Games SRE Play to Improve Incident Response
Who is Austin?

- Recovering Amazonian
- Has caused many production outages 😞
- Has learned a lot about resolving incidents 😊
- Exploring OpsDrills teams can play for intentional practice
Prerequisites
For Improving At Incident Response

• Have an Incident Management framework
  • Need a framework? response.pagerduty.com is a good start
• Train everyone on the framework
• Practice incident management through playing games
Foundational factors for SRE teams

SRE Cultural Elements

• Psychological Safety
  • Take risks, Be vulnerable, Blameless culture, Growth culture

• Team Cohesion
  • Timely feedback cycles, Shared responsibility, Shared goal

• Team Resilience
  • Incident Response, Monitoring / Observability, Automation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Incident Response</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Curiosity</td>
<td>• Azure - Cosmos DB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Problem Solving</td>
<td>• Kubernetes - kubectl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication</td>
<td>• AWS - Kinesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Delegation</td>
<td>• GCP - Firebase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Coordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Poor Performance leads to longer MTTR
Lost Revenue and Lost Customer Trust

- Mean Time To Restore - MTTR
  - Lots of other Rs used such as Recovery, Resolution, Remediation, etc
- Incident Response Anti-patterns
  - By-stander effect, Blame Game
  - In-efficient SMEs due to
    - Missing or out of date Runbooks
    - Poor Team Cohesion
How do we grow a SRE culture?

• Games!

• Re-defining games (Drills, Runbooks, and Gamedays oh my!)
Intentional Practice

What do other disciplines do?

• Sports teams do drills on isolated skills
• Fire departments do drills - controlled burns, entering burning structures
• CyberSecurity teams play Capture the Flag (CTF)
Hierarchy of Incident Response Concepts

- **Skills**: These games exercise core competencies that teams or individuals need to be great at.
- **Delegation**: These games provide different roles and the opportunity for leadership.
- **Communication**: These games stress calm, clear speech.
- **Trust, Bonding, and Safety**: This is the social foundation.
Types of Games to Play to Improve at Each Level

- **Ops Drills**: These games exercise core competencies that teams or individuals need to be great at.
- **Role Based Co-op Games**: These games provide different roles and the opportunity for leadership.
- **Asymmetrical Co-op Games**: These games stress calm, clear speech.
- **Party Games**: Social Foundation
Party Games
Trust, Bonding, and Safety - Social Foundation
Asymmetrical Co-op Games
Communication - Calm, clear directions
Role Based Co-op Games
Delegation - Chef delegating tasks

OVERCOOKED!
Ops Drills
Skills & SME Knowledge specific to your teams and business

• Tabletop Exercises
• Firedrills
• Chaos Testing
• Gamedays
CREDITS
Photography & Game Art Credits

Soccer - Jeffrey F Lin https://unsplash.com/photos/XUsMIX04wvc
Firefighters - by Hush Naidoo Jade
CTF - from https://www.cylab.cmu.edu/research/software-security.html
Jackbox - https://www.jackboxgames.com/presskit/
Overcooked - https://www.ghosttowngames.com/press/
Cafe Mox - https://www.moxboardinghouse.com/
Steam Store - https://store.steampowered.com/
Board Game Arena - https://BoardGameArena.com
So, Go Play More Games 😄

Questions and Discussion

@OpsDrill

austin@opsdrill.com