

IT Maintenance Scheduling

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Information Services

Introduction

- Manager, Database Management Services
 - Oracle/MySQL/SQL Server DBA's.
- Maintenance Coordinator

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Information Services

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Agenda:

- IT Maintenance coordination @ Griffith University
- What / why / how...
- Calendar preparation
- Managing a maintenance window
- Links with ITIL
- The future and questions

The 'old' days...

- Each group performed in isolation
- No schedule – whenever the admin had time
- Didn't get done!
- No real communication with clients
- No coordination between groups – clashes would occur
- No planning based on business requirements

Why coordinate IT maintenance?

- More reliance on IT systems
- Systems are much more complex
- Higher availability requirements
- Business planning (eg: end of financial year, student enrolment)
- Expectation of professionalism
- Security (university environment)

How we schedule (strategic)...

- Start August/September year before
- Check University calendars, current maintenance calendar and other important dates (eg: Easter)
- Prepare first draft
- Circulate within IT dept. for comment
- Prepare second draft

How we schedule (strategic)...

- Distribute to important clients for comment
 - Finance
 - Student Administration
 - School of Medicine etc.
 - HRM
 - Library
- Meet with clients and discuss concerns

How we schedule (strategic)...

- Prepare third draft
- Email to key staff
- Seek approval from executive groups
- Publish on web site (hopefully early December)
- Wait for further complaints / problems

What we end up with...

- Maintenance schedule for calendar year:
 - Approx 10 overnight maintenance windows (6pm Sat – 2am Sun)
 - Up to 4 all day maintenance windows (5am – midnight Sun)
 - 1 or 2 all day disaster recovery test dates (5am – midnight Sun)
 - 2 change freeze periods

2008 ICTS Maintenance Calendar

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How we schedule (tactical)...

- Request maintenance activities 2+ weeks before window
- Collate all activities
- Resolve conflicts if any
- Prepare communication to all staff
 - Translate 'IT speak' into 'plain English'

How we schedule (tactical)...

- Present to management if required
- Meet with IT staff Friday before if required (big picture)
- Be available during maintenance if problems occur
 - Coordinate response and communication
 - Decide when rollback needs to occur

ITIL & maintenance

- Information Technology Infrastructure Library
- Griffith has implemented Change Management component – works very well
- Not all maintenance involves a change
- Not all changes involve activities in maintenance windows

ITIL & maintenance

- CAB not best placed to coordinate maintenance activities – does not get the “big” picture
- Coordinator needs to check that maintenance has been approved by CAB
- Coordinator can cancel / postpone work approved by CAB

How we communicate with clients

- All staff email 1 week before window
 - Systems from a client point-of-view
 - Include link to calendar for reference
- Notice posted on important web sites
 - Portal login
 - Teaching & Learning system
- Seek responses – if any major issues please contact

Dealing with problems...

- During the window:
 - Priority is to get the system back up
 - Coordinate response and rollback if required
 - Communicate with management and keep them informed of progress

Dealing with problems...

- Afterwards:
 - Investigate and find out what went wrong
 - Decide on how problem can be avoided in the future
 - Report to management
 - Don't jump the gun – some problems don't occur for days

Results...

- Feedback is generally very good
- Provides certainty for IT staff
- Clients appreciate the consultation
- Very few windows get cancelled
- Most academics and staff aware of schedule's existence
- Very few complaints

Room for improvement...

- Lessons learned during windows
 - How to record and ensure mistakes not repeated
- Patching framework including targets and metrics
- Scheduling across groups
 - Allow all groups opportunity to patch
 - Server OS, database, application etc
- Tools to assist calendar preparation

Questions?