

Pager Rotation Duties in DevOps: Best Practices

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The Purpose of Pager Rotations

In DevOps, pager rotations are a workload system where team members are on-call to handle issues. This system is set up to be shared among team members and helps develop the concept and culture of "shared ownership". The team that builds the application also helps support it. Pager rotations provide a structure for teams to use that helps ensure a fair coverage of duties among team members. This also helps ensure someone is always available to respond to incidents. With this system in place, downtime is minimized, and service reliability is improved.

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Core Principles of Effective On-Call

According to Atlassian and PagerDuty, strong rotations include:

- Clear expectations of responsibilities
- Fair workload distribution
- Fast, reliable escalations
- Healthy schedules that prevent burnout
- Tools and processes that reduce alert noise

Rotation Structure & Scheduling

Here are some key points about scheduling that PagerDuty emphasizes:

Defined primary and backup roles

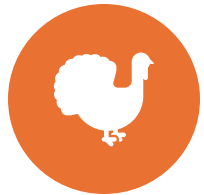
Automated escalation paths so incidents don't get stuck

Rotations that are predictable and evenly distributed

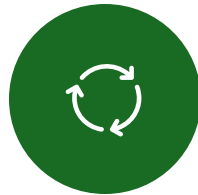
Flexibility for overrides when team members are unavailable

Schedules that support continuous coverage (24/7 or business hours depending on need)

Improving On-Call Coverage



Atlassian recommends the following for efficient and effective on-call procedures:



Ensure teams own the “build, run, fix” cycle



Providing training, access to runbooks, and clear documentation



Reducing alert noise so only actionable, high-quality alerts wake someone up



Using good incident tooling that provides context and reduces stress



Conducting regular reviews and improvements to the rotation process



Preventing Burnout

One of the goals of pager rotations is to keep the duties balanced. Atlassian stresses:

- Protecting engineers from alert fatigue
- Using metrics such as alert frequency to determine if rotations need adjusting
- Offering comp time or flexibility after difficult on-call shifts
- Ensuring teams don't assign overlapping heavy workloads during on-call duty

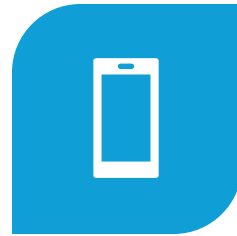
Tools & Automation



BOTH SOURCES HIGHLIGHT
DIFFERENT TYPES OF TOOLS
TO MANAGE THIS PROCESS:



AUTOMATED SCHEDULING
AND ESCALATION SYSTEMS



MULTIPLE NOTIFICATION
CHANNELS (PUSH, SMS,
PHONE)
(PAGERDUTY)

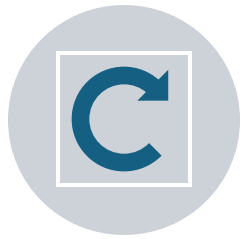


INCIDENT TOOLS THAT
PROVIDE FULL EVENT
CONTEXT TO RESPONDERS
(ATLASSIAN)



DASHBOARDS AND
RUNBOOKS FOR FASTER
TRIAGE

Continuous Improvement



AS WITH MOST SYSTEMS,
PAGER ROTATIONS ARE
DYNAMIC AND NEED TO BE
ASSESSED AND ADJUSTED
REGULARLY.



REVIEW THE ROTATION
REGULARLY TO ENSURE
FAIRNESS



TRACK SIGNAL-TO-NOISE
RATIO OF ALERTS



CONDUCT POST-INCIDENT
REVIEWS AND REASSESS
SCHEDULES



UPDATE DOCUMENTATION,
ESCALATION PATHS, AND
ALERT RULES AS SYSTEMS
CHANGE



Summary

For best practices with Pager Rotations:

- Create fair and predictable schedules with backups
- Provide team members with training, documentation, and continuous review
- Establish a shared team ownership culture
- Utilize high-quality alerts and reduced noise
- Implement automated escalation so issues don't get lost

References

PagerDuty. (n.d.). *Call rotations & schedules: Best practices for on-call coverage*. PagerDuty.

<https://www.pagerduty.com/resources/incident-management-response/learn/call-rotations-schedules/>

Atlassian. (n.d.). *Improving on-call: How to create healthy on-call practices*. Atlassian. <https://www.atlassian.com/incident-management/on-call/improving-on-call>