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# **Closing the Customer Experience Gap with Continuous Automation**

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We live and work in a technology-focused world where the speed and quality of digital customer experiences determines business success. Before COVID-19, companies pursued digital transformation at varying velocities according to market demands, resources and strategy. The pandemic has been an accelerant igniting the transformation of digital services we now rely on—and vaporizing underperformers.

For many enterprises, the unsustainable pace of development required to capture new online customer experiences has resulted in sacrifices of process, quality and resilience. As we pursue the next opportunity, be warned: automate or else.

xMatters exists because the world is an imperfect place filled with disasters, incidents, defects, and technology issues. Our mission is to help enterprises solve technology problems before they become business problems. In other words, we keep your digital experience available and awesome.

The only metric that really matters is whether the customer experience is so good, they would tell a friend about it (e.g., net promoter score) - all other metrics are early indicators.



# Close the Customer Experience Gap

Even in the midst of a pandemic and an economic recession, it's possible to democratize digital services and by doing so provide broader access to a better quality of life. This is attainable through a wider choice of more accessible and innovative products.

A recent xMatters research study found that despite IT and developer confidence in their ability to support today's digital services, there is a material rise in application performance issues reported by more than half of consumers. This means that organizations are challenged with the expectation not only to continue to build and innovate new services, but also to regularly address degradations, issues and incidents. To stay relevant, technology organizations must evolve the traditional approach to address issues.

How we deal with interruptions must change if we hope to develop and deploy reliable services faster.

## A Commitment to Continuous Automation

The requisite solution to meet the demand for reliability and innovation is a commitment to continuous automation. Automation efforts should be applied in areas of the software development cycle where friction in the process impedes an engineer from completing a task and ensuring an uninterrupted customer experience.

**xMatters is focused on several initiatives to help our enterprise customers, including:**

- ▶ Bringing SRE practices to the enterprise at scale with thousands of teams reusing the same automations to solve issues and analytics and postmortems to identify new opportunities for incident prevention and automation
- ▶ Applying automation to the software development cycle to reduce points of friction in development, quality, security, code integration, deployment and production issues
- ▶ Innovating to deliver simple-to-use incident response automation to restore services before customers experience a degradation or interruption of service

While all of these investments are foundational, an additional challenge remains. Incident management practices today are slow, process-laden and mired in toil. Development teams often use different practices, processes, and systems from the operations center, help desk, and IT teams, which leads to confusion, blame, and most importantly longer customer impact times than the market will accept.

# A New Approach: Adaptive Incident Management

There's an opportunity for technology practitioners to take a giant leap forward and realize a higher level of customer delight through automation, collaboration and constant learning. We refer to this as *adaptive* incident management, which we believe is necessary for enterprises to achieve the velocity and resilience that ensures an excellent customer experience.

We've seen similar evolutions in the past: with the rise of the internet economy, new software development methodologies were needed to maintain momentum, and we saw agile software development emerge. With the rise of the public cloud, traditional operations practices also showed signs of strain, with the result that DevOps and SRE practices were adopted into the mainstream. The rise of the pandemic and increased velocity required to meet heightened customer demand requires, yet again, a new approach.





We began to rethink how to fulfill our mission. How do we help customers resolve incidents as quickly as possible and minimize their impact, in this new and demanding environment?

What would it look like if we applied agile principles to traditional incident management?

The agile manifesto might be recast as follows:

### **We value**

- ▶ Collaboration over process and planning
- ▶ Team autonomy over policy and standards
- ▶ Automation over documentation
- ▶ Continuous improvement over accountability

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

**Adaptive incident management will eliminate toil in the continuous software development cycle, enabling better customer experiences at lower cost with less friction. It is the foundation for reliable digital service availability.**

Adaptive incident management solves the challenges of responding to service interruptions across different teams, cultures and systems.

Whether it's a small technical issue or an enterprise-wide outage, adaptive incident management delivers resiliency by automating resolution, facilitating dynamic collaboration, and by using data to inform and evolve processes for the most reliable customer experiences.

### ***Adaptive Incident Management in Action***

A Fortune 100 global retailer dramatically improved its customer experience by transforming its incident management process to be more adaptive. The organization re-evaluated its approach to collaboration across teams, tools, and cultures while leveraging automation to simplify overly complex and manual workflows. This resulted in a 35% reduction in incidents per month.

# The Path to Customer Experience Nirvana Today and in the Future

Delivering best-in-class, uninterrupted digital customer experiences requires an approach that aligns teams across multiple functions to address issues proactively within a culture steeped in continuous improvement and automation.

Adaptive incident management facilitates the application of multiple best practices based on impact, elapsed time, actual severity and customer business value. This approach enables SREs to swarm and major incident teams to manage to conclusion, collaboratively and in concert with one another. The longer adaptive incident management is in place the more valuable it becomes as it learns and improves from previous incidents to proactively avoid future incidents. It paves the way for a day when technology is doing more of the cognitive work to anticipate, identify, and resolve disruptions in digital services without burdening humans. Over time, incidents that do occur will be handled more quickly with little to no customer impact.

Adaptive incident management is fundamental to modern innovation and reliable customer experiences. By adopting adaptive incident management, technology organizations can create more space for innovation and fuel a more accessible and always-on customer experience from anywhere in the world.



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