CONNECTWISE + AFTER HOURS SUPPORT

"70% of all MSPs do not provide a true 24-7 service. The more mature MSPs realize that it is necessary to provide this service since downtime can inflict a significant cost on a customer's satisfaction as well as the long-term relationship between the MSP and the customer."
– George Bardissi, CEO BVoIP

With more businesses demanding support 24x7, MSPs who don't offer after-hours service are at a serious disadvantage, risking higher customer churn, lost revenue and lower margins than their competitors.

This guide provides tips and best practices on how you can launch or improve your current after-hours offering while keeping your on-call team motivated and happy.

RETHINK YOUR AFTER-HOURS POLICY

Typically, labor covered under a managed service agreement (MSA) extends from 8AM to 5PM Monday through Friday. Labor that is conducted beyond the hours specified under an MSA can usually be billed at 1.5-times the regular rate.

Implementing this type of policy ensures fewer emergency after-hours calls from clients because it compels them to consider whether the issue is serious enough to warrant the extra cost. Your team will then only be responsible for critical incidents after hours. Additionally, whoever on your team handles the emergency can be allocated a portion of the extra revenue as an incentive.

AVOID COMMON ALERT FAILURES

Since you are now charging more for after-hours service, you need to be responsive to your customers and make sure the incident is resolved in a timely manner. Although email and text communication methods are often used to alert MSP teams of critical incidents, these messages are too easy to miss and ignore, especially when they are sent after hours. Missing even one single email or text can result in delayed incident resolution and downtime costs totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars per hour according to Gartner's research. Consider an incident alert management system that is tightly integrated with ConnectWise Manage to ensure that after-hours alerts are never missed.

A little bit of organization goes a long way. MSP teams need to work together to set a schedule that works for everyone, with on-call hours distributed equally and clear on-call schedules so no one is confused about their responsibilities. An on-call scheduler, part of a complete incident alert management system, will automate and manage whatever on-call scheduling policy your team establishes.

To make sure that after-hours incidents are handled effectively, conduct a post-incident (or post-mortem) review after every instance. During the review, you and your team should ask if:

- The event was triggered by a real issue or by an issue that could have waited until the following day or by an issue that didn't exist in the first place
- The alert was delivered to the appropriate person. If not, was this because the alert was missed or was the person who received the alert unable to handle the issue?
- There was enough information provided to the MSP on-call so that they could handle the issue quickly. If not, the team must establish a new process for including more alerting information.

MAKE CONNECTWISE MANAGE WORK FOR YOU

ConnectWise Manage is a powerful solution for cataloguing incidents and updating tickets, giving the MSP team real time visibility into each incident. Here are a few tips on how to get the most out of ConnectWise Manage for after-hours service.

TIP 1 – Automate as much as you can

When you automate workflows, you speed up the processes of incident management. Here are some opportunities for automation:

USE SMART ALERTS

When a high priority ticket is created and updated in ConnectWise Manage, use an incident alert management system that intelligently routes alerts to the right person. By automating the process, you eliminate human errors and reduce the time it takes to notify the on-call team member that is responsible for managing incidents.

SET UP ALERT ESCALATION

To build redundancy into the alerting process, establish an escalation policy so that if the person receiving the alert does not acknowledge it in a timely manner, the alert can be routed to someone else. The incident alert management platform should have customizable parameters, such as the interval of time between escalations and the action that begins or stops the escalation of alerts (i.e., Read, Acknowledged, etc.).

Imagine having to waste valuable time to make calls to someone on your team or calling the office or the operator to hand off the emergency to someone else if you can't get to it. With a solution that lets you automatically assign and set up escalations, you don't need to worry that the incident isn't going to get resolved if you can't respond right away. Someone else on your team will be alerted and can take on the responsibility.

SET AUTOMATIC TICKET UPDATES

A key component of cataloging the incident resolution process is to ticket every step of the way so you can track the progress of the event. The incident alert system should have the ability to automatically update the ticket. This eliminates human error, saves time and provides for almost immediate updates.

AUTOMATE NOTIFICATIONS TO CLIENTS

If you choose to make these updates available to your clients, imagine how relieved they would feel knowing that the critical incident they reported is being worked on. Sharing this and other information with your client (e.g. providing them a monthly report, extending a login for them to access their own documentation), is the key to building trust and tackling problems together as partners.[1]

TIP 2 – Schedule Recurring Tickets

Once you've automated the process of capturing and dispatching tickets, consider doing the same with recurring tasks. With ConnectWise you can automate regular tasks that deal with documents, finance, configurations and more. You can also schedule the right resources to make sure these important client maintenance tasks are completed on time.

In addition, you can create a standard service template for one-off tickets that you know will occur frequently, such as workstation and server installs. With these templates in place, tickets can be created and entered into the system quickly, ensuring you capitalize on important revenue opportunities.

According to a ConnectWise blog post[2]:

"Bid adieu! to ticketing déjà-vu. When a familiar request comes in from a client that you've already handled for a different one, just copy the entire previous ticket (tasks, configurations, documents, and all), and save yourself the headache of recreating the wheel, or in this case, the ticket."

TIP 3 – Get Engineers to update ticket status

The teams involved with the incident are the best people to update tickets. However, busy engineers tend to defer updating the ticket status and often wait until they are finalizing their

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[1] https://www.itglue.com/blog/7-keys-to-client-retention-for-msps
[2] https://www.connectwise.com/blog/see-feedback-in-action-2016-5/

notes and have fully resolved a ticket. Try to make it easier for engineers to provide updates and encourage them to do it sooner in the issue-resolution process. For example, limit the number of status selections for a ticket that follows normal workflows and provide a clear, concise description for when to use each status.

By using an alerting solution with bi-directional ConnectWise Manage integration, techs can use the solution's smartphone app to immediately respond to the ticket.

ConnectWise[3] urges you to explain to your team why it is important to your business that timely status updates are made available to both the client and the service team. Effective communications to the client via a portal or email notifications will result in fewer calls requesting updates. With a service management solution, management can gain visibility of tickets that are getting stuck in the queue and take appropriate action.

CONCLUSION

The key to incident resolution after hours is to use a powerful solution like ConnectWise and pair it with a critical alerting platform that lets you differentiate alerts, automate the process of escalating alerts to the next person in charge and develop on-call schedules to determine who gets the alert based on the day and time of the incident.

[3] http://university.connectwise.com/content/documents/whitepapers/cw_wp_newservice.pdf

ABOUT ONPAGE

OnPage's award-winning incident alert management system for MSP professionals provides the industry's only ALERT-UNTIL-READ notification capabilities. Built around the incident resolution lifecycle, OnPage helps MSPs and their clients get the most out of their digital investments, ensuring that sensors, monitoring systems, and people have a reliable way to escalate critical alerts to the right person immediately.

OnPage's escalation, redundancy, and scheduling features ensure that a critical message is never missed. Infinitely more reliable and secure than emails, text messages and phone calls, OnPage shrinks incident resolution time by automating the notification process, reducing human errors and streamlining operations. As part of IT service management, the solution tracks alert delivery, ticket status, and responses, delivering complete audit trail reporting during and after each incident. OnPage is fully integrated with ConnectWise Manage and other systems, allowing teams to initiate and manage alerts and escalation teams from any ticketing platform.

MSPs rely on OnPage to streamline operations, keep their teams motivated, reduce costs, and add new revenue streams to grow their businesses.

For more information, visit http://www.onpage.com or contact the company at marketing@onpagecorp.com or at (781) 916-0040.

