



IT Maintenance Scheduling

Kevin Grant

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Introduction

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

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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

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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

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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)

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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

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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

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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

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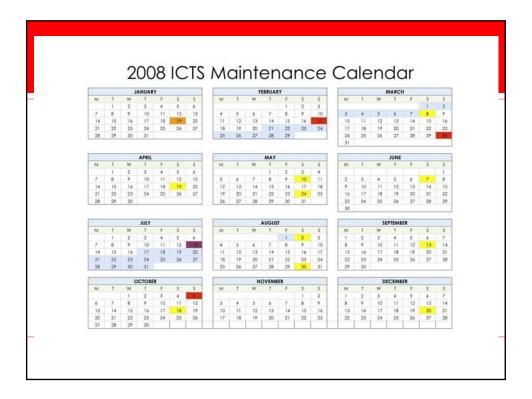




What we end up with...

- 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

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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'

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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Questions?

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