

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED KNOW ABOUT POST-MORTEMs

***BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK...**



VictorOps

IT'S NOT A MATTER OF IF, BUT WHEN...



78%
the number of Database Admins that
experience unplanned downtime from
untested database changes



1 large scale & 3 partial outages
what the average company with a
datacenter experiences per year



\$5600 per minute
what downtime costs the
average business

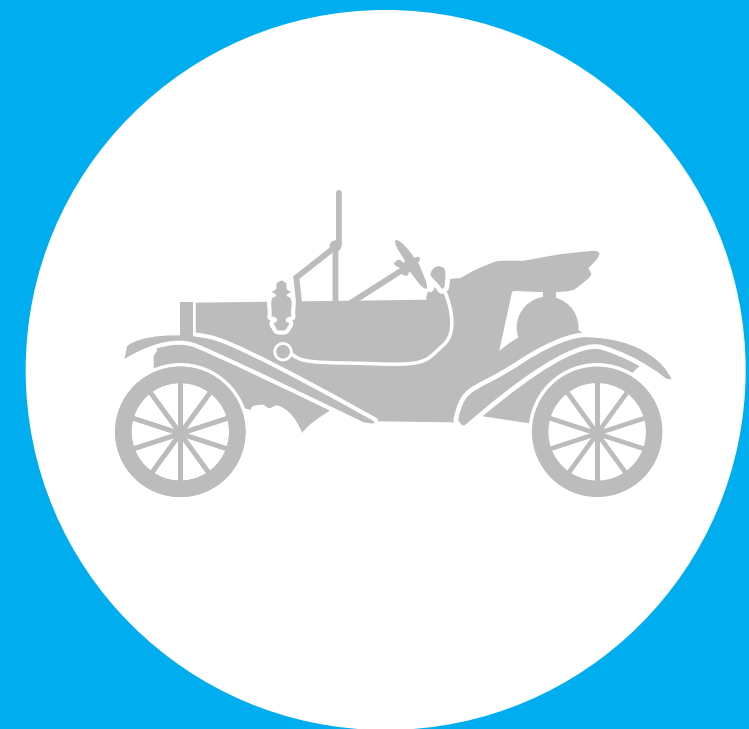
Outages are going to happen.
The real question is:
**ARE YOU GOING TO LEARN FROM
YOUR MISTAKES?**

AFTER THE OUTAGE, DISCUSSING WHAT HAPPENED, WHAT WORKED & WHAT DIDN'T IS ESSENTIAL. THE PROCESS IS CALLED A POST-MORTEM.

“A post-mortem is a meeting where all stakeholders can and should be present, and where people should bring together their view of the situation and the facts that were found during and after the incident. The purpose is to collect as much data as possible and to figure out how the impact of a similar future incident can be reduced.”

Post-mortems are not new or groundbreaking - they've always been an effective way of providing learning and closure around outages.

“THE ONLY REAL MISTAKE IS THE ONE FROM WHICH WE LEARN NOTHING.”



- Henry Ford

WHY ARE POST-MORTEMS IMPORTANT?

From: *Project Retrospectives: Evaluating Project Success, Failure, and Everything In Between*

“The fact that the majority of IT projects fail on at least one measure of success, and that billions of dollars in project waste is reported each year, suggests that there is a critical need for improving the way we manage these projects. The sobering truth is that the secret to more successful project management has been right in front of us the whole time – learning from the past.”

BENEFITS OF POST-MORTEMS

Retrospectives offer a variety of potential benefits, including the following:



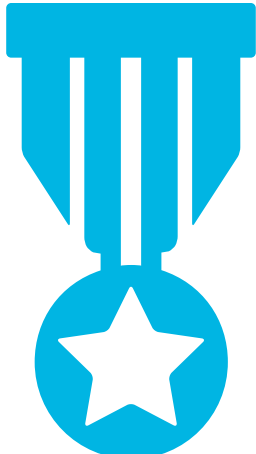
Organizational learning

Get the collective story out (synergistic learning) and ensure that individual stakeholders hear the whole story, not just their personal experience.



Better estimating & scheduling

Capture actual data on size, effort, and time to use in calibrating future estimation models and practices.



Improved recognition & reflection

Pause and reflect on accomplishments before proceeding to “solve the next problem.”



Continuous improvement

Learn from what you’ve done in order to iterate and make your process better in the future.



Team building

Make your team stronger by allowing them the space to debrief & talk through the outage experience.

WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY SKILLS FOR A GOOD POST-MORTEM PROCESS?

- OPENNESS
- PATIENCE
- THE ABILITY TO LISTEN
- POLITENESS
- COURAGE
- EMPATHY
- HUMOR

Norman Kerth emphasizes the importance of a good atmosphere through the 'prime directive':

“Regardless of what we discover, we must understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job he or she could, given what was known at the time, his or her skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand”.



POST-MORTEM CHECKLIST

THE BASICS:



Document your
timeline or log data

☐

Document
conversations

☐

Leave room
for notes

☐

Mean Time to Resolution/
other time calculations

☐

Level of
severity

☐

Archive it for
historical retrieval

☐

Remediation - make
it actionable

☐

RESOURCES:

Tools for the next incident, just in case.



VictorOps post-mortem reporting feature-

http://victorops.force.com/knowledgebase/articles/Getting_Started/Post-Mortem-Reports/

<http://www.paperplanes.de/2014/6/20/what-blameless-postmortem-taught-me.html>

<http://www.slideshare.net/jhand2/its-not-your-fault-blameless-post-mortems>

<http://codeascraft.com/2012/05/22/blameless-postmortems/>

<http://www.slideshare.net/fattofatt/post-mortem-report>

<http://www.cdlib.org/cdlinfo/2010/11/17/the-project-post-mortem-a-valuable-tool-for-continuous-improvement/>

<https://speakerdeck.com/indec/fallible-humans-dealing-with-failure-in-the-absence-of-scapegoats>

<http://tech.blog.box.com/2014/08/a-tale-of-postmortems/>

The Field Guide to Understanding Human Error, Sidney Dekker

The Human Side of Postmortems, Dave Zwieback



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