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# DevOps Best Practices for Pager Duty

Ryan Norrbom

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# Introduction



- On-call responsibilities are crucial for modern DevOps and ensuring the continuous operation of business systems.
- Sustainable rotations and prioritizing the well-being of engineering teams are important to prevent burnout and ensure high-quality work.

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# On-Call Responsibilities



## **On-Call Responsibilities**

Engineers on-call are responsible for responding to incidents and addressing technical issues outside of business hours. This requires high technical expertise, strong communication skills, and an ability to work well under pressure.

## **'You Built it, You Maintain it' Principle**

The 'you built it, you maintain it' principle means that engineers who are responsible for building and maintaining a system are also on-call for that system. This helps ensure that engineers have a deep understanding of the systems they work on, and that they are invested in their long-term reliability.

## **Sustainable Rotations**

Sustainable rotations are essential for preventing burnout and fatigue among on-call engineers. This means ensuring that engineers have adequate time off between on-call shifts, and that they are not on-call for extended periods of time.



# Sustainable Rotations



## **Follow-the-Sun Shifts**

Follow-the-sun shifts ensure that support is available 24/7, without having all team members working out of hours. This approach ensures that someone is always available to provide support when needed.

## **Filtering Non-Critical Alerts**

Filtering non-critical alerts reduces the number of unnecessary out-of-hours notifications, allowing team members to rest and recharge when they are not on call.

## **Regular Audits**

Regular audits ensure that only essential alerts trigger out-of-hours notifications. This approach ensures that team members are not overwhelmed with notifications and that the notifications they receive are critical and actionable.

# Alert Management



Effective alert management is key to enabling the resolution of critical issues. This involves distinguishing between urgent and non-urgent alerts and having a well-defined escalation process.

# Training and Development



## **Runbooks**

Runbooks are an important tool for on-call responsibilities as they guide how to deal with an incident. They should be updated and easily accessible for the on-call team.

## **Incident Reviews**

Incident reviews are a crucial part of training and development for on-call responsibilities. They help identify areas of improvement and prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

## **Shadowing Experienced Team Members**

Shadowing experienced team members is an effective way to learn new skills and gain practical experience. It allows the on-call team to observe how experienced team members handle incidents and learn from their approach.

## **Postmortems**

Postmortems are retrospective meetings that analyze incidents and identify actionable improvements. They help the on-call team to learn from past mistakes and improve their response to future incidents.





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# Balancing Work and On-Call

## **Separate Development from On-Call Duties**

Separating development from on-call duties can help balance work and on-call responsibilities, and align expectations on what needs to be done during on-call hours.

## **Focus on Documentation or Automation**

Using downtime to focus on documentation or automation can help improve processes and reduce on-call workload, enabling a better work-life balance.

## **Realistically Manage Off-Hours Expectations**

Realistically managing off-hours expectations can help reduce stress and improve work-life balance. Set clear boundaries, communicate effectively, and avoid over-committing.

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# Cultural Considerations



A supportive on-call culture enhances the success of teams. It includes:

- Rotating shifts
- Blameless postmortem
- Continuous improvement
- Empathy



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# Mitigating Stress



## **Flexible Schedules**

Offering flexible schedules can help mitigate stress during on-call periods by allowing individuals to manage their work and personal life in a way that is more conducive to their well-being.

## **Time Off After On-call Shifts**

Giving time off after on-call shifts can help individuals reset and recover from the stress associated with on-call work.

## **Personal Downtime**

Personal downtime is important for mitigating stress during on-call periods. This can include activities such as exercise, meditation, or spending time with family and friends.

## **Realistic Off-hours Expectations**

Setting realistic off-hours expectations can promote work-life balance and help individuals manage the stress associated with on-call work.

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# Tools for Efficiency



Using efficient tools like Jira Service Management and Opsgenie can help streamline alert management, reduce response times, and increase productivity.

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# References

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