

Dropbox suffers global outage: Communication handled well

UPDATED. The file storage service, open to SMB and enterprise customers, suffered an outage on Thursday. But it's a testament to the company that it communicated well and recovered quickly.



By [Zack Whittaker](#) for [Between the Lines](#) | May 30, 2013 -- 15:11 GMT (08:11 PDT) | Topic: [Cloud](#)



Image: Dropbox

Dropbox on Thursday experienced an outage that prevented its users from uploading files or accessing the website.

The file storage service said in a tweet just less than an hour after it first confirmed problems with the network that [things we back to normal](#).

Dropbox communicated the issues well. It's not clear if the company was or is able to send notifications to desktop machines and devices that there were experiencing problems, but many were likely unaware of the situation.

In this day and age, when many always-on services fail to work, many are immediately incensed. That said, it's the way the world works now: we outsource our services to the cloud and panic when they're not available at our immediate behest.

The company stated in a simple message on its website that, "your files are still safe." At this early stage, it's still not clear what happened — an internal post-mortem is likely under way now.

Dropbox may have suffered a security breach, a denial-of-service attack — which are commonplace nowadays, particularly for high profile businesses, or what's more likely is that whether someone has tripped over a cable in a datacenter somewhere. Or something similar; you get the idea.

There's a lesson above all else to be taken here. That's in Dropbox's communication strategy.

Dropbox stated very clearly on its Twitter pages that:

- "We are aware of the site issues" and "[We] are working to correct them" in a single tweet. That shows awareness and that something is being done about it.
- Once the problem was identified, a Twitter update was posted no more than half-an-hour after the first announcement. Twitter is the go-to-place for instant updates. It's a search-and-notify system for service help and support (as well as being a microblogging platform for Instagram tweets of people's food.)
- As soon as the problem was resolved, Dropbox notified its customers. It also apologized. So many times, companies fail to even apologize. It's such a simple thing that humans at the originating end of the tweet often forget.

This matters most for the prosumer and the enterprise customers that pay for the service.

The company has proven popular with enterprise customers after first launching as a consumer-focused file-sharing service. Dropbox launched its business service, [dubbed Dropbox for Teams](#), in October 2011. In April this year, the company rebranded the feature that saw it swap out its Teams subscription service [with Dropbox for Business](#) .

Dropbox is expected to float on the stock exchange later this year, after it reportedly began [prepping for an initial public offering](#) .

Despite the obvious hiccup, kudos to Dropbox. It's disaster management planning at its best. Whether it was spontaneous reaction to take to Twitter or if it was planned in advance such an issue occur, the company handled it well.

Now all it has to do is openly and transparently explain what went wrong. At very least for the paying customer base.

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