SRE vs. DevOps: What's the Difference and Why It Matters

Myth vs. Reality

MYTH

SRE and DevOps are the same thing with different labels.

REALITY

They share goals but solve problems differently. Think cousins—same family, different personalities.

Core Philosophies

DevOps

Culture, automation, CI/CD pipelines

"You build it, you run it"

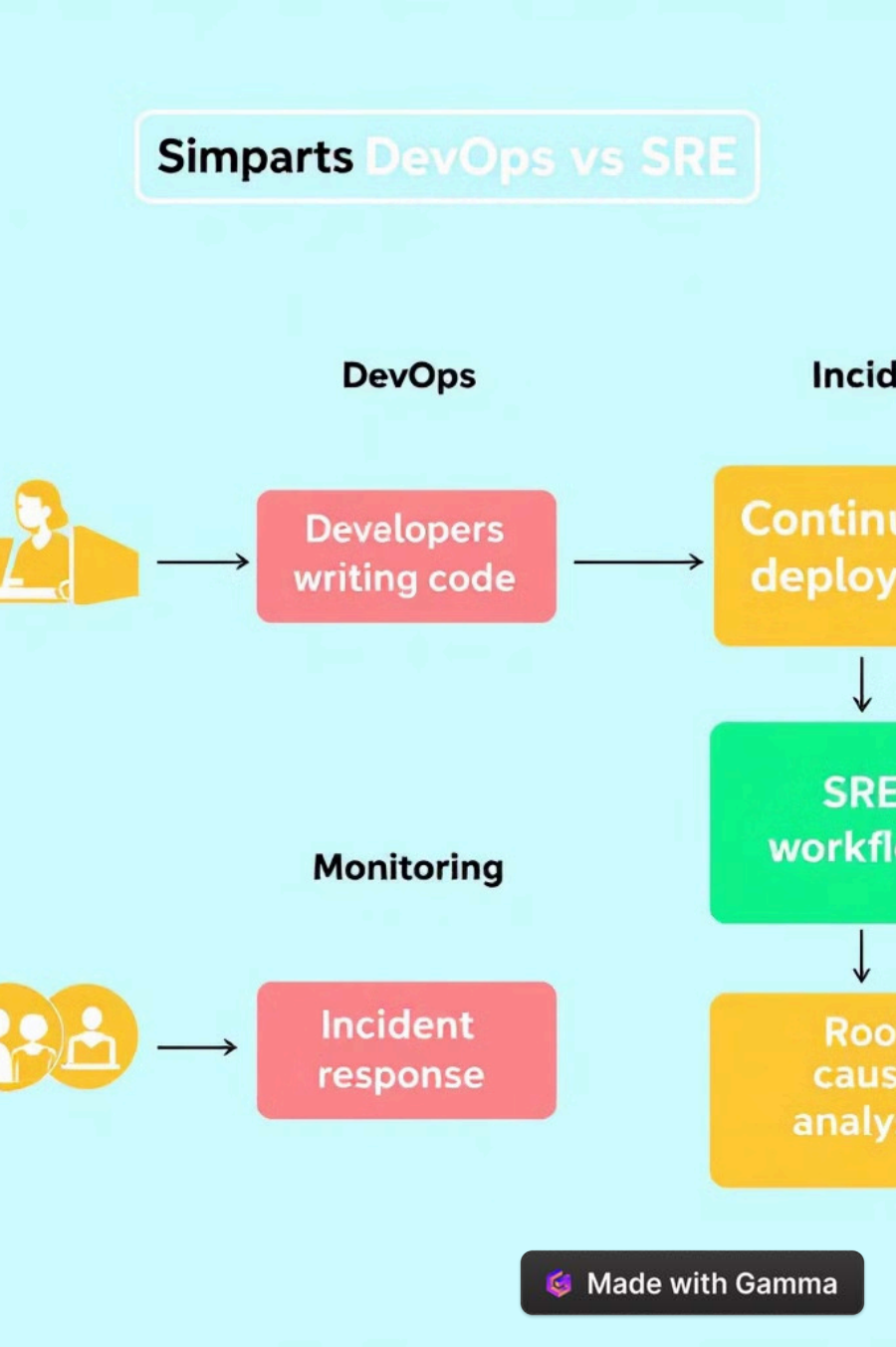Focus: Breaking silos between development and operations

SRE

SLIs/SLOs, error budgets

"Reliability is a feature"

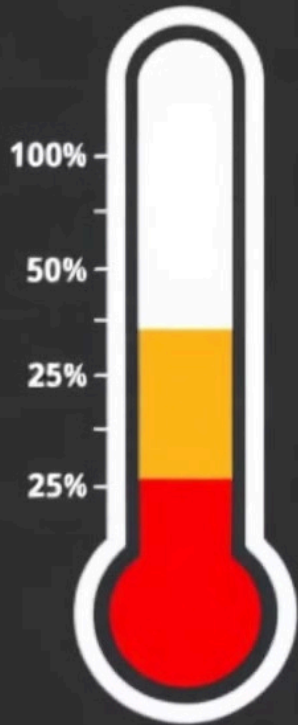Focus: Engineering reliability into systems through metrics

Key Differences

Success Metrics	DevOps: Deployment frequency	SRE: System uptime
Primary Tools	CI/CD pipelines	Monitoring dashboards
Philosophy	Remove walls	Build guardrails

SRE's Secret Weapon – Error Budgets

100%
Reliability Target
Perfect uptime (unrealistic)

99.9%
Typical SLO
43 mins downtime/month

0%
Error Budget Depleted
Time to pause new features

When to Use DevOps vs. SRE

Startups
Favour DevOps for speed to market

Mid-size Companies
Begin adopting SRE practices

Enterprises
Need SRE's rigour for complex systems

Bridging the Gap

Embed SREs

Include SREs in design reviews and sprint planning

Adopt SLOs

Integrate reliability objectives into CI/CD pipelines

Co-own Postmortems

Share accountability for incidents and improvements

Case Study: From Chaos to Calm
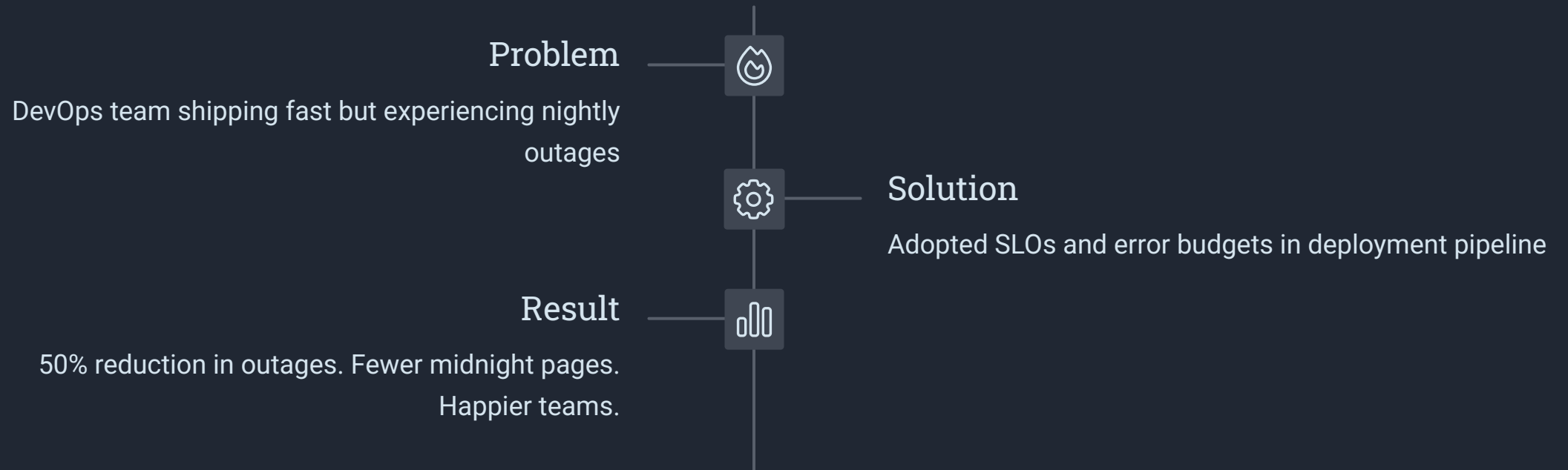
Problem

DevOps team shipping fast but experiencing nightly outages

Solution

Adopted SLOs and error budgets in deployment pipeline

Result

50% reduction in outages. Fewer midnight pages. Happier teams.

Key Takeaways

Better Together

DevOps ≠ SRE, but they're stronger when combined.

Shared Language

SLOs provide common ground between speed and stability.

Start Small

Pilot one SRE practice in your DevOps workflow.

Made with Gamma

Next Steps

Champion Change
Be the bridge between DevOps and SRE thinking

Learn More
Read Google's SRE books and DevOps Handbook

Implement
Begin measuring SLIs for your critical services