Blameless

Building a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Disclaimer: This is NOT a PM 101

Reliability is the most important feature

Bad Experiences Hurt Business

Blameless Postmortems

Agree/Disagree

PMs help you increase resiliency

PMs help you ship faster

PMs help you uncover unseen insights

PMs create collaborative & blameless culture

Summary

- Build more reliable systems

- Get important insights

- Continuously Innovate - build new features

- Hire and retain the best talent by having a blameless culture

When you don't do them
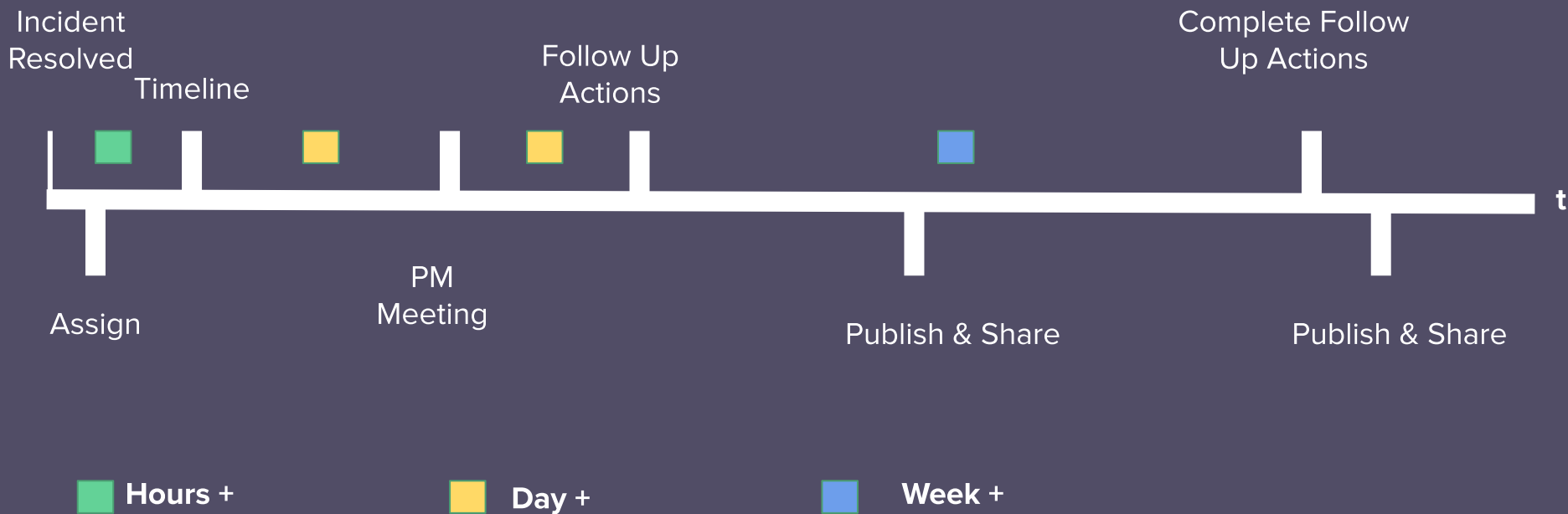
How to get more out of Postmortems

300+ Companies

Quick Survey

Typical Postmortem Process

1. Assign PM Owner
2. Complete the timeline
3. Schedule meeting
4. Discuss & Create follow up actions
5. Complete follow up actions
6. Publish and share postmortem

Postmortem Time Consumption

Incident
Resolved

Timeline

Follow Up
Actions

Complete Follow
Up Actions

t

Assign

PM
Meeting

Publish & Share

Publish & Share

🟩 **Hours** +   🟨 **Day** +   🟦 **Week** +

Successful Postmortems Have

1. Ownership

2. Context & Key Details

3. On Time Completion

4. Follow up action items tracked to completion

5. Blameless language

6. Referencability

Ownership: Case Study

Mid-Size SaaS Tech Comnpany

Ownership: Why It's Hard

- Role & Responsibilities not defined

- Hot Potato Blame

- Toil

Ownership: **Make it Easy**

- Simple model: 1 Service owner owns PM

- Manager/Dir/VP owns time allocation

- Track ownership via ticket

- Set up a Postmortem Guild

On Time Completion: Case Study

F500 Retailer

On Time Completion: Why It's Hard

- Toil, toil, toil

- Shifting priorities

On Time Completion: Make it Easy

- Block new releases for teams w/ outstanding PMs

- Do them on slack/MSFT Teams

- Allocate time in sprint, escalate to C-Level

- Gamify and reward for on-time completion

inc-2323-postmortem

You created this channel today. This is the very beginning of the # **inc-2323-postmortem** channel.

✎ Set a purpose   ＋ Add an app   ⚇ Add people to this channel

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Today

Ashar Rizqi 10:04 AM
joined #inc-2323-postmortem.

Ashar Rizqi 10:06 AM
@Geoff White I need the following from you

@Geoff White I need the following from you

Impact, Root cause, Duration of problem, Product(s) affected

@Morgan Please fill out the following

Revenue impact, Detection Source, How we Resolved the incident

@Greg Can you fill out Lessons Learned

Document them here

I'll check back in by EOBD

＋ Message #inc-2323-postmortem   @ ☺

Context & Key Details: Case Study

F500 Credit Card Company

Context: **Why It's Hard**

Includes background and sometimes a glossary

- Tribal Knowledge

- Outdated Documentation

- Team Silos

Key Details: Why It's Hard

Root cause, trigger, user impact, mitigation, metrics
- Data is in different systems

- Details live in different brains

- No SLOs - don't know what's important

Context & KD: Make it Easy

- IC's job is to corral Content and KD and hand off
- Keep all details in one place: chat system, data warehouse etc.
- Setup 1:1 interviews with incident attendees asap
- Force conversations to happen over chat - easiest place to keep track

AIs created & tracked to completion: Case Study

Mid-Size IaaS Provider

AIs created & tracked to completion: Why it's Hard

- Created in different systems

- Never get tagged correctly, get buried

- Have same priority and unclear language

- Tracked manually

AIs created & tracked to completion: Make it Easy

- Use one ticketing system

- Use tags profusely - most systems have them

- Have SLO impact attached to AI

- Generate daily outstanding AI report

Blameless Language: Case Study

Hyper Growth Tech Startup

Blameless Language: Why it's Hard

- English not always first language

- Easy to call out individuals and teams

- Culture of psychological safety is not there

Blameless Language: **Make it Easy**

- Don't call out individuals, teams - use initials if you have to

- Move away from 1 root cause

- Don't write personal judgements

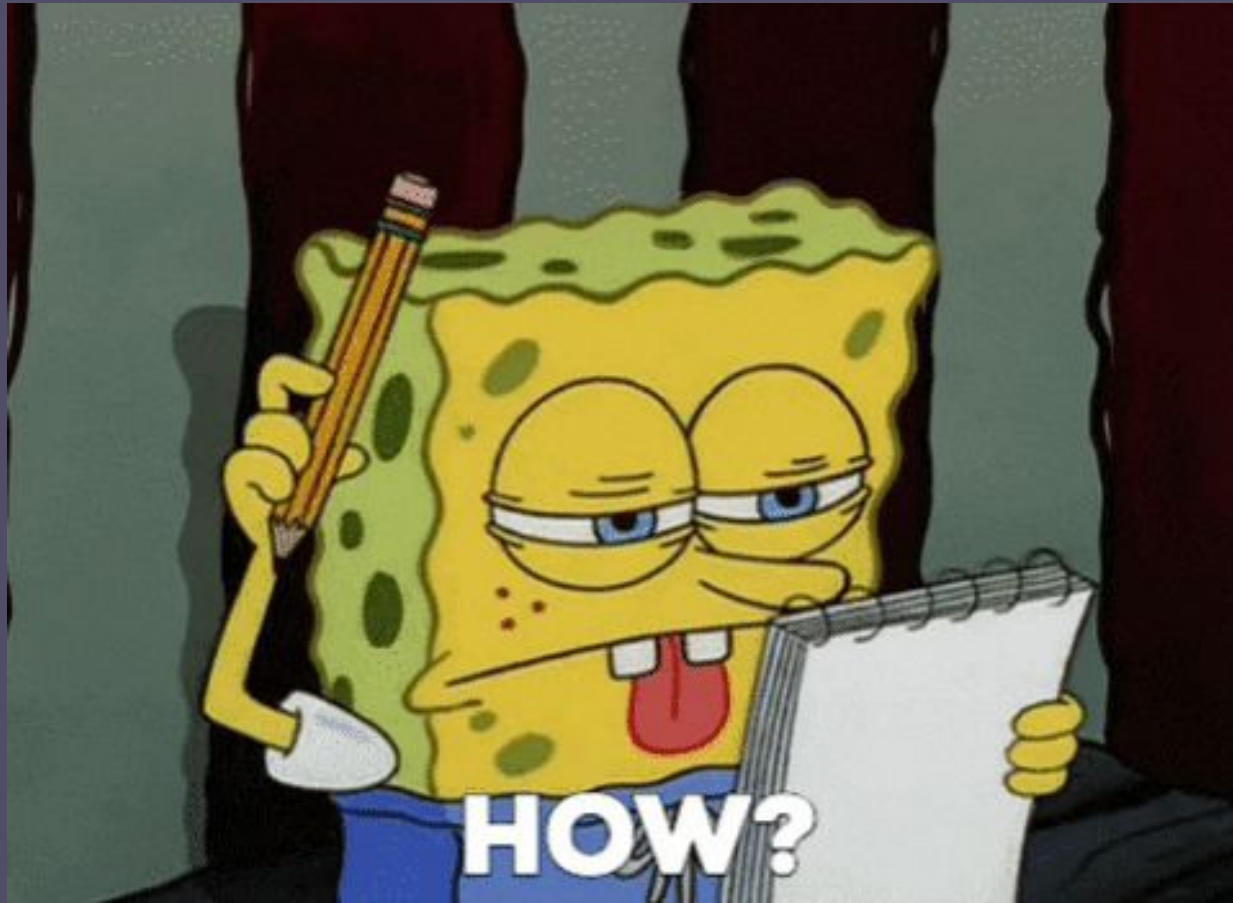- Always ask: where did the system fail

Referenceability: Case Study

Everyone!

Referenceability: **Why it's Hard**

- No place to capture structured data

- Postmortem data lives in a different system

- Teams use different templates/methodologies

- No incentive to do this well
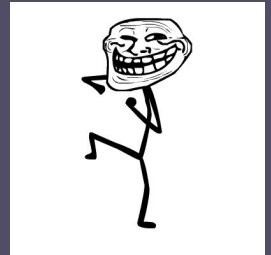
Referenceability: Make it Easy

TBH: It's still hard!

Referenceability: **Make it Easy**

- Standardize on one template: use Google's to start

- Have all postmortems in gdrive or confluence

- Hack: Log file format to index the data

- Hack: Hire temps/interns to scrape data

Unsolved Postmortem Problems

- Asynchronous vs. Synchronous?

- When do you declare a postmortem complete?

- Referencability

- Knowledge Extraction

Highlights

- Have clear roles & responsibilities
- Track things in diligently in systems: tickets, chat, data warehouse
- Reward good behavior
- Set SLOs
- Never call people out
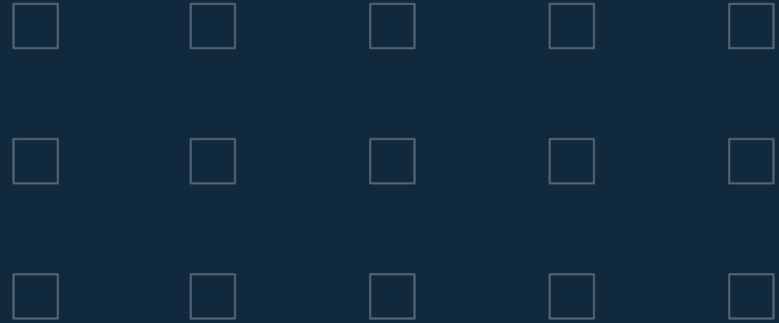
BLAMELESS

When it's working

1. Less Blame
2. Less Burnout, Less Toil
3. Less Panic
4. Continuous Improvement, Faster Delivery
5. Happy customers :)

No Excuses!

A tale of 2 Blames