



x matters

xMatters IT Management Review From A Customer

From IT Central Station, the leading review site for enterprise technology solutions.

Review by a Real User

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Sr. Manager & Product Owner at a transportation company with 10,001+ employees

Dan Russo

WHAT IS OUR PRIMARY USE CASE?

We have two primary use cases. One is alert notification and escalation. The other is major incident notification.

HOW HAS IT HELPED MY ORGANIZATION?

In the past, when there was a major incident notification, which is an outage for one of our products, we had one tool that we would use for email notification to our internal stakeholders, another tool for a voice blast going out to their phones, and then another tool for a conference bridge. All of those needed to be kicked off individually and managed individually by our enterprise operations center. It was very difficult to manually maintain call lists - who was on call when - and up-to-date contact information. So, when there was an outage, we didn't have the right people on the bridge, it took forever to get people on the bridge, it took us a long time to notify people there was an issue. By using this tool, it's a one-stop shop. Through one tool, we're able to generate email notifications, voice notifications, mobile push notifications, Slack channel notifications, all managed from one place, simple and easy to use. People are able to join the conference bridge directly from the phone call by pressing one button instead of having to dial into a bridge and remember a conference code. Everyone's contact information is up to date, people are able to go in and update their contact information and even set things like when they're going to be on vacation and who their backup is. It has dramatically cut the amount of time that it takes to get people assembled during a major incident.

WHAT IS MOST VALUABLE?

Its ease of use and self-service are important to me. It's very easy for users to go in and modify their own contact information, for managers to go in and manage their own on-call rotations and shifts, so that is a very valuable feature to me. And the ability to notify and get everybody on a conference call, rapidly, is also very important. It serves as our communication hub. We're able to point all of our alerting tools at xMatters and have it route alerts to the right people at the right time. We're able to generate major instant notifications for product outages, get all of our people on the bridge at the same time, and include information from our monitoring tools with that. So everyone is speaking the same language and seeing the same information. We're able to route those notifications not only to people, but also to other tools like Slack channels, where everyone can get in and collaborate.

WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

While the documentation is good, the knowledge base - the collection of user supported community forums - is a little weak compared to some of the other products I've used. If I have a problem that I can't find the answer to in the documentation, there are very few places to go after that, because the user base, the community forums, are not strong for me to find someone who's had the same issue as me, and find out what the answer to their problem was. That's somewhat of a weak point.

FOR HOW LONG HAVE I USED THE SOLUTION?

Three to five years.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

Regarding issues with stability, none that I can recall. There have been some scheduled maintenance and downtimes, of course, but we've always been told ahead of time and have been able to plan accordingly. I honestly can't recall an unscheduled outage that we've experienced with the product.

WHAT DO I THINK ABOUT THE SCALABILITY OF THE SOLUTION?

In terms of scalability, there haven't really been any issues. We use the On-Demand version, which is the cloud version, not the on-prem, and we've never had any issues with the scalability. Maybe, if there are a lot of people to be notified during a particular incident - if we're talking a couple of hundred people for instance - it takes a little while for everybody to get called, which I would expect. But I've never really thought about that as a scalability issue. In the end, everyone who needs to get notified gets notified.

HOW IS CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT?

I've used tech support a couple of times. I have worked with support before, to change permissions and roles that we don't have permissions to change, but mainly, when I do have questions about actual solution implementation, I typically will work with our technical account manager, and reach directly out to them and not go through support. And that's been successful for us.

WHICH SOLUTIONS DID WE USE PREVIOUSLY?

We originally used a tool called AlarmPoint. We used it for about the first year and a half I was here. We were planning on punting it because it wasn't very useful, and when we contacted the team to tell them that we were going to not use their tool anymore, they said, "We're no longer AlarmPoint, we're xMatters, and the tool that you're using is years old. Why don't you see what our new tool can do?" That's actually how we were introduced to xMatters. So, we previously used an old iteration that was very outdated. We also did use PagerDuty a little bit, which is a competitor of xMatters. And the reason we chose to go with xMatters over PagerDuty was that, while both were very good at alert notification and escalation, when we did our assessment, PagerDuty did not have the ability for the major incident notification process that we needed to implement as well. It's more just for alerting on-call people when there is an issue with the server, and not necessarily for assembling a large group of people, whether they be business, technical, management, on a bridge to actually provide information and collaborate.

HOW WAS THE INITIAL SETUP?

It was pretty easy. It took a little while because we have a lot of products and a lot of different teams that need to be notified for different products, and a lot of different policies. The implementation wasn't difficult, it just took time.

WHAT'S MY EXPERIENCE WITH PRICING, SETUP COST, AND LICENSING?

I would definitely say it's worth the value. I wouldn't say it's expensive, but most people who pick xMatters are not going to select xMatters based on price. There are other lower-priced competitors that are out there. But I would say for what we're getting, it's worth the money.

WHICH OTHER SOLUTIONS DID I EVALUATE?

We did evaluate PagerDuty, as I mentioned earlier. We had originally evaluated directly PagerDuty against xMatters, and we used each of the tools for about six months on a smaller scale, and ultimately we found that xMatters was going to be the right fit for us. That's when we really expanded the usage and bought a lot of licensing.

WHAT OTHER ADVICE DO I HAVE?

I would say, before you begin with implementation, you should really have a good idea of what your notification standards and policies are. Completely irrespective of a tool or technology, if your process isn't rock solid, and if you haven't really thought out your process and what you're trying to achieve, it's going to make it much more difficult to try to implement the product itself. So before you begin implementation, really plan ahead of time. Understand what it is you're trying to achieve, understand how you're going to measure the success of the project, and have all of your standards and policies laid out beforehand. It will make the implementation that much easier. I would say it's a nine out of 10. And to bring it up to a 10, once again, if the user community knowledge base forums, were a little better, and it was easier to find answers to some very difficult questions without having to engage our technical account manager, I would give it a 10.