"SerivceNow gives us a complete framework for managing events and incidents. We depend on it every day."

– Seth Thomas, Director, Site Operations

This ServiceNow case study is based on an interview with Seth Thomas, Director of Site Operations at Zillow.

Headquarters
Seattle, Washington

Highlight
ServiceNow provides a consistent, automated way of managing thousands of raw events each day and reduces them to a small number of actionable incidents

Challenges
• Manual email-based approach to event management

• No simple way of linking appropriate knowledge articles to specific events

Results
• ServiceNow reduces thousands of events to less than 100 incidents

• Ability to attach relevant knowledge base articles to each incident with the push of a button

• Events link to corresponding configuration items in the CMDB to instantly identify affected devices and services

Zillow Group Creates a Unified View of Events and Incidents across Their Data Center

ServiceNow Reduces Thousands of Raw Events to a Small Number of Actionable Incidents

Zillow Group houses a portfolio of the largest and most vibrant real estate and home-related brands on mobile and Web. It gives consumers data, insights and inspiration about the place they call home, and connects them with outstanding local professionals who can help them. Zillow Group's brands empower consumers throughout the entire lifecycle of owning and living in a home, including buying, selling, renting, valuation, financing, remodeling and other home-related topics.

Zillow Group's flagship consumer brand, Zillow, depends on its data center to give its audience trusted information. Consumers expect Zillow's website to be available and responsive, and also want Zillow's content to be fresh and accurate. Zillow takes this seriously – for example, they monitor their content to ensure that stale MLS real estate listings are detected and removed quickly from their site.

The Business Challenge
As with many IT organizations, Zillow had invested in multiple monitoring tools for their data center. They use tools such as Nagios and Zabbix to monitor the quality of their services and IT infrastructure. When a monitoring tool detected an event that needed attention, it would send an email to Zillow's Tier 1 IT operations team, who would then use Outlook to manage the resolution of the issue.

While this manual email-based approach worked during the early stages of Zillow's growth, the IT team knew it was becoming unmanageable as Zillow's business continued to scale. The problem would only become more pronounced as Zillow formed Zillow Group and started to integrate a number of key acquisitions – well-known properties such as Trulia, HotPads and StreetEasy. They needed a consistent, automated way of managing thousands of raw events each day, reducing these to a small number of actionable incidents. They also needed to create a centralized knowledgebase to speed incident resolution – while they had a knowledge wiki, there was no simple way of linking appropriate knowledge articles to specific events.

The Solution

Zillow Group had already invested in ServiceNow for their corporate IT helpdesk. After evaluating a number of other options, they decided to leverage their ServiceNow investment for their data center as well. By adding ServiceNow Event Management to their existing ServiceNow capabilities, they have created a normalized view of events across their data center, integrating and correlating events from all of their monitoring systems.

By using ServiceNow as a single system of record, Zillow Group is also able to manage and resolve issues more quickly and accurately. According to Thomas, "The true power of event management comes when you marry it with incident management, configuration management and knowledge. ServiceNow has given us a unified platform where we can do that."

The Results

Now, the Zillow Group Tier 1 team only has to actively work on a few dozen tickets every day. ServiceNow reduces thousands of events to less than 100 incidents, and then automatically closes the majority of these as it receives subsequent clear events. The Tier 1 team easily triages the remaining incidents using ServiceNow's event management dashboard – deciding whether they need to work on specific incidents or assign them out to other teams. They can also attach relevant knowledge base articles to each incident with the push of a button – ServiceNow searches its knowledgebase and automatically identifies the most appropriate articles based on the incident type.

Because ServiceNow automatically links events to corresponding configuration items in its CMDB, Zillow Group's Tier 1 team can also instantly identify affected devices and services. This gives them critical information that makes it easier to diagnose and resolve issues. Zillow Group also plans to attach change announcements to CIs, so that they can suppress events during change windows.

Moving Forward

With ServiceNow, Zillow Group has a structured and efficient way of managing events and incidents. This has given them the confidence to embark on several strategic initiatives. For example, they are starting to offer ServiceNow to all their brands, creating a consistent management approach while preserving each property's independence. They also plan to move to a 24x365 IT operations model, and see ServiceNow as a critical enabler for working with remote IT teams.

Conclusion

With ServiceNow, Zillow Group has positioned itself for continued growth. By creating an automated and efficient way of handling events and incidents, they have dramatically reduced the effort of delivering high-quality services to consumers. ServiceNow has also given them the agility needed to expand the scope of their IT operations, simplifying the task of integrating new acquisitions and working with IT partners. Thomas puts it this way, "By consolidating our monitoring and managing our events consistently, ServiceNow Event Management gives us the ability and confidence to take on new challenges."

> "By consolidating our monitoring and managing our events consistently, ServiceNow Event Management gives us the ability and confidence to take on new challenges."
>
> —Seth Thomas, Director, Site Operations

servicenow

www.servicenow.com