability Pillar This chapter will show you how to architect and integrate AWS services to achieve a high level of reliability for your applications. You'll learn how to plan around and recover from inevitable outages to keep your systems up and running.

Chapter 11: The Performance Efficiency Pillar This chapter covers how to build highly performing systems and use the AWS elastic infrastructure to rapidly scale up and out to meet peak demand.

Chapter 12: The Security Pillar In this chapter, you'll learn how to use encryption and security controls to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of your data and systems on AWS. You'll also learn about the various security services such as GuardDuty, Inspector, Shield, and Web Application Firewall.

Chapter 13: The Cost Optimization Pillar This chapter will show you how to estimate and control your

costs in the cloud.

Chapter 14: The Operational Excellence Pillar In this chapter, you'll learn how to keep your systems running smoothly on AWS. You'll learn how to implement a DevOps mind-set using CloudFormation, Systems Manager, and the AWS Developer Tools.

Interactive Online Learning Environment and Test Bank

The authors have worked hard to provide some really great tools to help you with your certification process. The interactive online learning environment that accompanies the *AWS Certified Solutions Architect Study Guide: Associate SAA-C02 Exam, Third Edition* provides a test bank with study tools to help you prepare for the certification exam—and increase your chances of passing it the first time! The test bank includes the following:

Sample Tests All the questions in this book are provided, including the assessment test at the end of this Introduction and the chapter tests that include the review questions at the end of each chapter. In addition, there are two practice exams with 50 questions each. Use these questions to test your knowledge of the study guide material. The online test bank runs on multiple devices.

Flashcards The online text banks include 100 flashcards specifically written to hit you hard, so don't get discouraged if you don't ace your way through them at first. They're there to ensure that you're really ready for the exam. And no worries—armed with the review questions, practice exams, and flashcards, you'll be more than prepared when exam day comes. Questions

are provided in digital flashcard format (a question followed by a single correct answer). You can use the flashcards to reinforce your learning and provide last-minute test prep before the exam.

Resources You'll find some AWS CLI and other code examples from the book for you to cut and paste for use in your own environment. A glossary of key terms from this book is also available as a fully searchable PDF.

Go to wiley.com/go/sybextestprep to register and gain access to this interactive online learning environment and test bank with study tools.

Exam Objectives

The AWS Certified Solutions Architect – Associate exam is intended for people who have experience in designing distributed applications and systems on the AWS platform. In general, you should have the following before taking the exam:

- A minimum of one year of hands-on experience designing systems on AWS
- Hands-on experience using the AWS services that provide compute, networking, storage, and databases
- Ability to define a solution using architectural design principles based on customer requirements
- Ability to provide implementation guidance