Improving IT Incident Management Performance at Target

Client

Target Corporation wanted to close the gap in their high severity incident management processes. The goal was to speed up resolution while minimizing operational and customer impact resulting from those incidents across their global technology services organization.

Challenge

The challenges were multi-faceted:

- Incidents were becoming more complex, increasing the probability and risk of major outages

- The geographically disbursed team of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) required a high-degree of coordination during the incident handling process

- The organization was lacking a consistent, repeatable approach for taking control of incidents and keeping everyone "on the same page"

- Inconsistent data gathering reduced the effectiveness of Problem Management during potential RCA investigations at a later stage

- SLAs were at risk of being missed

In order to respond to these challenges, the company engaged Kepner-Tregoe to introduce a scalable approach to High Severity Incident Management and improve the core performance metrics: Time-to-Restore, Variation and "Avoidance of Global Incidents" (incidents of the highest severity level).

Solution

A pilot project was implemented. Over a four-month period, Kepner-Tregoe worked with the High Severity Incident Management group of one of the major technology groups.

The major phases of the project included:

- An analysis of the Incident Management function in order to baseline performance and assess the underlying capabilities, processes, and IT ecosystem

- A streamlining of the High Severity Incident Management process with respect to the sequence of process steps and the execution of those steps

ScoreCard

- 74% reduction in Mean-Time-to-Restore

- 77% reduction in Variation

- Increase in the percentage of "Global Incidents Avoided"

- Improvement in process quality and consistency

- A realignment of the Incident Manager role from "administrator" to "process manager," giving more responsibility to the Incident Manager while empowering him/her to take control and drive incident resolution

- Development of an integrated Incident Management "Playbook"—a resource and guide to help ask the right questions at any stage of an incident for the correct next steps and communication requirements

- Development of a dashboard to act as a mental focal point especially bridge call management, and to make the team thinking and analysis visible during incident handling

- Training of the Incident Managers in the use of the KT Clear Thinking processes and use of supporting templates to document and communicate situations, decisions, problems, risks and opportunities in a structured, consistent fashion

- Ongoing on-the-job coaching of the Incident Managers to reinforce the behaviors and sustain improvements

Results

After four months, Mean-Time-to-Restore had been reduced dramatically (74%) while variance in the time it took to resolve an incident had also been reduced significantly (77%). With it, the outliers that were consuming major technical and senior management resource time, and which had the longest outage times, had been reduced. In addition, the number of recorded "Global Incidents Avoided" was trending up.

At the end of the pilot, Executive Management decided to further roll-out the KT approach inside the Incident and Problem Management organization.

Mean Time to Restore
All In Scope Incidents

TTR Variance
All In Scope Incidents