

BLAMELESS

# Too many people in the room?



The Incident Room, that is...

By Nick Mason & Emily Arnott

# Agenda

- **What “does too many people” mean?**

- **Why do incidents get crowded?**

- **Preventing overcrowding**

- **Managing during incidents**

- **Building a cultural foundation**

# Isn't having more people better?

When something goes  
wrong, it's tempting to  
get as many people as  
you can involved...



# The Downsides of Crowded Incidents

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“

“It takes someone at our company  
**10-15 minutes**  
to get up to speed with an incident.”

”

- SRE Manager @ E-Commerce Company

**YOU CAN'T HELP  
IF YOU DON'T KNOW  
WHAT'S HAPPENING**

# Why do we bring in too many people?

- Poor classification leads to over escalation
- Too many necessary subject matter experts
- Lack of confidence that tasks will be complete

These are perfectly natural problems!



# Preventing Overcrowding

## Be Smart and Strategic about Classifying Incidents

- Judge incidents by customer impact
- How fast do you need to resolve each tier of incident?
- Who do you need to achieve that resolution time?

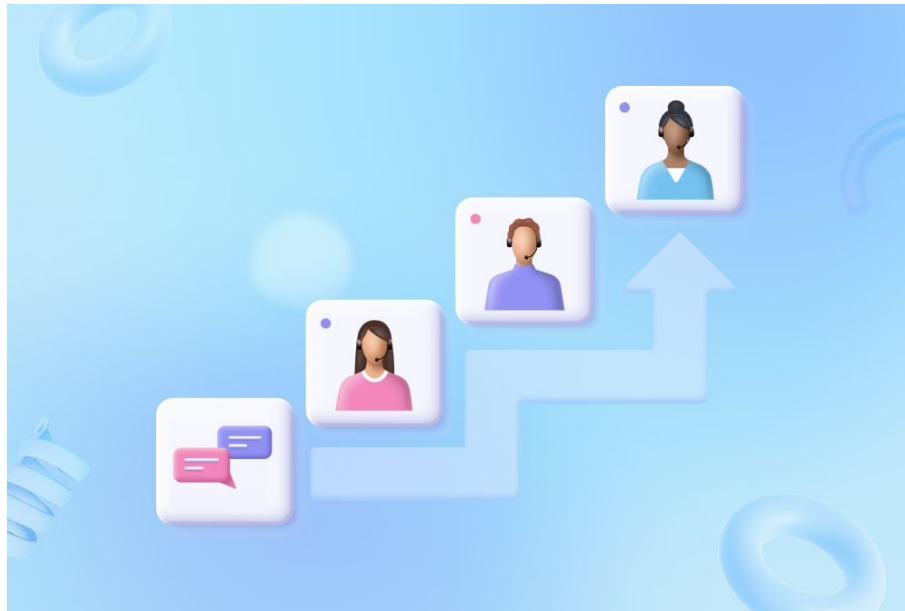
Severity Level	Situation	Customer Impact	Response
Severity One	Pages totally failing to load	Service unusable to customers, SLA violations	All hands on deck
Severity Two	Pages loading 200% slower	Service extremely tedious to use, customer retention threatened	Senior engineering teams and management alerted
Severity Three	Pages loading 50% slower	Service annoying to use, customers complaining	Senior engineering teams alerted
Severity Four	Pages loading 10% slower	Service usage not impacted to the extent customers complain, but could indicate further issues	Relevant engineering teams alerted
Severity Five	Pages loading 1% slower	Unnoticeable to customers	Incident logged into ticketing systems, but no immediate escalation or alerting necessary



# Preventing Overcrowding

## Escalate in Diverse Directions

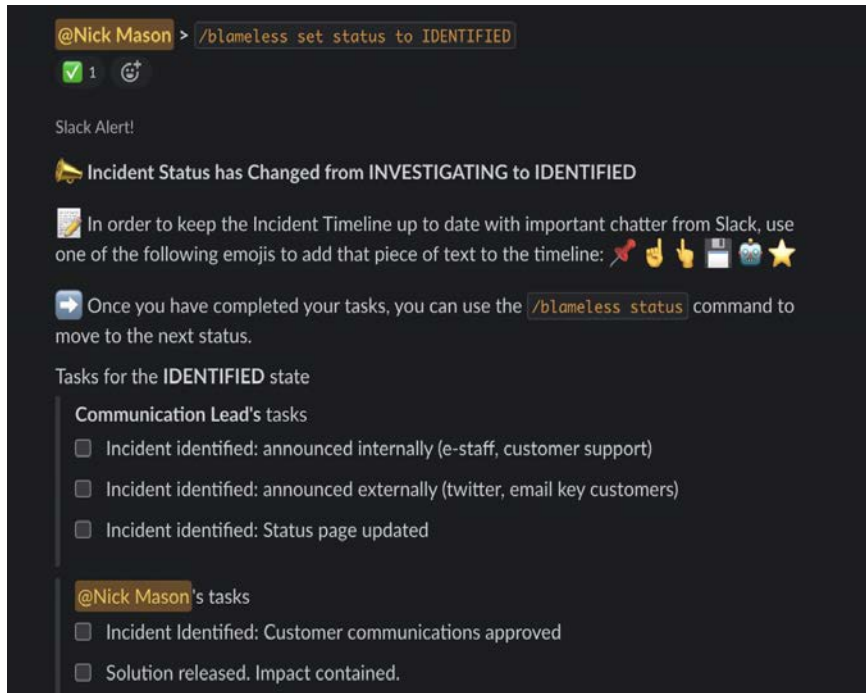
- Escalation shouldn't just be more people or more senior people
- Have a network built around expertise and working relationships
- Get just the right people who can contribute right away!



# Preventing Overcrowding

## Use Roles and Checklists

- Make sure all tasks are covered between different roles
- Have a process to assign roles and follow up on them via the Incident Commander
- Balance workloads to prevent burnout



**@Nick Mason** > `/blameless set status to IDENTIFIED`

✓ 1 🗨️

Slack Alert!

**🔔 Incident Status has Changed from INVESTIGATING to IDENTIFIED**

📖 In order to keep the Incident Timeline up to date with important chatter from Slack, use one of the following emojis to add that piece of text to the timeline: 📌 👉 📅 🌟

➡️ Once you have completed your tasks, you can use the `/blameless status` command to move to the next status.

Tasks for the IDENTIFIED state

**Communication Lead's tasks**

- ☐ Incident identified: announced internally (e-staff, customer support)
- ☐ Incident identified: announced externally (twitter, email key customers)
- ☐ Incident identified: Status page updated

**@Nick Mason's tasks**

- ☐ Incident Identified: Customer communications approved
- ☐ Solution released. Impact contained.

**AS THE INCIDENT  
EVOLVES,  
COMMUNICATE!**

# Get the word out!

To avoid stakeholders crowding in, communicate proactively!



# What will you need to remember?

## Learning from Incidents is Key

- It can be difficult to track what's important in a crowded incident
- Systemic incident response makes it easier to cut through the noise
- Have a process to collect the most relevant comments



7:33 AM 09/08/22 Nick Mason assigned to **Communication Lead**

7:33 AM 09/08/22 Nick Mason via Slack

I am here

7:33 AM 09/08/22 Nick Mason via Slack

Looking into this

7:33 AM 09/08/22 Nick Mason via Slack

Looks to have happened at 1:32am

7:33 AM 09/08/22 Nick Mason via Slack

7:33 AM 09/08/22 John Weil via Slack

7:34 AM 09/08/22 John Weil via Slack

7:34 AM 09/08/22 Nick Mason via Slack

This looks important

7:36 AM 09/08/22 Nick Mason via Slack

I'll follow up on that!

# Cultural Foundation

- This isn't a change you can make overnight!
- People need psychological safety to not overcrowd incidents
- Struggling to change is **OK**, failing and iterating is how we learn and grow



BLAMELESS