

Incident Communication Strategy

Last updated by | Drew August | Sep 19, 2023 at 7:59 AM PDT

Incident Communication Strategy

The primary objective of this communication strategy is to ensure clear, effective, and timely communication during incidents within the Technology Division. Effective communication is crucial to minimize downtime, manage stakeholder expectations, and facilitate swift resolution.

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Communication Channels

Microsoft Teams Chat Channels

In effort to streamline the communication process for Incident Management, we will be utilize designated Teams channels for real-time updates and collaboration among incident response team members.

- Incident Reporting Teams Channel - This Team's Channel is to be used to by its members to report any observed disruption that negatively affects the normal operation of a service, system, application, or infrastructure.
 - If acknowledged and validated by the appropriate Engineering teams, a separate and dedicated Team's Channel will be created within the Incident Management Team to allow Engineering Teams to triage and work towards resolving the reported Incident. A link to the dedicate Team's Channel will be appended to the chat thread to help direct appropriate Engineering teams.
 - All further communication's regarding the Incident will be contained to the dedicated Incident Management Channel or within the declared DataDog Incident, with updates regarding the status of the Incident to be provided by the Incident Manager in the Service Incident Teams Channel.
 - Once the Incident has been mitigated and considered Stable/Resolved, a final message will be posted to the original chat thread (pertaining to the reported Incident) in this Channel to close the loop on the discussion.
- Service Incident Teams Channel - This Team's Channel is to be used to by its members to announce to the rest of the organization a verified Incident that is currently impacting normal operations.
 - Updates to this Channel need to be provided 1x per hour during an active Incident.
 - Utilize the Communication Templates located below when providing Initial Notifications , subsequent Update Notifications, and Resolution Notification .
- Incident Management Team - This Team is to be used by its members to create dedicated Incident Channels to allow Engineering Teams to triage and work towards resolving the reported Incident.
 - This Team will have a new dedicated Team Channel created for each new Major Incident by the Incident Manager
 - This dedicated Incident Team Channel will conduct the Video Team's Meeting which engaged Engineering Teams will meet to troubleshoot and resolve the Incident.
 - A URL link to the Incident Team Channel will be added to the associated DataDog Incident to direct Engineering Teams to the Video Team's Meeting.
 - All notes and discussions will be recorded in the Channel's Chat by the Incident Manager or delegated Team Member.
 - Details from this Channel's Chat will help populate the DataDog Incident Timeline and be utilized during the Postmortem.

DataDog Incidents

Utilize the central Incident Dashboard in DataDog to provide a live overview of ongoing incidents, their status, and recent updates.

Status Page

An externally accessible Status Page, hosted with StatusPage.io for customers and stakeholders to view the current system status and ongoing incidents.

Communication Templates

The Incident Manager, needs to notify the occurrence of any Major Incidents internally and externally. The goal of internal notification is to focus the incident response in one place for Virtuoso employees and let them know that we know something's broken and we're looking into it. The goal of external notification is to tell customers (Virtuoso staff/members/partners/consumers) that you know something's broken and you're looking into it as a matter of urgency.

Internal Notifications

Incident Initial Notification Template:

- Create a post in the MS Team Service Incident with the following information:

```
SUBJECT:
<Product Name> - <Incident Short Description>

MESSAGE:

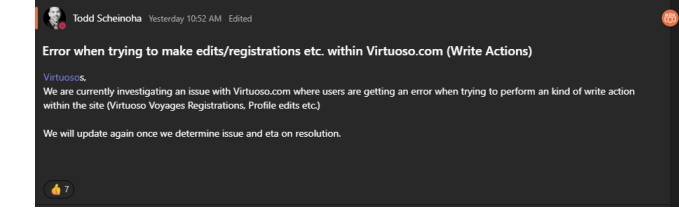
@Virtuoso,

We are investigating an incident affecting, <Product x>, <Product y> and <Product z>. Our team is actively investigating the issue <Incident Impact>.

There will be an update once we determine the issue and an ETA on resolution. Updates will be provided via this Teams channel thread and [StatusPage](https://status.virtuoso.com/) shortly.

We appreciate your patience and support throughout this incident.
```

Example:



- Following this pattern for internal communications makes it easier and more reliable to produce and consume information about incidents. In an emergency this is important. Before sending, we review the communications for completeness using this checklist:
 - Have we described the actual impact on customers?
 - Did we say how many internal and external customers are affected?
 - If the root cause is known, what is it? If it is unknown simply state that root cause is "Unknown"
 - If there is an ETA for restoration, what is it?
 - When & where will the next update be?

Incident Update Notification Template:

- We communicate via MS Teams - Service Incident Channel as described under Initial Notifications above.
 - Update as needed or minimum once per hour.
 - Reply to the same thread and Open with a 1-2 sentence or bullet summary of the incident's current state and impact.
 - A "Next Steps" section with 2-4 bullet points.
 - State when and where the next round of communications will be sent out.

Before sending, we review the communications for completeness using this checklist:

- If the root cause is known, what is it? If it is unknown simply state that root cause is "Unknown"
- If there is an ETA for restoration, what is it?

```
REPLY MESSAGE:

We have determined (or not determined) <the root cause> affecting <Product x>.

Next Steps:
- <Responsible Team> is working towards a fix to resolve.
- There will be an update within one hour with an ETA on resolution. Updates will be provided via this Teams channel thread and [StatusPage](https://status.virtuoso.com/) .
```

Example:

Todd Scheinoha

Yesterday 10:52 AM

Edited

Error when trying to make edits/registrations etc. within Virtuoso.com (Write Actions)

Virtuosos

We are currently investigating an issue with Virtuoso.com where users are getting an error when trying to perform an kind of write action within the site (Virtuoso Voyages Registrations, Profile edits etc)

We will update again once we determine issue and eta on resolution.

7

Ed White

Yesterday 11:11 AM

There is a long running job on Composer-PRO SQL Server that's causing blocking. This could be related to that. Trying to kill the job doesn't stop it. I am investigating other solutions.

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- Incident Resolution Notification Template:
- We communicate via MS Teams - [Service Incident Channel](#) as described under [Initial Notifications](#) above.
- SUBJECT:

RESOLVED: <Product Name> - <Incident Short Description>

REPLY:

@Virtuoso, The issue is now resolved. <Responsible Team> is continuing to monitor the situation.
- Update the subject line to be prefixed with "RESOLVED:"
 - Reply to the same thread, tag the **Virtuoso team** with a 1-2 sentence stating the incident's resolution and continued monitoring.

Example:

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Edited

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1

Todd Scheinoha

Yesterday 11:23 AM

Virtuosos This issue is now resolved. DBA team is researching root cause.

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External Notification

- Incident Initial Notification Template: [TBD](#)
- Login to [Virtuoso Status Page](#) via the [StatusPage Login](#) and update the affected site with the following information:
 - * *Note - credentials are stored in Zoho Vault called "statuspage.io"*
 - **Subject:** Investigating issues with <Product(s)>
 - **Message:** We are investigating issues with <Product> and will provide updates here soon.
- Incident Update Notification Template: [TBD](#)
- We update the incident that we opened on [Status Page Incidents](#) , changing its status as appropriate.
 - We try to keep updates "short and sweet" because external customers usually aren't interested in the technical details of the incident—they just want to know if it's fixed yet and if not, when it will be.
 - Generally, 1-2 sentences will suffice. It's also always a good idea to get someone else to review your communications as a "second opinion" before you send them.
- Incident Resolution Notification Template: [TBD](#)
- TBD