Reactive? Proactive?
It’s All Problem Management

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Topics covered

• What is Problem Management?
• What do we mean by Reactive?
• Incident / Problem Management relationship
• What about Proactive?
• More factors for successful Problem Management
What isn’t covered

- Root Cause Analysis
- KPIs, Metrics and Reporting
- Details of the Problem Management process
- Implementation specifics
What is Problem Management?

**ITIL® 2011:**
- “Prevent problems and resulting incidents from happening
- Eliminate recurring incidents
- Minimise the impact of incidents that cannot be prevented”
  - (2011, Service Operations, p 97)

- Finding the cause and
- Fixing it so it cannot happen again
- Makes a difference to stability

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Makes a difference to stability ...

Impact of Problem Management

- 62 Critical Incidents in 2008
- 20 Critical Incidents in 2009
- 3 Critical Incidents in 2010
- 1 Critical Incident in 2011

Problem Mgt launched October 2008
So what’s Reactive Problem Management?

- Flows from an incident that has already occurred

- Incident management is focused on restoring service
- Problem management comes afterwards to investigate the root cause and fix it to prevent recurrence
Incident and Problem Management interact

At some point, IM stops and PM starts ...

1. **Smooth handover**
   - Agree time frames and the handover process
   - Agree what data should be passed over
   - Agree which problems
     - Prioritisation scheme accepted by all
     - Acceptance step in Problem management
     - Absolute clarity about investigations
     - Manage backlog – no false expectations
Incident and Problem Management interact

At some point, IM stops and PM starts ...

2. Effective communication
   ▫ IM and PM speak to same audience
   ▫ Who says what to whom and when is critical
   ▫ Tendency for IM to report causes
   ▫ What does the customer actually want to know when they ask for the cause?
IM/PM Lifecycle is fairly complex

Client: What's my risk exposure? What is the chance of recurrence?

Now we know the cause

First Alert  Status Update  Status Update  Status Update

Incident Report: Incident Data  Risk Estimate  Risk Mitigation  Business Impact  Etc

Problem Report: Agreed solution  Cost  Due Date  Next steps  Etc

Problem Report: Closure statement  Resolution implemented  Etc

Known Error: Work around  Risk mitigation  Additional heightened alerts  Monitoring  Etc

Known Error: Update with root cause

Known Error: Update with completed resolution  Set workaround as inactive

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“What caused it?” is in PM, not IM

- What happened?
- When will it be fixed?
- Will it happen again?

The IM question is:
- What’s my risk exposure?

Client: What’s my risk exposure? What is the chance of recurrence?

Incident Start

Service Restored

Work to restore service

First Alert Status Update Status Update Status Update

Incident Report: Incident Data Risk Estimate Risk Mitigation Business Impact Etc

Hand over
So, What’s Proactive Problem Management?

- Finding problems that may cause instability

  - By definition, before they cause incidents

  - BUT! Don’t get hung up on this, just think in terms of analysis and other sources of intelligence about the environment
Proactive is all about Analysis

The “Great Debate” ...

- Is there any such thing as proactive?
- Are we doing it?
- Is a given problem reactive or proactive?

Finding problems early is worthwhile

- Don’t just react to incidents as they occur
- Analyse all the data you have available
  - Where problems are or might be coming from
- Dedicate resources to proactive problem management
Finding problems proactively

3 General Categories

- **Process outputs**
  - Incident data – e.g. “near misses”
  - KT – “extend the cause, extend the fix”
  - Service desk – knowledge article use

- **People and Teams**
  - Investigation requests
  - Hunches

- **Data Analysis**
  - Trends – catching things creeping up on you
  - Patterns – seeing the “trees for the woods”
More factors in PM effectiveness - 1

- Be good at finding causes -
  Adopt structured problem solving

Consistent and repeatable process
- People know what to expect
- Speeds up problem investigations

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More factors in PM effectiveness - 1

- Be good at finding causes -
  Adopt structured problem solving

![Average time to root cause](image-url)
More factors in PM effectiveness - 2

- Make sure fixes get implemented
  - Business cases fully costed and approved
  - Follow up to ensure implementation
Bottom Line - It’s all Problem Management!

- What is Problem Management?
- What do we mean by Reactive?
  - Finding and fixing the cause of an incident that has already happened
- Incident / Problem Management relationship
  - Handover is very important but hard to manage well
  - Communication is all about managing customer expectations
- So, what’s Proactive Problem Management?
  - Finding the cause of instability before they cause incidents
  - But mainly it’s about gathering intelligence about potential trouble
- Proactive is all about Analysis
  - Ignore the debate about what’s reactive and what’s proactive
  - Build skills in analysis techniques
  - Make time for proactive problem management
- More factors for successful Problem Management
  - Have a structured investigation process
  - Make sure fixes are fully implemented