

DevOps | Pager Rotation Duties



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Purpose

In DevOps, pager rotation duties refer to the shared responsibility among team members to handle on-call alerts and respond to incidents that affect the reliability, availability, or performance of production systems

Why do telemetry if you're not gonna do anything about what you find?

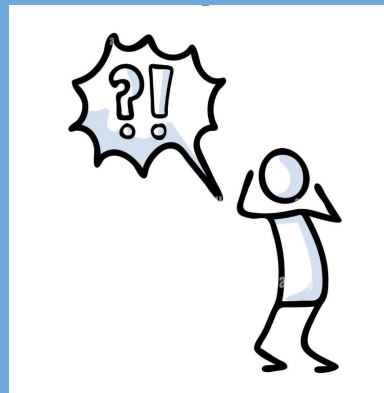
- 24/7 Monitoring
- Shared Responsibility
- Speedy incident resolution
- Continuous improvement



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Key Responsibilities

- Monitoring and Alerting
 - Use monitoring tools to detect system issues
 - Configure alerts to notify on-call engineers when predefined thresholds are reached
- Triage and Respond to Incidents
 - An alert must be acknowledged, assessed, and then resolved
 - Resolution could involve rolling back changes in version control and recruiting extra pairs of hands/eyeballs as needed
- Post Incident Review
 - After the dust settles, conduct a post-mortem to analyze causes and lessons learned
 - Create a list of action items based on lessons learned to prevent a repeat occurrence



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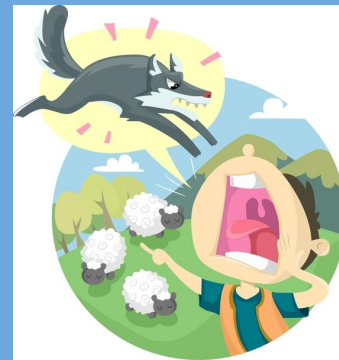
Best Practices



- Take turns
 - Like lifeguards that regularly rotate to keep their attention fresh and alert, support shifts should also rotate thorough engineers
- Have clear escalation policies
 - If an engineer on rotation is unable to solve the issue themselves, have a plan for getting them help
- Automate when you can
 - Self-healing mechanisms that can be triggered are very useful

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Best Practices Cont.

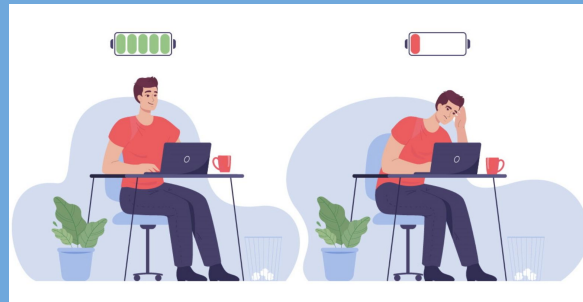


- Set reasonable alert thresholds
 - Alerts that go off for non-urgent reasons have a “crying wolf” effect
- Offer compensation or perks
 - Some companies find it motivational to offer extra benefits for those on support rotations
- Improve documentation
 - Keep playbooks with up-to-date troubleshooting steps to aid in swift responses (I believe airline pilots have a special playbook for emergencies)
- If you have team members spanning time zones, you can leverage that for better full-time coverage

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Challenges

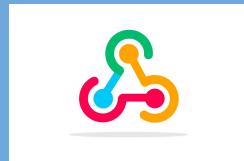
- Burnout
 - To prevent the case of a fatigued engineer on rotation, rotate frequently
- Alert fatigue
 - Too many false positives can lead to ignored alerts, suppress non-critical notifications
- Knowledge gaps
 - Difference in ability/experience amongst a team of engineers may lead to lopsided rotations, be sure to train and mentor the junior engineers



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Common Tools

- PagerDuty
 - For support scheduling and escalations
- OpsGenie
 - Monitoring/alerting
- VictorOps
 - Incident response workflow automation
- Slack/Webhooks
 - Alert notifications via Slack

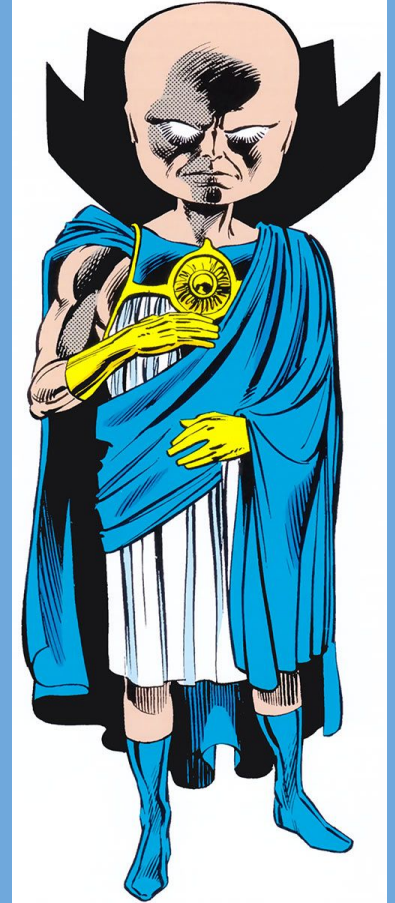


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Conclusion

Pager/support rotations are a crucial part of DevOps that is in services of ensuring system reliability. The task of perpetual surveillance and vigilance should be allocated reasonably amongst the team

The Watcher: Marvel comics character that forever monitor's the universe's activities



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Sources

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