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Getting Started with ChatOps: A Step by Step Guide
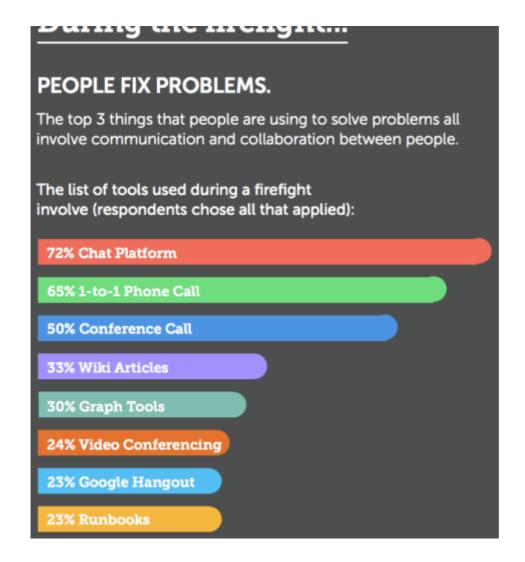
Jason Hand December 19, 2014   DevOps   ChatOps

ChatOps

Our "State of On-call" report revealed many interesting tidbits of information regarding how infrastructure professionals manage incidents and outages.

Not surprisingly, ChatOps is gaining in popularity among many DevOps teams. The benefits are easy to understand and it's clear that collaboration through a solid chat platform is the preferred method for managing infrastructure and addressing incidents among other responsibilities. Building tools that allow you to immediately take action right from within your chat client positions you and your team for some high speed MTTR.

While more and more information is popping up online each day with examples of scripts and plugins that highlight the power of ChatOps, a lot of teams are still left at the starting line, twiddling their thumbs and wondering how to get started. In this multi-part blog post, I'll step you through the decision-making process and an easy-to-follow guide on getting your first chatbot installed, configured, and handling tasks for you.

Chat Clients

One of the first decisions to make is which chat client to use. For many, this is already in place, leaving you only to decide on the flavor of their bot. For those who are still weighing their options on the best chat service for business-wide collaboration, spending a fair amount of effort piloting several options is worth your time as the tool you select will be the interface for communication and chatbot commands.

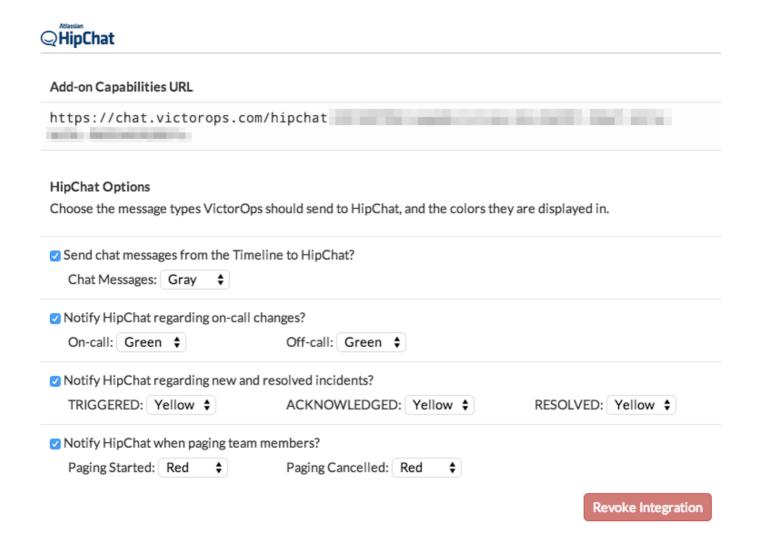|	Slack	HipChat	Flowdock	Campfire
Free version	✓	✓	✓	✓
Persistent	✓	✓	✓	✓
Drag & Drop File Sharing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Desktop	✓	✓	✓	✓
Web	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mobile	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multi-rooms	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multi-accounts	✓	✗	✗	✗
Push Notifications	✓	✓	✓	✓
3rd-party Integrations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Video Chat	✓	✓	✗	✗
Media Preview	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual Chat	✓	✓	✓	✗
Chat History	✓	✓	✓	✓
See Who's Typing	✓	✓	✓	✗

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pretty close to the same features, with CampFire having a only a few deficiencies.

All of these services will serve you just fine when it comes to implementing ChatOps within your team. GitHub, the original developers of Hubot uses CampFire within their teams so despite it's lacking of features in a few areas, it's still a very viable option.

For me, Slack's ability to allow for multiple accounts is a huge benefit. Not only am I able to communicate with my team at VictorOps, but I also have persistent conversations with many other groups unrelated to work. Having one tool where I can carry on all of those conversations from anywhere is a total win for me. Currently, VictorOps integrates with HipChat so creating a bi-directional link between the incident timeline and your team's "War Room" is only a few clicks. away.

Atlassian
⬭HipChat

Add-on Capabilities URL

https://chat.victorops.com/hipchat ▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮ ▮ ▮▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮▮
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HipChat Options
Choose the message types VictorOps should send to HipChat, and the colors they are displayed in.

☑ Send chat messages from the Timeline to HipChat?
    Chat Messages: [Gray   ▼]

☑ Notify HipChat regarding on-call changes?
    On-call: [Green   ▼]   Off-call: [Green   ▼]

☑ Notify HipChat regarding new and resolved incidents?
    TRIGGERED: [Yellow ▼]   ACKNOWLEDGED: [Yellow ▼]   RESOLVED: [Yellow ▼]

☑ Notify HipChat when paging team members?
    Paging Started: [Red   ▼]   Paging Cancelled: [Red   ▼]

[**Revoke Integration**]

This integration was made available in August and has been a favorite among many of our customers. Being able to add additional context such as the conversation (and ChatOps commands) directly to the timeline as it relates to monitoring alerts is critical

Integrations with Slack and FlowDock are underway and should be available in the coming weeks. Regardless to which chat client you choose, as long as it allows for multiple rooms (or channels), can integrate with 3rd-party services, offers a mobile version, and is embraced by the overall culture of your team, you are now ready to select the chatbot that works best for your situation.

In my next post, I'll outline the most popular chatbots currently available and breakdown their core differences. My hope is that this will assist you in your journey towards ChatOps. Stay tuned for part 2.

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