



6 ITSM mistakes

You can fix using analytics





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Introduction

IT teams are under tremendous pressure to manage constantly-evolving user expectations, and work with a diverse and ever-growing portfolio of devices, applications and services, often constrained by a static budget and limited resources. As a result, it's not uncommon for IT leaders to overlook certain mistakes such as making quick assumptions to resolve an incident without properly looking into its root cause. While this may seem logical when strapped for time, it can cost additional time and money in the long run to resolve the incident.

The solution is to analyze service management data to identify and address deep-rooted process-level or people-level inefficiencies by continuously monitoring key aspects of the IT service desk. In this e-book, we'll discuss six common IT service management mistakes that can easily fixed using analytics.

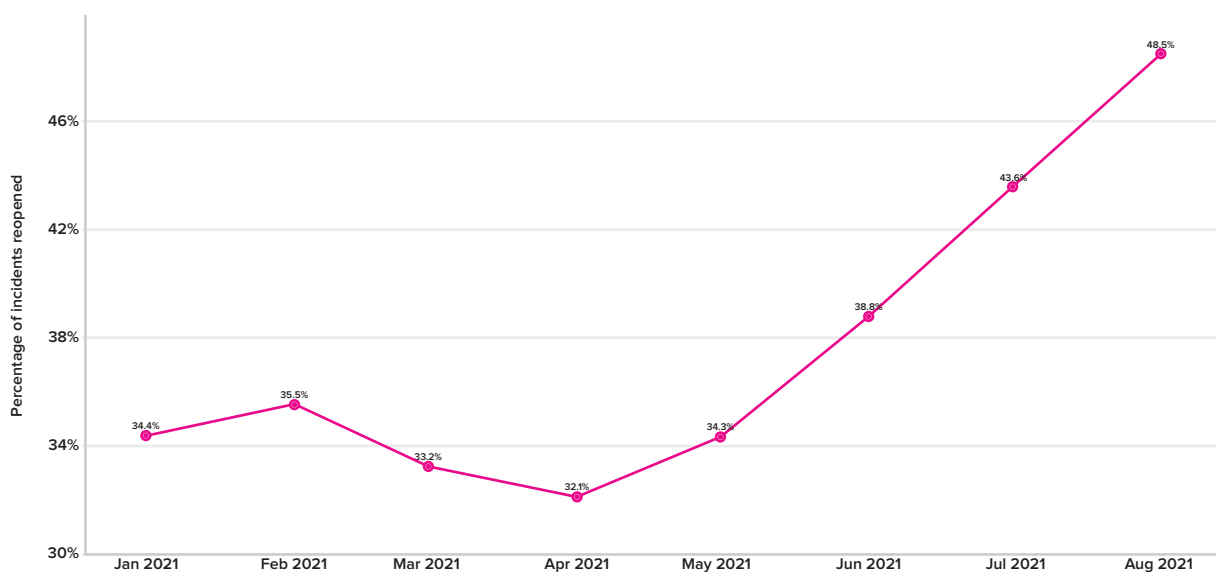
1. Making quick assumptions

When there are a lot of incidents and impatient end users demanding quick resolutions, it's natural to want to jump to conclusions and offer a boilerplate response. It might work for some incidents, but in other cases it may not provide a satisfactory resolution and might lead to frequent reopening of tickets and unhappy end users. Examples of such incidents include asset malfunction, network failure, or software incompatibilities.

Typical KPIs used to measure the efficiency of incident management processes—such as incident resolution time, number of incidents resolved within service-level agreements (SLAs), and number of backlogs—often fail to check if technicians are making quick assumptions while resolving incidents. This is because these KPIs focus mostly on efficiency and timeliness rather than end users' satisfaction. An interesting way to watch for this is to look into the trend of percentage of incidents reopened.

$$\text{Percentage of incident reopens} = \frac{\text{Total incidents reopened}}{\text{Total incidents raised}} \times 100$$

Trend of incidents reopened



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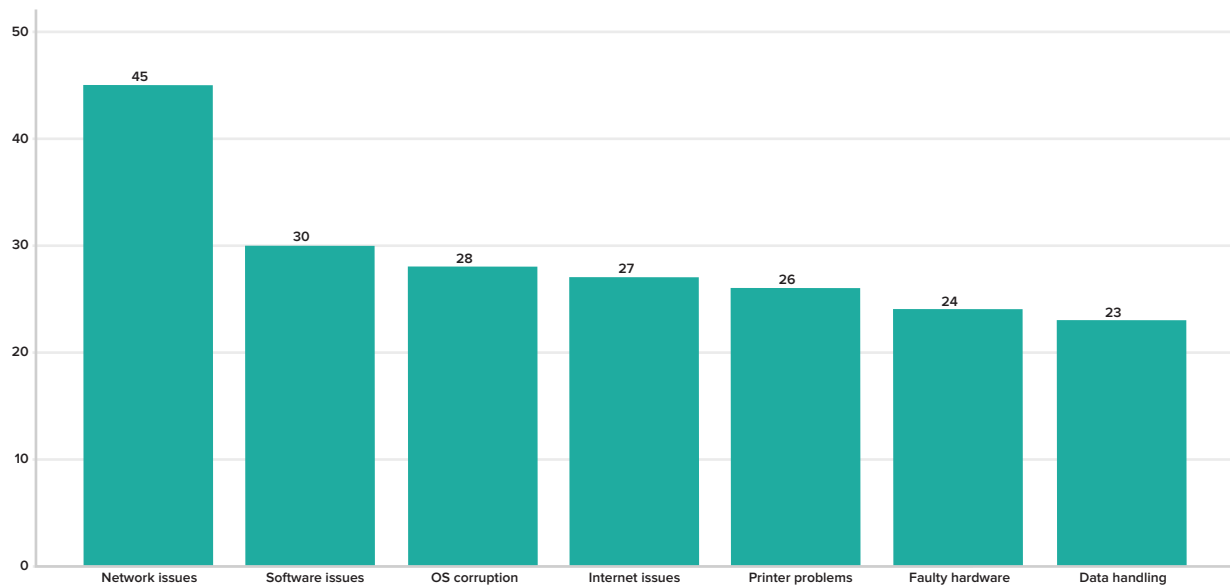
The sample report above shows an increasing trend of incidents being reopened for the last few months.

Once you identify this issue, the next step is to drill down and see the categories of incidents which are frequently reopened, and see if their response protocols need to be reevaluated.

In our sample, network-related incidents have a higher reopens in the last three months.



Incident categories with the most reopens in the last 3 months



Quick tip:

Help desks often track the number of open incidents cumulatively. That is, if an incident was raised and closed in January, it might show up only in the count of incidents closed in January. To get an idea of the actual number of incidents open at any given point in time, it's best to take snapshots of your data at frequent intervals and store it for historical analysis. Snapshots allow you to capture real-time data that tends to change over time, and save it for future reference.

2. Not using the IT service management (ITSM) tool to collect necessary information

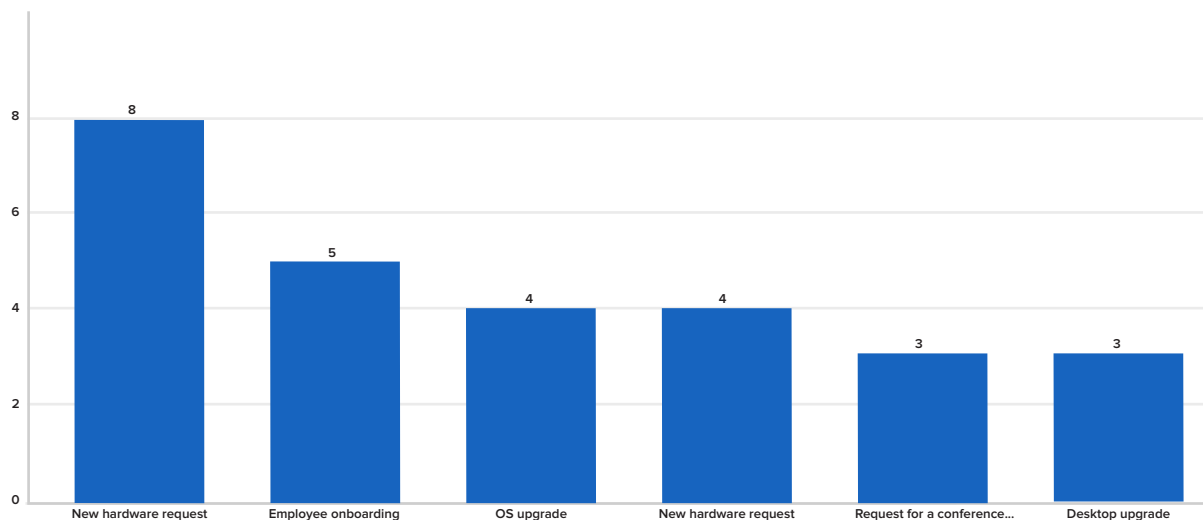
Technicians' time is an invaluable asset for any help desk. So, it's critical to ensure their time is utilized efficiently, and is not spent in trivial activities such as collecting information about service requests or incidents from end users.

Use the service desk support form to gather all necessary details about technical hiccups, problems, issues, and bugs. The form shouldn't be needlessly lengthy. The last thing end users want to do when faced with a technical glitch is write a lengthy summary of their issue. Configure your forms to collect all the basic information, such as name and contact details, service(s) affected, a short description of the issue, and how quickly the issue needs to be resolved. Next, set up conditional drop-downs to collect further details based on category and sub-category of the issue, and the impact on the technicians so they will have all the information needed to efficiently attend to the issue.

The report below gives you the number of conversations between technicians and end users for various categories of requests. A higher number of conversations means that the support forms for those categories are ineffective in collecting necessary information, leaving technicians to reach out to end users several times for information gathering.



Average number of conversations



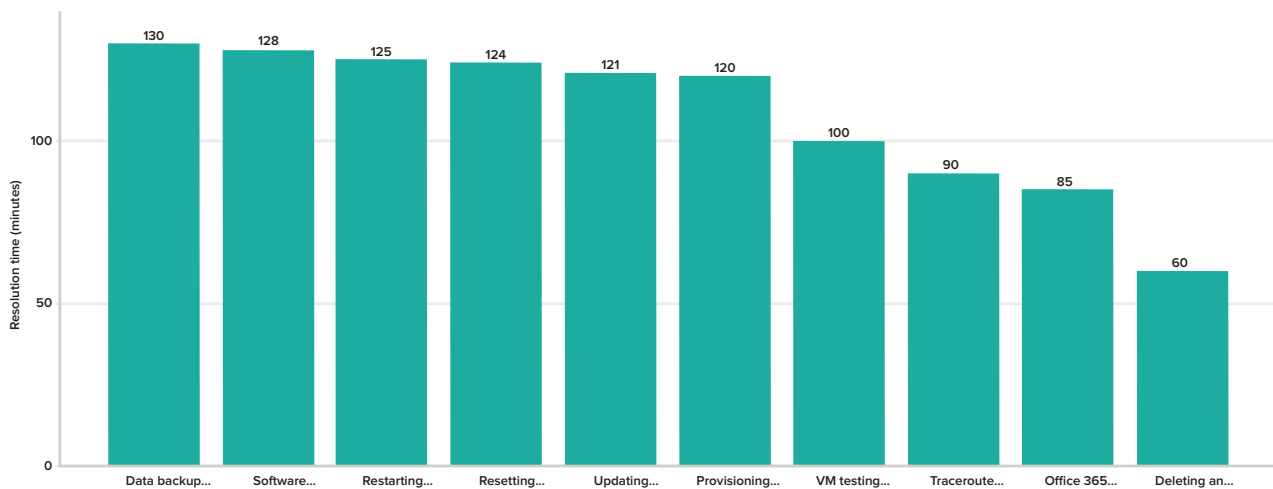
The objective here isn't to bring down the number of to-and-fro conversations to zero. Communication between technicians and end users is essential, and should even be encouraged. However, it's crucial to ensure that these conversations are used to provide status updates and not to collect information.

3. Not adopting automation wherever applicable

Restarting a virtual machine, resetting passwords, deleting an Active Directory (AD) account, and running a ping or traceroute check are all day-to-day service desk activities that can be automated. If these tasks are left to be manually resolved, they can cost the help desk precious work-hours and pull technicians away from critical incidents or other service requests. A periodic analysis of requests, and the time required to resolve them can indicate activities that could be automated. Tasks that don't require much time to complete, say, deleting an AD account, can generally be automated. This can free up a considerable amount of time for technicians.



Top 10 requests with the least resolution time



The report above offers a glimpse into the various tasks that take the least amount of the time to resolve, making them excellent candidates to consider for automation.

Help desks that follow traditional management techniques abhor automating tasks like provisioning access to accounts and applications due to security concerns. This can be handled by:

- Setting up various access permissions, such as read-only, read-write, and edit permissions for applications.
- Providing a clean, user-friendly, self-service portal for users to submit access requests and application, enabling admins to approve those requests based on need, designation, and security clearance levels.

While this may not directly fall under automating tasks to reduce the help desk workload, by moving this process away from technicians to those in application and account admin roles, the service desk saves a lot of time, and a clear sense of accountability is established.

4. Not looking at the big picture

When presented with an issue, it's important to look at the bigger picture to figure out if the issue is a result of another activity or event. An organizational change process can trigger an avalanche of incidents, or a security breach that has locked out users can flood the help desk with service requests. In such cases, addressing the parent issue usually resolves the cascading effects automatically. Without figuring out these relationships, it's futile to try and tackle issues individually.

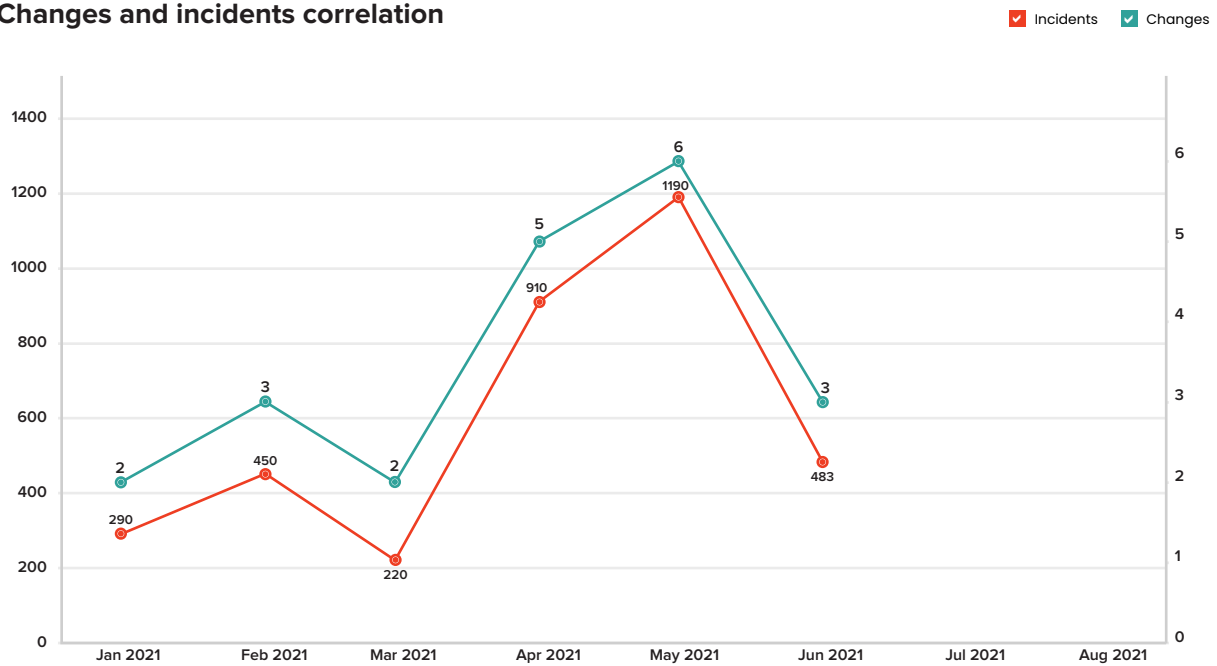
A help desk that's battling frequent spikes in incident volume should look for other help desk activities that might be triggering these incidents.



- The success of change management initiatives are based on procedural correctness and not on business risk or impact.
- There is little any information on how to execute changes with minimal impact on the business.
- Changes implemented might be poorly tested.

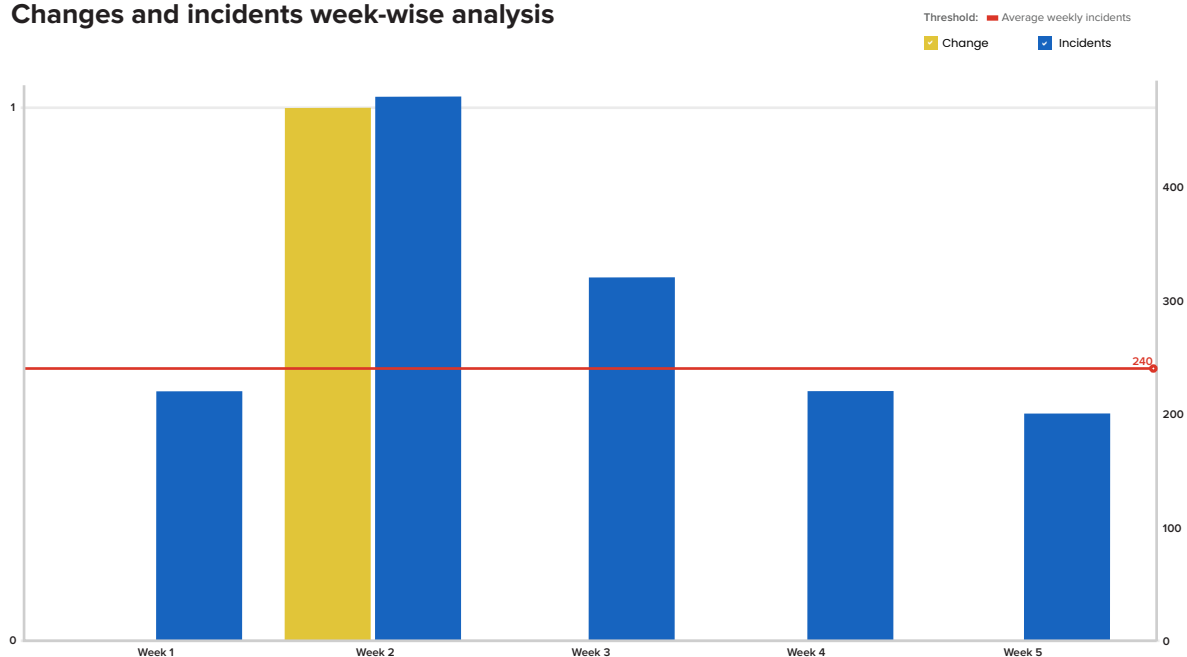
The line graph below compares the trend of changes and incidents that have occurred over the past six months.

Changes and incidents correlation



The lines almost mirror each other suggesting an obvious relationship between changes and incidents. To further clarify if this is happening, here's a weekly comparison of incidents and changes.

Changes and incidents week-wise analysis



It's evident from the graph that incidents tend to peak immediately after a change is implemented and subside a week later. For comparison, I've also used a static threshold line to indicate the average number of incidents that occur in a week where no changes have been implemented.

5. Accepting pressure to deliver faster resolutions

It's no secret that service desks are undermanned and overworked. Strapped for time and pressured to deliver faster results, technicians tend to close tickets without resolving them properly resulting in overall dissatisfaction from end users. Service desks need to ensure that delivering faster resolutions does not come at the cost of customer satisfaction. One way to keep this in check is to compare customer satisfaction rates to the number of service requests resolved within the same day. A negative correlation indicates that faster resolutions don't provide satisfactory resolutions to customers. This means that the help desk administrator needs to reduce the workload and take some pressure off technicians so they have sufficient time to work on requests and provide satisfactory resolution to the end users.



6. Not measuring the full cost of major incidents

The cost of downtime in 2014^[2] :

\$137 to \$427 per minute
for small to medium businesses

\$5,600 per minute
for large enterprises

The cost of downtime in 2017^[3] :

\$8,600 per minute
for large enterprises

These stats show that the cost of downtime is astronomical for businesses. However, downtime costs cover only one aspect of the cost of incident management. Several other aspects, such as lost business opportunities, loss of revenue and reputation, IT costs incurred in restoring business services, and the legal ramifications, are also involved.

The true cost of incidents = IT costs + loss of revenue + legal charges(if any)

IT costs = [(Downtime in minutes x cost of service desk resources used) + Direct costs*]

*Direct costs refers to the cost involved in purchasing assets or asset components required to restore services, or the hiring of third-party experts to restore services.

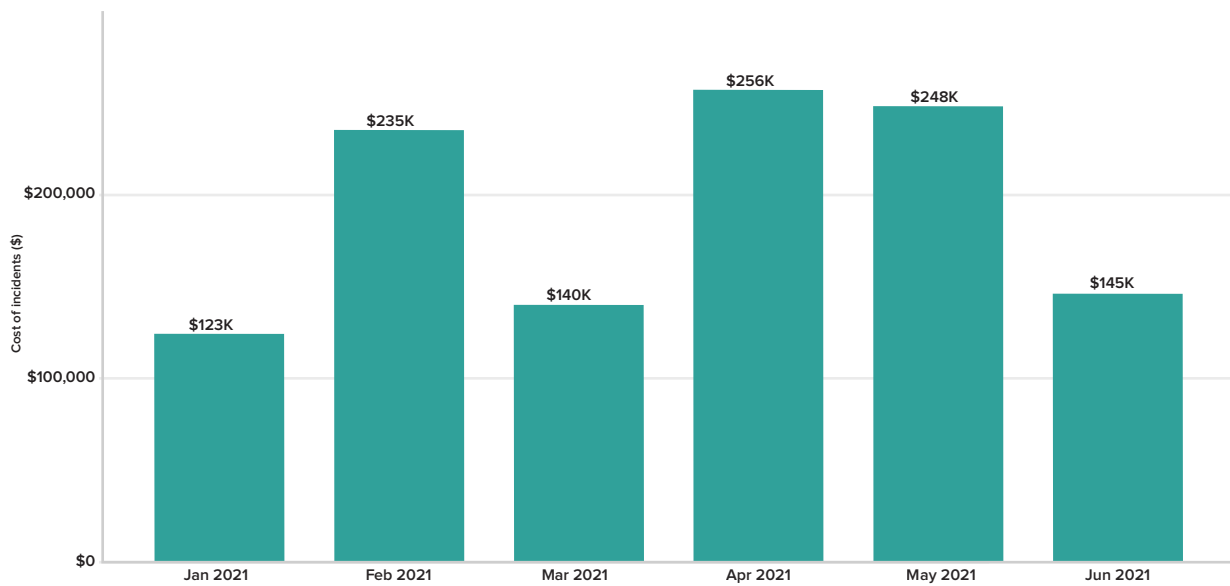
Loss of revenue encompasses loss of employee productivity and loss of new business opportunities.

Loss of revenue = [downtime x revenue per minute]

The report below quantifies the trend of the true cost of incidents for the organization over the course of a year. The graph has been calculated using the formula above for sample help desk data.



Total cost of incidents



Conclusion

No help desk is without its fair share of issues. Using analytics to identify and resolve these problems, can save the help desk a lot of time and money and, in the long run, improve efficiency and customer satisfaction.



About

ManageEngine Analytics Plus

ManageEngine Analytics Plus is a self-service business intelligence and IT analytics solution that integrates with several popular help desk applications, such as ServiceNow, Zendesk, and ManageEngine ServiceDesk Plus, as well as with other IT applications used for network and application management, project management, endpoint security management, and more. Powered by artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and natural language processing, Analytics Plus features an AI assistant that can display stunning visual responses to voice and text comments. Analytics Plus also features capabilities such as importing data from multiple sources, data blending, trend forecasting, real-time sharing and collaboration, and advanced computing and analysis.

[Download a 30-day free trial of Analytics Plus](#) to kickstart your IT analytics journey. Want to know more about the product before giving it a try?

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About

ManageEngine 

ManageEngine is the enterprise IT management division of Zoho Corporation with a broad suite of IT management software including ServiceDesk Plus, Desktop Central, Applications Manager, OpManager and more. Established and emerging enterprises—including 9 of every 10 Fortune 100 organizations—rely on ManageEngine's real-time IT management tools to ensure optimal performance of their IT infrastructure, including networks, servers, applications, desktops and more.

ManageEngine has offices worldwide, including the United States, the Netherlands, India, UAE, Mexico, Singapore, Japan, China and Australia, as well as 200+ global partners to help organizations tightly align their business and IT.

180K
customers
across the world

18+
years of IT
management experience

90+
products
and free tools

190+
countries
served

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3. <https://go.everbridge.com/03040120171505?alid=eyJpIjoirFwvMEJYMFJNYk05cFZBTFAiLCJ0IjoibERFWXVCVFo5XC8rUmgzRnNJSdhEOEE9PSJ9>

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