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Request from: Office of Education, Outreach, and Enforcement

Question:

(INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY) Is there a certain criterion that an IT issue must meet to be communicated to a large group of customers? If so, provide the criteria.

a. Is there a threshold number of customer reports, contacts, or occurrences after which the Company classifies an issue as a broader IT issue? If so, identify that threshold and explain how it is applied. Please explain the process from identifying an IT issue to customer notification. Provide all related policies and procedures outlining this process and associated metrics.

Response:

Information Technology's Service Management Office (SMO) follows a framework called ITIL (also known as Information Technology Infrastructure Library). ITIL comes with a set of standard industry practices for information technology (IT) activities such as service management and is responsible for governing processes that define internal incident definitions and responses. The ITIL process is intended for internal use and is not intended to be used in the process of determining external communications.

The process of identifying a problem starts with an employee creating a ticket which the IT Help Desk reviews. If the analyst at the IT Help Desk cannot resolve the issue, it is routed to a team who has the skills to resolve it.

The Service Desk will raise the criticality level of an incident when multiple reports of the same issue are being opened by employees. Broad criteria have been established for incident categorization which also drive incident response using a combination of the urgency of an incident (how quickly the business needs a resolution) and the level of impact it is causing.

A range of criticality levels from the highest P1 (large scale system outages affecting a business area) to the lowest P5 (ex: how-tos, employee password resets) require different responses. Incidents with the highest urgency and impact are considered P1s and are considered critical incidents. In those cases, once declared critical, within 15 mins, a Major Incident Manager is assigned to lead the activities required to address the incident and communicating the status to IT Leadership who will then engage with their business partners to lead any customer related communications necessary until the issue is resolved.

Generally, an incident qualifies for a Major Incident in the following cases:

a. Severe functionality loss;
b. Enterprise-wide incident or an incident affecting a group of users, an entire department or an area work center unable to perform their job function;
c. Large workgroup unable to perform critical job functions (ex. Customer Service);
d. Affects an Operationally Critical Application (OCA) or Operation Centers (Refer Appendix) or affects a Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) system
e. Storm Critical applications

When a widespread IT issue has been identified in the self-service channels on eversource.com , in the IVR, and/or in the mobile application, the Company communicates with customers through messaging in the impacted channel(s), such as with an informational banner or upfront message. Such messaging informs the customer the application is unavailable, advises when they can return to try again, and directs them to the channel(s) that remain available.

When the issue impacts a system that is used by a customer service representative ("CSR"), CSRs move to business continuity procedures to minimize impacts to customer service. If the issue impacts customer experience, CSRs would acknowledge the issue and advise alternative actions to achieve the customer's desired outcome.

Once the IT issue has been resolved, regardless of whether it impacted self-service or CSRs, the Company will assess the impact of the issue. In the event it is found that there was a negative impact to customers which requires remediation, the Company will communicate directly with the impacted customers via letter, email, or a phone call to advise the customer of the issue and the action and timeline for remediation.