

# Run, Walk, Crawl, or How We Failed Our Way to SLO Readiness



**Rob Durst**  
**Site Reliability Engineer**  
Salt Lake City, Utah

Run, Walk, Crawl, or

How ~~WE~~ <sup>FEEL</sup>

*Or, looking back how we'd think about  
this endeavor in hindsight...*



**Rob Durst**  
Site Reliability Engineer  
Salt Lake City, Utah

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# SLO Readiness Checklist

✓ - ???

✓ - ???

✓ - ???

✓ - ???



A theater stage with a spotlight and red curtains. The stage floor is made of wooden planks, and the background is a plain wall. The spotlight is a bright, circular beam of light that illuminates the text and the floor. The red curtains are on the left and right sides of the stage. The foreground shows the backs of several rows of red theater seats.

**The Who?**

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# An SRE Team's Reality?



Google Gemini generated image

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# An SRE Team's Reality?



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# Setting the Scene

We are a resource constrained  
SRE team.

A theater stage with a spotlight and red curtains. The stage floor is made of wooden planks, and the walls are a neutral color. The spotlight is a bright, circular beam of light that illuminates the text and the floor. The red curtains are on the left and right sides of the stage. The foreground shows the backs of several rows of red theater seats.

**The Where?**

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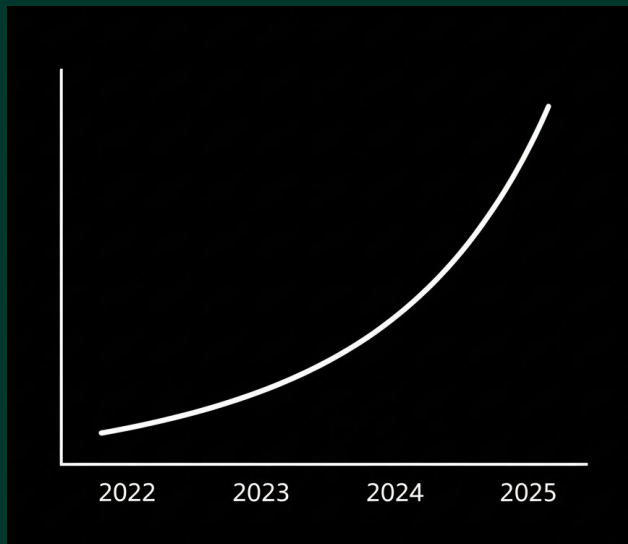
# A Bit on Spring Health

2022

[Team] 50 eng | 0 devops/sre

[Backend] 250,000 req/day

[Deployments] 75/wk



2025

[Team] 200 eng | 8 devops/sre

[Backend] 30,000,000 req/day

[Deployments] 300/wk

---

# Setting the Scene

**We are a resource constrained  
SRE team at a hypergrowth startup.**

A theater stage with a spotlight and red curtains. The stage floor is made of wooden planks, and the walls are a neutral color. The spotlight is a bright, circular beam of light that illuminates the text and the floor. The red curtains are on the left and right sides of the stage. The foreground shows the back of several rows of red theater seats.

**The What?**

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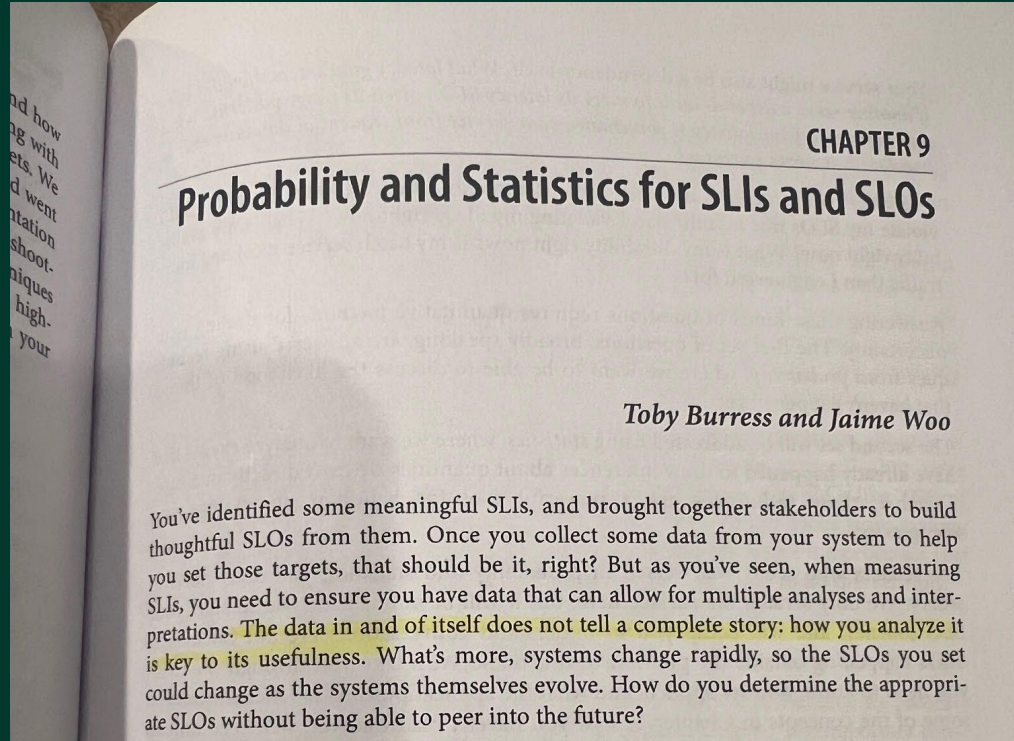
**SLO adoption is a  
socio-technical  
problem.**

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SLO adoption is a  
socio-technical  
problem.

---

# Ch. 9 of The SLO book



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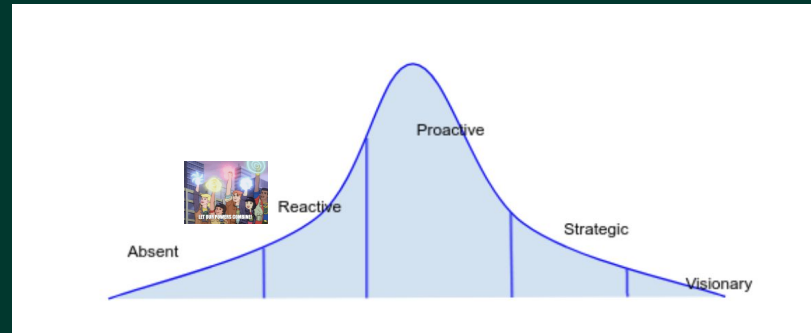
# Setting the Scene

We are a resource constrained  
SRE team at a hypergrowth startup  
adopting SLOs - a socio problem.

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# The Start of Our Journey

The early days, circa 2021.



## Reliability Maturity Model

December 15, 2022

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**Culture**

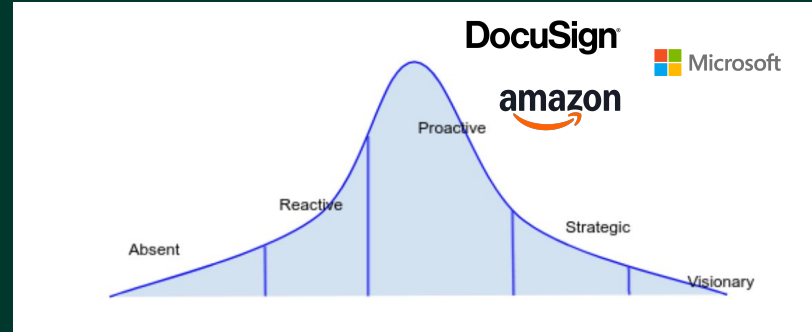
**Authors:**

[Vartika Agarwal](#), [Tracy Ferrell](#)

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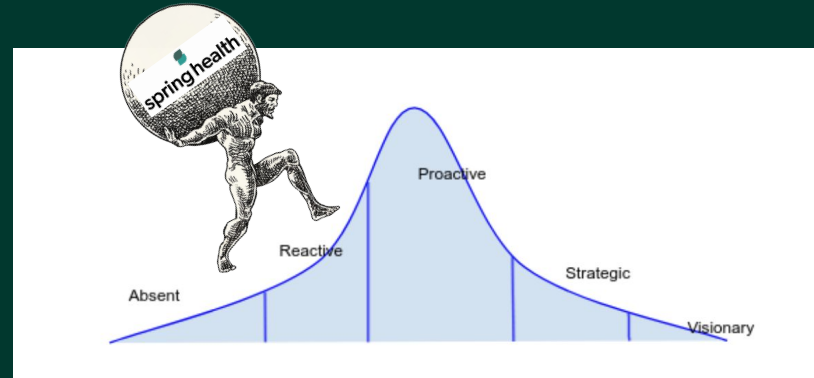
# The Platform team is born...

Spring Health, circa 2022.



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# Can we bake in SLOs from the very beginning?



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# SLO Readiness Checklist

✓ - adopted and committed to an observability platform

---

# Attempt #1



May 6th, 2022 ▾

Hey guys - there's an interesting (virtual) conference next week: <https://www.sloconf.com>. Might be worth watching some sessions.

🔒 1 🗣️ 1 😊+

May 11th, 2022 ▾

random thing: this is the dashboard I made for myself in new relic prior to us moving over to data dog:  
<https://one.newrelic.com/dashboards/detail/MjIwNjkxNHxWSVp8REFTSEJPQVJEfDE5NTk2NzI?account=2206914>

May 17th, 2022 ▾

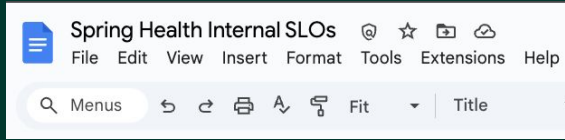
SLO view in DD [https://app.datadoghq.com/slo?query=%21Internal&saved\\_view=1512](https://app.datadoghq.com/slo?query=%21Internal&saved_view=1512) <- this is external SLO  
<https://app.datadoghq.com/slo> has both internal and external SLO

May 18th, 2022 ▾

nobl9 & SLO platform (a thread)

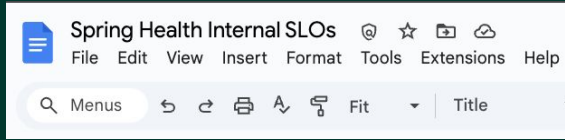
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# Attempt #1



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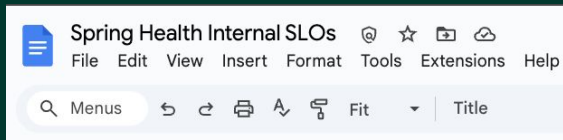
# Attempt #1



Google Gemini generated image

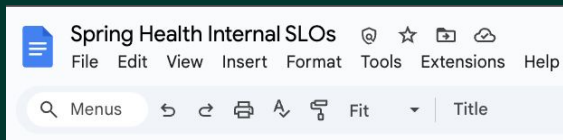
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# Attempt #1



SLI	How/Where it is measured	Internal SLO	SLA
Database Query Duration	<a href="#">Datadog</a> - top duration by queries < 5s	P90 < 5s	

# Attempt #1

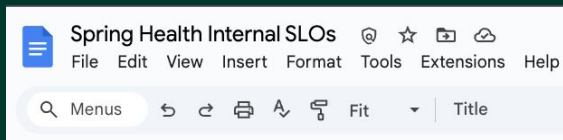


## Admin Experience

SLI	How/Where it is measured	Internal SLO
Care provider can access member profile	Datadog - TBD on getting metrics	

SLI	How/Where it is measured	Internal SLO	SLA
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# Attempt #1



## NBD (New Business Drivers)

SLI	How/Where it is measured	Internal SLO	SLA

## Admin Experience

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✗ - a notion of nominal and vague ownership

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# SLO Readiness Checklist

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# Attempt #2

Updated Jul 14, 2023   Edit  Share  ...

Spring Health Internal SLOs



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# Attempt #2

Updated Jul 14, 2023     

Spring Health Internal SLOs



Google Gemini generated image

# Attempt #2



Updated Jul 14, 2023     ...

Spring Health Internal SLOs



SLI	How/Where it is measured	Internal SLO	SLA
Appointments Latency	<a href="#">Datadog SLO</a>	99%	
Note Appendments Latency	<a href="#">Datadog SLO</a>	99%	
Documents Latency	<a href="#">Datadog SLO</a>	99%	
Notes Latency	<a href="#">Datadog SLO</a>	99%	
Error rate	<a href="#">Datadog SLO</a>	99%	

Google Gemini generated image

---

# Attempt #2



Updated Jul 14, 2023   Edit  Share  

Spring Health Internal SLOs

SLI	How/Where it is measured	Internal SLO
Database Query Duration	<a href="#">Datadog</a> - top duration by queries < 5s	P90 < 5s



SLI	How/Where it is measured	Internal SLO
Appointments Latency	<a href="#">Datadog SLO</a>	<u>99%</u>

# Attempt #2



Updated Jul 14, 2023  Edit  Share  ...

Spring Health Internal SLOs



Google Gemini generated image

## Mobile Experience

SLI	How/Where it is measured	Internal SLO	SLA

## NBD (New Business Drivers)

SLI	How/Where it is measured	Internal SLO	SLA

---

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✓ - adopted and committed to an observability platform

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✗ - an established standard and process

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# Attempt #3



## Creating the Pit of Success

"The Pit of Success: in stark contrast to a summit, a peak, or a journey across a desert to find victory through many trials and surprises, we want our customers to simply fall into winning practices by using our platform and frameworks. To the extent that we make it easy to get into trouble we fail."

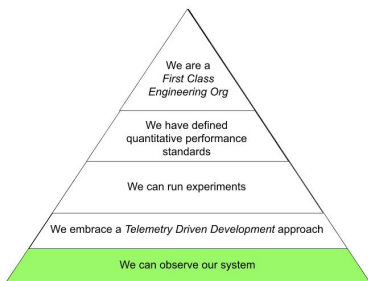
— Rico Mariani

To achieve this org-wide process change, I propose the creation of the MOP initiative: an engineering initiative to build out tooling, define processes, and evangelize best practices around monitoring, observability, and performance.



Folks on MOP are affectionately known as Mop-Heads

Here we will implement a plan to bring out the pyramid of first class engineering orgs. This will better equip developers with the tools and skills to own the performance of their own systems. Furthermore it will make success the default.



## MOP Initiative #1: A Foundation of SLOs

By Rob Durst 4 min 19 Add a reaction

# Attempt #3



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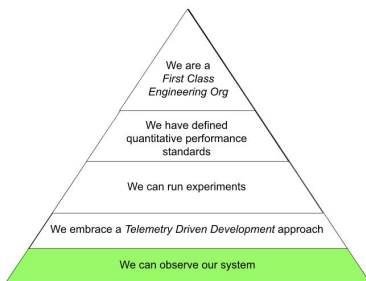
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Google Gemini generated image

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# Attempt #3



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- ✓ - adopted and committed to an observability platform
- ✓ - a notion of nominal and vague ownership
- ✓ - an established standard and process
- ✗ - a dedicated SRE resource with protected time as part of a roadmap initiative

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# Attempt #4



## A Primer on Reliability

By Rob Durst 9 min 33 Add a reaction

### Grokking reliability.

A majority of the following section is heavily based on [Dave Rensin's talk Less Risk Through Greater Humanity](#). If you have an extra 45 minutes to spare, pour a ☕ and enjoy!

To err is human, yet to persist in error is diabolical. Thus, mistakes are learning opportunities and since innovation is the process of mak[ing] changes in something established, especially by introducing new methods, ideas, or products (source) it is based in mistakes. As we're ~1,400 strong at Spring Health working *fast to change* lives it's common for these errors to be occurring all the time (yet typically small in blast radius and temporal); to be overly philosophical, as Dave Rensin stated "to embrace humanity is to embrace fallibility".

So with this context in mind, how do we address the desire to continuously innovate while also maintaining the reliability of the system?

Stepping back, what even is reliability?

**Reliability:** likelihood that when a user goes to use the system it will work as they expect and need. This is the most important feature of a system.

Ok, so we know we cannot be 100%; perfection here is not only impossible (it is human nature to make mistakes) but undesirable (the most reliable system is an unchanging one and thus lacks innovation) and counter to the growth of the company (no mistakes means no learning opportunities). So how do we reason about how reliable we should be?

Ultimately, we seek a magic line where anything below the line users are unhappy and anything above the line users are indifferent (at some point each incremental increase in availability will no longer be observable by users and furthermore, will be exponentially more expensive to achieve).



Levels of reliability vs. user happiness.

## SLO Walkthrough: Overview

By Rob Durst 4 min 32 Add a reaction

This walkthrough is structured to guide folks through the process of brainstorming and creating SLOs for their service for the first time. *While useful as a guiding instrument*, if the process of filling out the entire document here is too laborious, please at least ensure the SLO Template is filled in completely; *this walkthrough is a guide, the SLO template is the living source of truth.*

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THU

20

Eligibility <> MOP: SLOs, 11:30am

Grant / Rob: more SLO work [Hu  
12 - 1pm

MX Python Service SLO, 1pm

# Attempt #4



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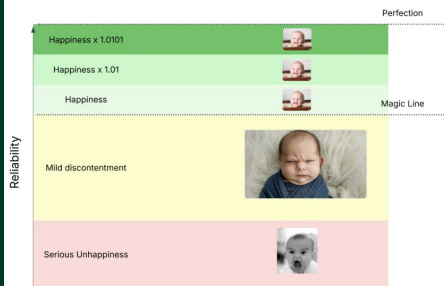
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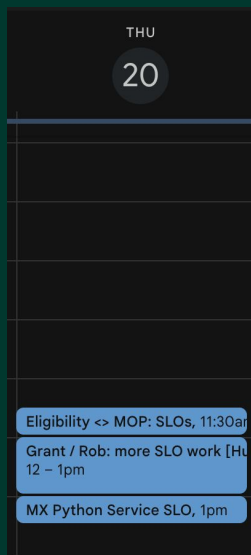


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### SLOs for in cd\_pipeline

TYPE	NAME	TIME	TARGET	STATUS	ERROR BUDGET LEFT
🕒	CD pipeline jobs complete within 10 min	30d	99%	99.953%	95%
📊	CD pipeline success rate	30d	99%	95.5%	-349%

Showing 2 of 2 SLOs

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# Attempt #4



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# Today

## RFC: Error Budget Based Code Freeze

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### Executive Summary

**Target Period:** Holidays '25 (December 4, 2025 to January 16, 2026 - tentative)

**Author:** Rob Durst

**Status:** *Approved* 

# SLO Readiness Checklist

✓ - adopted and committed to an observability platform

✓ - a notion of nominal and vague ownership

✓ - an established standard and process

✓ - a dedicated SRE resource with protected time as part of a roadmap initiative

# SLO Readiness Checklist

1. Basic observability

✓ - adopted and committed to an observability platform

2. An understanding of nominal

✓ - a notion of nominal and vague ownership

3. A concept of ownership

✓ - an established standard and process

4. Protected time

✓ - a dedicated SRE resource with protected time as part of a roadmap initiative

# Reliability Initiative Framework SLO Readiness Checklist

1. Basic observability  - adopted and committed to an observability platform
2. An understanding of nominal ownership  - a notion of nominal and vague ownership
3. A concept of ownership  - an established standard and process
4. Protected time  - a dedicated SRE resource with protected time as part of a roadmap initiative

# Rightsizing Resources

1. Resource utilization dashboard.
2. Baseline going back months.
3. Platform owns sizing.
4. SRE/Infra engineer assigned to task.

# Rollback First Mentality

1. General dashboards of service health.
2. Nominal == up.
3. SRE owns incident management process.
4. SRE/infra engineer assigned to task.

---

# Summary

## Reliability Initiative Framework

1. Basic observability
2. An understanding of nominal
3. A concept of ownership
4. Protected time



# We're Hiring!



# *Thank you*

Spring Health 

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[rdurst@springhealth.com](mailto:rdurst@springhealth.com)



[/in/robertdurst/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/robertdurst/)