

# Everbridge IT Alerting in Context: Transforming IT Incident Response for a Global Healthcare Services Provider

## Executive Introduction

Given the complexities of cloud, agile and geographical sprawl, IT organizations are increasingly faced with the need to move from traditional processes to more efficient and automated ways of working. Both user satisfaction and business effectiveness depend on more advanced approaches to incident remediation, where manual, time-worn approaches to diagnostics and communication have clearly shown their limits.

A large part of the problem is a dependence on often-siloed monitoring tools combined with IT service management (ITSM) investments that too often only function in reactive mode when critical events trigger alerts. This results in significant OpEx inefficiencies, ineffective war-room decision-making, and damaging service loss due to extended periods of downtime.

To address this situation, IT response automation (ITRA) solutions deliver intelligent, targeted notifications, on-call scheduling, automated escalations, workflow automation, collaboration tools for IT professionals, and smart analytics to resolve incidents faster. ITRA also promotes proactive communication with senior management, impacted users, and relevant business stakeholders, while bridging the worlds of ITSM and operations for a more unified approach to resolving damaging service outages and disruptions. In a very real sense, ITRA provides a critical bridge for improved insight, communication, and decision-making when major incidents or recurring problems demand immediate attention and fast resolution.

In this report, EMA examines how Everbridge IT Alerting, a leading ITRA solution, is enabling a far more efficient approach to major incident handling at a global healthcare services provider. The interview explores how ITRA can uniquely address complex communication, collaboration and orchestration needs for resolving critical IT events.

## Interview With the Incident Manager for a Global Healthcare Services Provider

### Would you share some background on your role in IT?

“As our company’s Incident Manager, my role is to manage every major incident and ensure that services are restored. It’s a new role, created this year [2017] when we got management leadership with a strong IT Information Library (ITIL) background. Before my current job, I managed the daily operations for our data warehouse for business intelligence.”

### How big is your IT organization, and how did it handle incident management in the past?

“We are a global company, but we are still very fragmented when it comes to IT. We have offices in the continental U.S., in Puerto Rico, and in Eastern Europe. There are about 200 people in IT overall, and we support a business organization of about 13,000 employees with multiple billions in revenue.

“We have a global application management team and an infrastructure management team that’s also global but more centered in the U.S. Sometimes it’s safe to say that we run into competing priorities and directions across our different units. But we’re building more consistency in direction now. For instance, we’ve hired a director for applications support, partly with the objective of relieving development as much as possible from day-to-day support tasks.”

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### **What led your IT organization to create an Incident Management position?**

“In the past, we had our application and development teams leading the incident management process, which was sometimes like the fox managing the hen house. On many occasions, the problem would be swept under the rug. There was no exposure, no accountability. And yet our entire global organization could be impacted.

“This problem was compounded because of our geographical spread. If something happened in any given time zone, local stakeholders would try to fix it. But there was no record of their activity. So, for instance, Europe might have worked on the same problem that we would wake up to in the U.S., but we wouldn’t know anything about it—even though they might have already changed some server settings, left the problem still unresolved, and gone to bed.

“My job is to try to bring process and sanity to incident handling across a fragmented organization, linking incidents region by region, so if Europe lost a whole day, the U.S. doesn’t need to wake up and lose a whole day, too.

“When we first started, our leadership suggested creating a team for incident management. But it wasn’t clear—a team to do what exactly? So I personally got the opportunity to build an incident management process and train everybody in IT across our different regions.”

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### **What led you to select Everbridge IT Alerting in support of your position?**

“As the only Incident Manager, I was on call 24x7. And I quickly got tired of waking up three times for the same thing. I would ask myself, ‘Am I going to get an alert at 1:20 in the morning again?’

“To solve this problem, we had several solutions in play for IT alerting. A few years earlier we tried to get PagerDuty up and running, but that project never got off the ground. We also considered xMatters. But then we discovered that our company already had Everbridge. The focus had been employee health and safety. We leveraged the existing tool and expanded the licensing, which saved having to go through a lot of red tape with legal and procurement. The subscription-based model worked well for us.”

### **What are your other existing management investments, including your IT service management integrations?**

“We had LANDesk, now Ivanti, but we are in the process of moving to ServiceNow, which is targeted for operation in January 2018. Our ITSM team is small, only three people. [We have] one person for change management, one for problem management, and then me for incident management.

“For monitoring, among other tools, we use SolarWinds. But our processes and toolsets for managing events are still not consistent. For instance, there is no central consolidation of events. This is one of our future targets—to ingest a more optimized event flow into Everbridge—but we’re not there yet.”

### **How is the Everbridge IT Alerting deployment going?**

“It’s going well. Before any attempt at coordination it was all a manual process, with little or no accountability. Everybody was opening tickets because they weren’t aware that other people were working on the same issues. When incidents occurred, we were sending out emails to people on our distribution list and just hoping that we reached the right stakeholders. Now we alert them far more effectively through Everbridge and they’re no longer bombarding our service desk.

“Also, [before Everbridge] it could take hours just to map the names of users of a specific application so we could alert them that we were actively resolving a given problem. Now that the process is becoming more and more automated, we can quickly get communications out regarding the incident and reach the resolvers faster.

“One of our first goals was to get preapproved templates populated. Before [Everbridge] we had to reach multiple management signatures including our CIO every time we wanted to send out a communication surrounding an incident. This could take days. And in fact, by the time we sent it out, it was usually pointless. Why tell our user community that earlier in the week we had had an incident? Now we have preapproved messages that circulate within minutes, and I don’t need to go through an ordeal just to get approval. So there we’ve progressed from days, in some cases, to minutes.”

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“Still, I should stress that we are only in our first phase. Optimizing the IT alerting templates for our use is taking time. Right now, we’re looking to do on-call calendaring by the end of the year so we can have better, more automated insights into who’s available to solve a problem—in which location and when.”

“We’re also in the process of rolling out our subscription model so IT service consumers can sign up for automated, proactive information when one of the applications they’re using is experiencing issues, along with expected resolution times. For instance, if they’re using Skype, they can sign up for Internet connectivity alerts. And they’ll be fully current on status.”

“In 2018, we’ll want to explore the Everbridge connector with ServiceNow for more integrated ticketing and event management, as well as email ingestion.”

“And now that Everbridge IT Alerting is in place, we’re getting requests. I’m hearing a lot of “Oh, can it do that?” For instance, our disaster recovery team is looking at Everbridge now. It’s still more of a future direction but the interest is there.”

## EMA Perspective

This interview illustrates how an IT organization with complex geographical interdependencies can become far more efficient in major incident handling and war-room decision-making. This is being achieved through much-improved levels of stakeholder alerting, proactive communication for both IT professionals and impacted users, and far more effective change management procedures to ensure faster issue resolution. The dialog also highlights how effective IT response automation addresses not only technical needs but also organizational and process dynamics as IT organizations seek to become more unified across silos—and more responsive to their service consumers. Finally, this conversation demonstrates how Everbridge IT Alerting can deliver on the diversity of functionality required to make effective IT response automation a reality across global time zones with minimal headcount investments.

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### About EMA

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