An Investment in Communications

The Principal Financial Group® (The Principal®) uses incident notification subscriptions to reduce alert overload

> "My favorite feature is creating groups on the fly for targeted secure notifications."
>
> **Renae Gaskins** ▸ IT Systems Analyst-Sr, The Principal

The Principal is a leading global financial investment management firm. Founded in 1879 and headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa, The Principal has more than $539.9 billion in assets under management.

The Principal serves 20.1 million customers worldwide from offices in 18 countries.

The Principal offers businesses, individuals and institutional clients a wide range of financial products and services, including retirement, asset management and insurance, through its diverse family of financial services companies.

Challenges

The Principal uses Netcool Omnibus to monitor its systems. With so much data, executives and IT leaders were buried with a deluge of alerts being generated from the system. With 323 groups and more than 12,000 users (including 219 in Netcool), the volume was overwhelming. During one month, 3,600 events produced more than 352,000 notifications.

Previously, resolution teams that were required to respond to some types of incidents, received notifications only through call trees. A lengthy and manual process that drastically slowed down resolution times.

(x) matters®

Solution

IT leadership implemented a set of subscriptions so executives and IT Staff could choose and self maintain their specific notifications. The result was an incredible 1,108 individual subscriptions. The available subscriptions vary by role and communication method for even better targeting.

"More areas of the company are using xMatters," says Doug Ward, IT Senior Systems Leader. "You can set the level for which notifications you want to receive and what you don't."

Before xMatters, one notable event produced 9,000 notifications during one 12-hour period, and an avalanche of emails and phone calls, overloading the prior solution. Today, with xMatters, over 12,000 have been sent in a 10 minute window with no adverse effects.

Netcool detects when some systems are reaching key thresholds. When they are, xMatters sends targeted alerts based on required technical resolvers.

The Principal has also instituted a method for detecting "heartbeat" issues verse by automating a second ping to a detected issue. If the issue is clear on the second attempt, "all clear" messages are sent via a phone message.

Benefits

IT support staff at The Principal leveraged xMatters' drag-and-drop functionality to build more than 1,100 subscriptions in just a month.

"The great thing about subscriptions is that they are managed by the person. We have saved a ton of

administrative time by not having to change a flat file every time someone wants to change the notifications they receive," says Renae Gaskins, IT System Analyst-Sr.

Meanwhile, leaders at the The Principal replaced manual copy-paste processes for sending notifications with automated notifications based on severity, subscriptions, and roles.

"It's all automated so it doesn't have to go back to the data center to look up contact information for each escalation," explains Ward.

Executives and IT staff can choose which device they use to receive notifications, with mobile notifications on Android and iOS particularly popular in the executive suite.

With IT staff located in multiple locations worldwide, overseas holidays proved particularly tricky. With xMatters' advanced scheduling capabilities international holidays (particular in India) are covered with substitutes in the U.S.

As one of the leading Fortune 500 financial corporations, The Principal relies on superior processes, rapid communication throughout the enterprise and global infrastructure. The intelligent communication enabled by xMatters now contributes to increased service levels for its employees and clients.

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