

Best Practices Summary

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Project/Point-Event: DBA After Hour Response Procedure

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Process Owner/Dept: Brian Borchers/ITS-MIS

Business Need: The ITS DBA team (consisting of three Database Administrators) currently has no formal process for responding to after hour alerts, pages, and emails. They have a very informal way of handling this that was meeting their needs but a formal procedure/policy was needed for this very important, but infrequent task.

Summary of Event: The team started off by mapping out the current informal process that they use to respond to after hour pages, alerts and emails. Since this process had never been visualized before, there was a lot of discussion on certain steps as to “how do we really handle that?” In most cases they found that they were pretty consistent with the way they handled these. Next the group looked for any problems or gaps that existed in their process, and identified a number of these, mainly dealing with the way they communicated internally or with customers. After some brainstorming, those gaps had easy solutions that the group was able to implement into their response process.

Results: A new procedural document was created to acknowledge, respond, and communicate all after hour pages, alerts, and emails. This document identifies what action the DBA is supposed to take at every step of handling an after hour incident. It also clearly defines that the first person that responds to an alert is the “point” person for that incident until it is resolved, and that person is responsible for all communication within the DBA team itself and also with external entities (Server Team, Third party vendor, customers/stakeholders, etc.). This was something that was not defined or clear before. The group also identified a parking lot list item that is very critical when dealing with after hour incidents. There is no formal definition of Service Levels for the various systems that they administer and thus, after hour availability was not clear (On-Call vs. best effort to be available).

Team Members: Mark Schemmer, Cameron Zapf, and Kyu Larson

