How We Use Post-Mortems To Build A Quality Culture

@anastasia.chicu

May 17th, 2022

= a practice primary goals of which are to ensure that the incident is documented, that all contributing root cause(s) are well understood, and, most importantly, that effective preventive actions are put in place to reduce the likelihood and/or impact of recurrence.

May 17th, 2022

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@channel: I have been informed by a friend that users can't purchase our subscriptions in the iOS app.
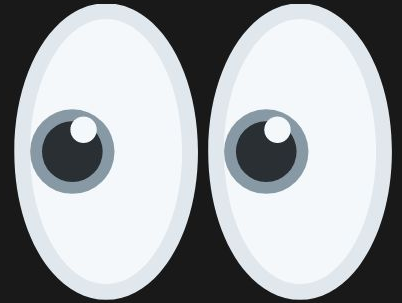
ON SATURDAY, 2:10 PM, FROM CEO

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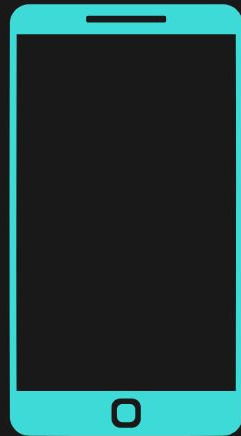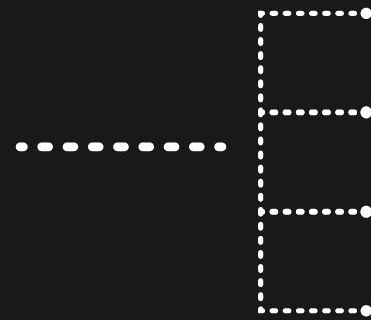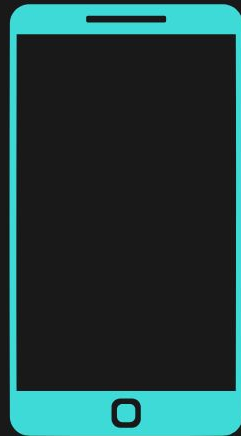**@channel:** I have been informed by a friend that users can't purchase our subscriptions in the iOS app.

ON SATURDAY, 2:10 PM, FROM CEO

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404

CMS

gender

goal

locale

...

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goal

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...

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WHEN TO RUN A POSTMORTEM

- User-visible downtime or degradation beyond a certain threshold
- Data loss of any kind
- On-call engineer intervention (release rollback, rerouting of traffic, etc.)
- A monitoring failure (manual incident discovery)

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Let's postmortem!

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"Regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what they knew at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand."

The timeline

Error introduced
12:20 PM

Start of investigation
2:35 PM

Typo fixed
3:17 PM

2:10 PM
CEO reported the incident

3:15 PM
Root cause found

3:25 PM
Confirmed full recovery

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Impact

# Distinct customers ————————————————	**X**
Purchase ratio ————————————————	**Y**
Average basket size ————————————————	**Z**

Communication during and after the incident

Incident Commander
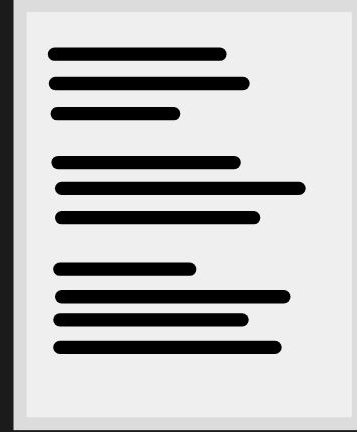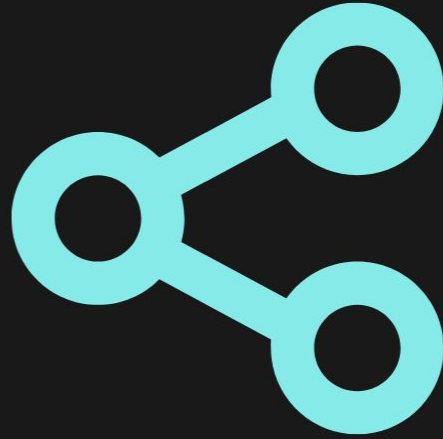
Documented incident resolution procedure

POINTS OF FAILURE

Why wasn't it caught by tests?

Why didn't we have a fallback?

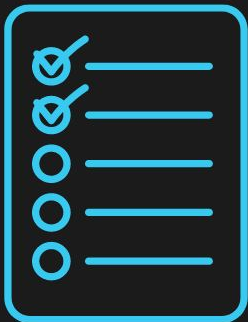Why did it take ~2h to discover it?

Why was it painful to debug?
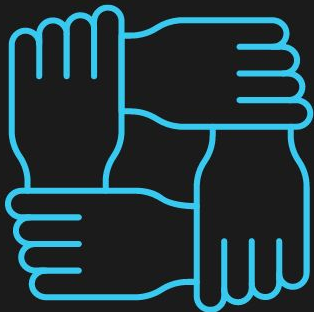
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Write up & share
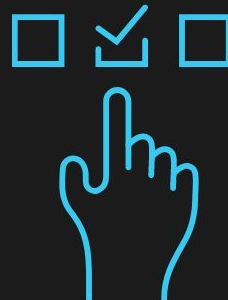
Benefits

ORGANISED INCIDENT RESOLUTION STEPS

ONBOARDING FUTURE ENGINEERS
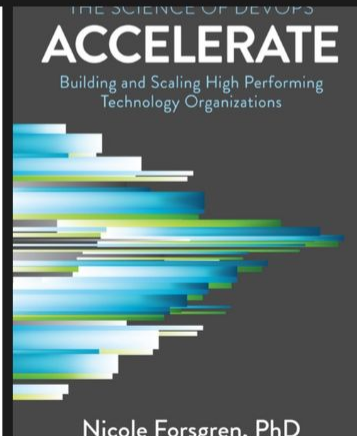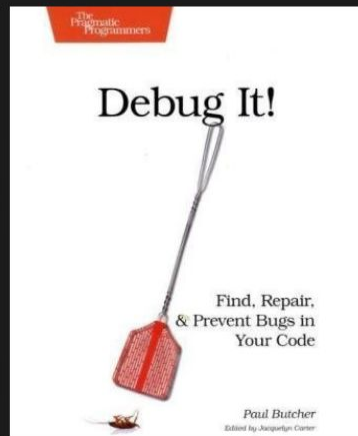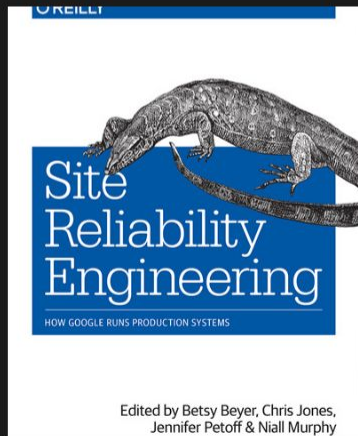
DEAL BETTER WITH TECH DEBT & DEPENDENCIES

TESTABLE & SCALABLE FEATURES

More resources

- https://www.sysaid.com/blog/entry/problem-management-most-problems-dont-have-a-single-root-cause

http://reinertsenassociates.com/the-cult-of-the-root-cause/

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Thank you!