Making incidents suck **less**
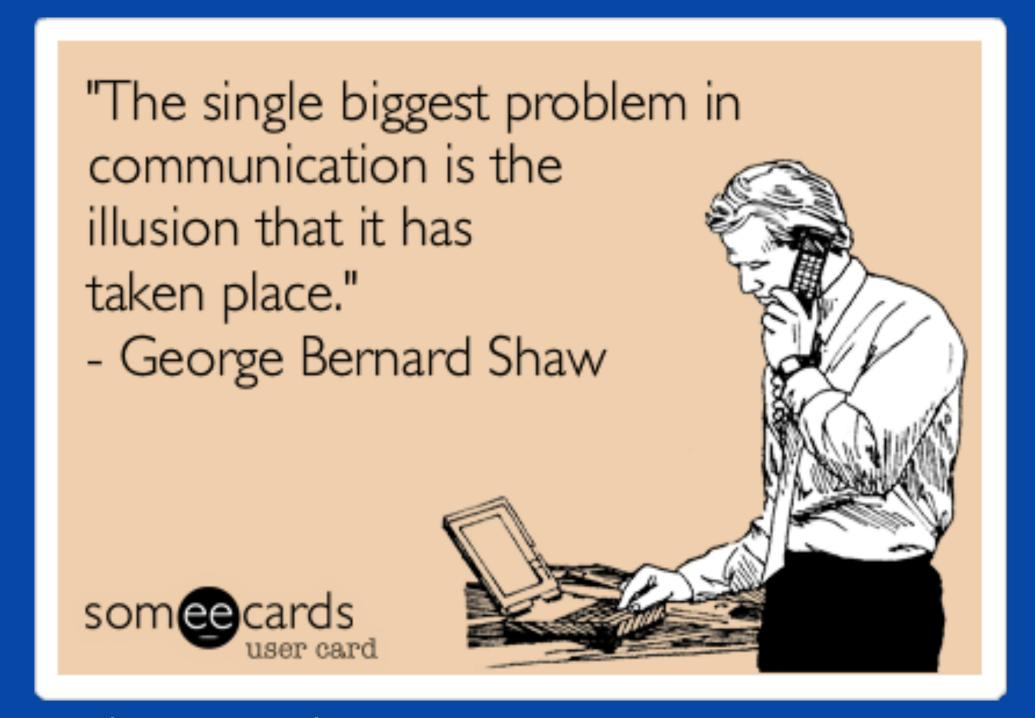
10 battle-tested tips

KATE CLAVET | SENIOR TECHNICAL PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER | ATLASSIAN

What we'll cover

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."
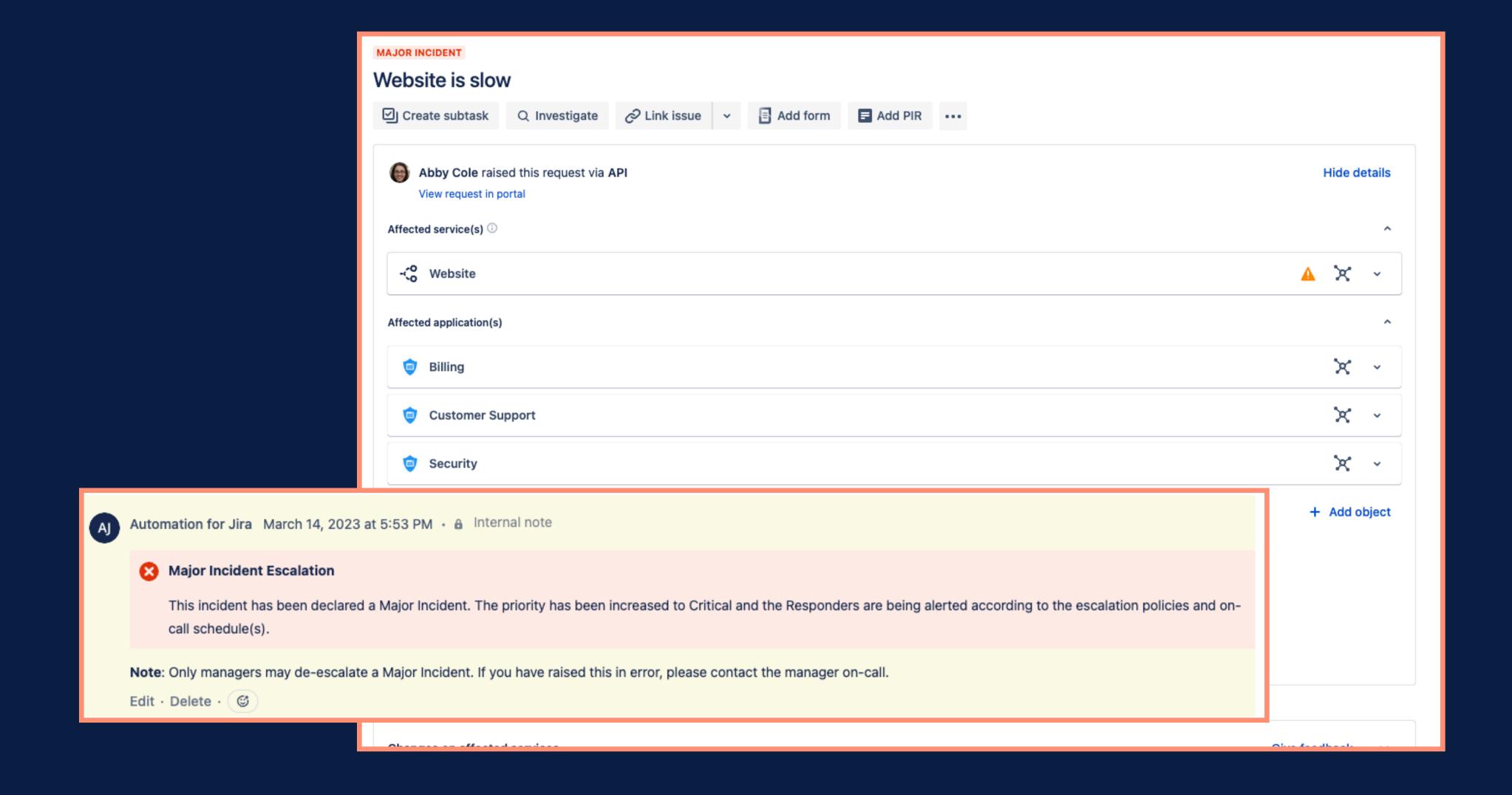- George Bernard Shaw

someecards
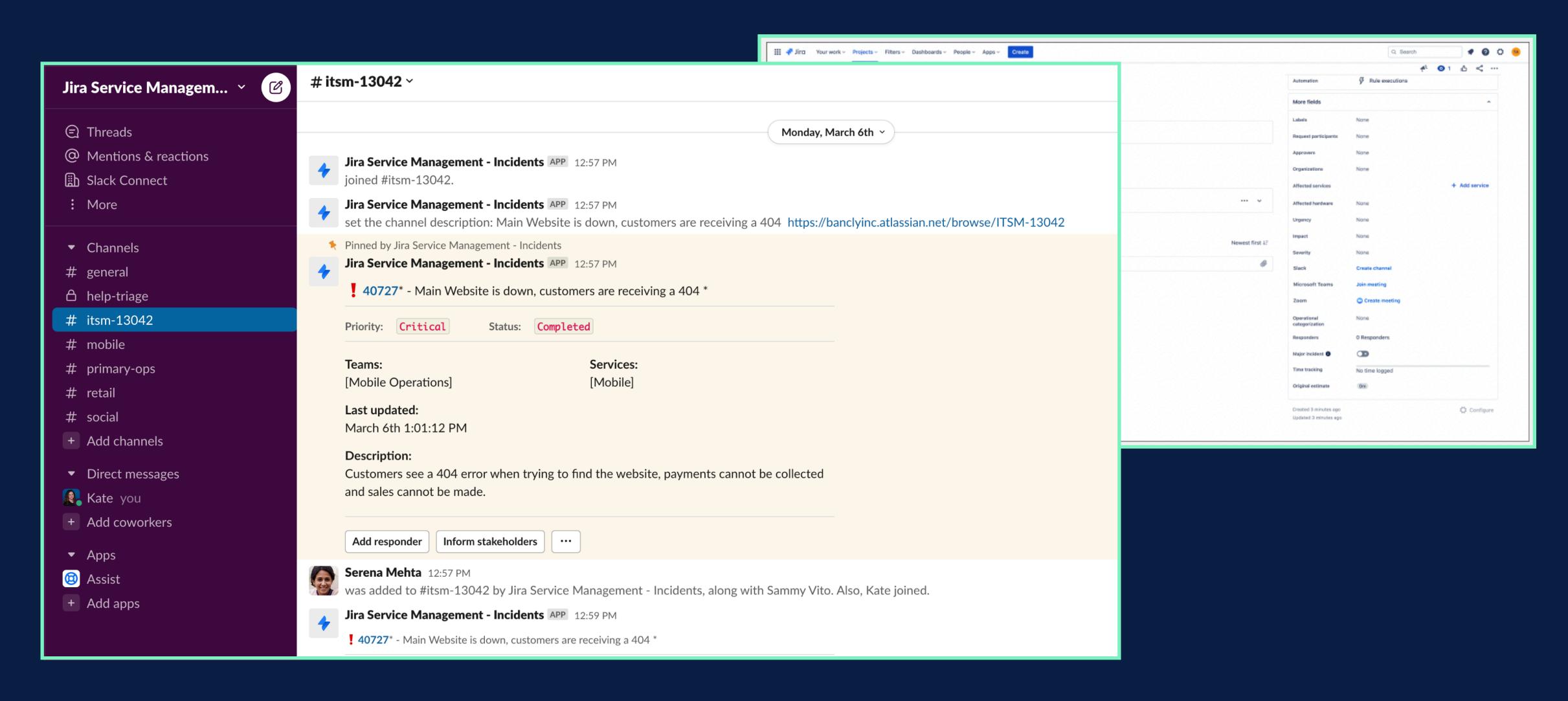user card

Credit: Someecards.com

- Setting up processes

- Defining key information

- Communicating well

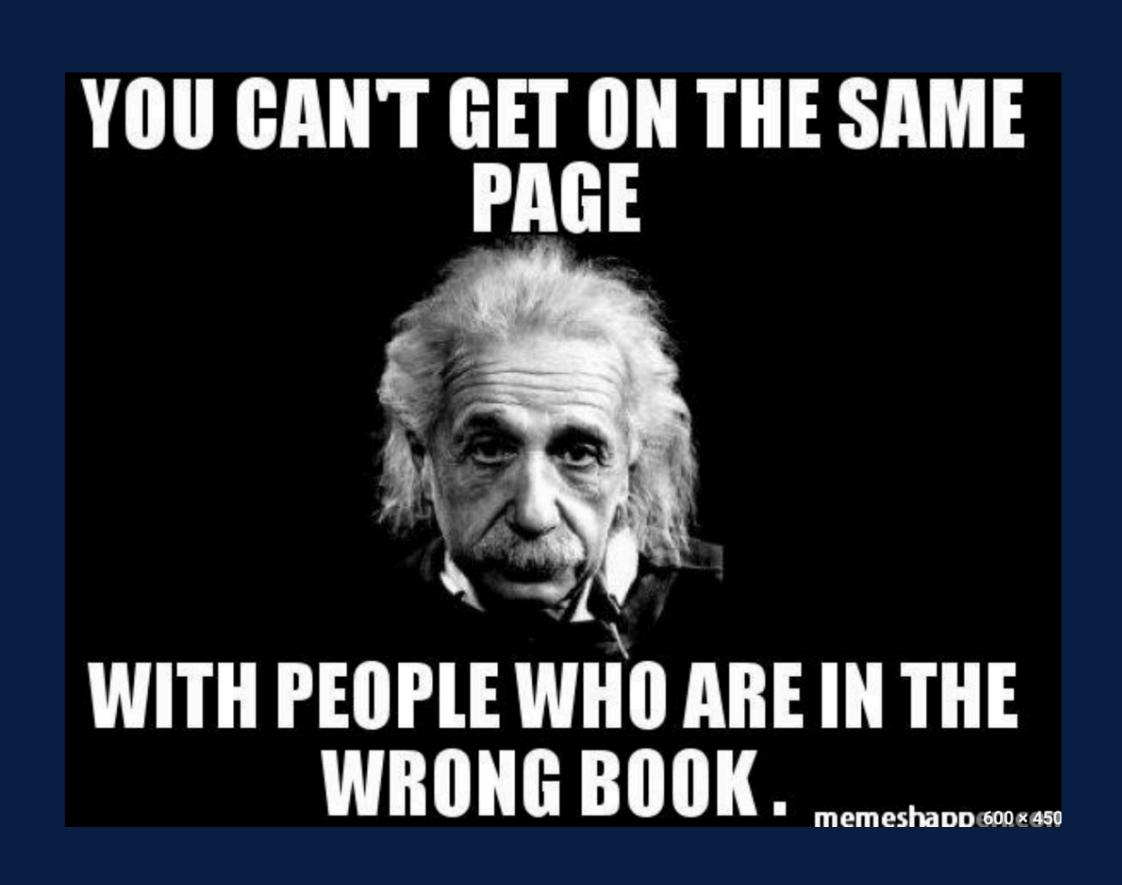# INCIDENTS ARE COSTLY AND STRESSFUL

WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS & PROCESSES, INCIDENTS CAN SUCK *LESS*

1. Get on the same page

YOU CAN'T GET ON THE SAME PAGE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE IN THE WRONG BOOK.

- Assume nothing

- Define everything

- Talk about the obvious

- Over-communicate

2. Define key terms

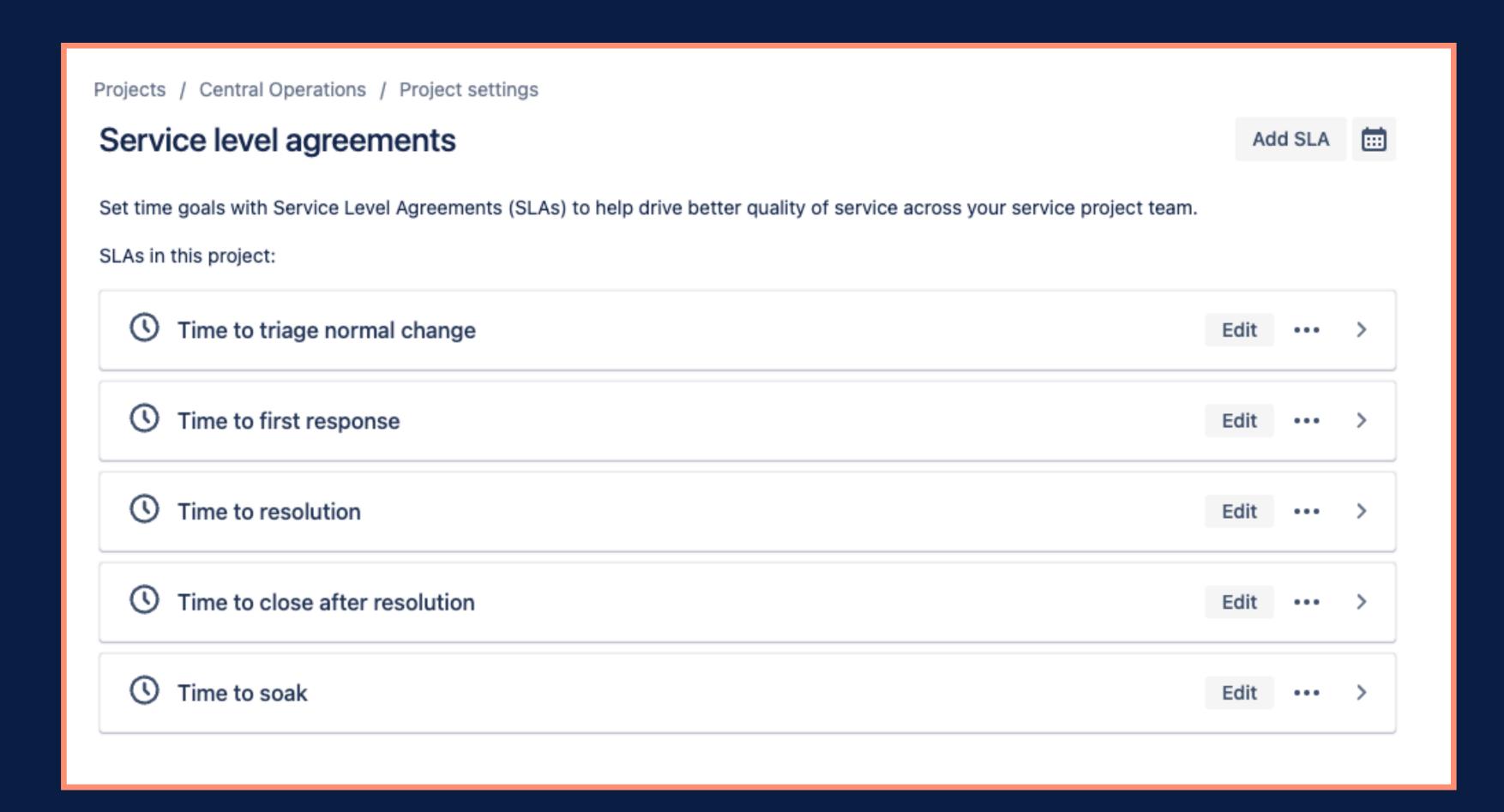| Term	ITIL definition	(Your company's) example
Alert	Notification that a threshold has been reached, something has changed, or a failure has occurred.	Scheduled maintenance during shopping hours for AWS EC2.
Incident	An unplanned interruption to or quality reduction of an IT service.	45 second web app outage, or 100 users can't access their account information.
Major Incident	The highest category of impact for an incident. A major incident results in significant disruption to the business.	Web app outage for more than five minutes.

3. Capture and identify key fields

Examples include priority, impact, urgency, reported to, and assigned to.

Secondary examples include time to first response, time to resolution, time incident began, time incident closed, components, services, and many more.

4. Define & socialize SLAs & priorities

	Low	Medium	High	Critical
Priority description	Little to no effect on the ability to do one's job.	Limited loss of normal functionality.	Loss of normal functionality.	Severe disruption or degradation.
Example	Customer is a graphic designer and the request is for access to Spotify.	Customer can access email via web browser, but not directly via the email application.	Customer can't access their account profile.	Retail store website is down.
Urgency	Low	Medium	High	Critical
SLA target	48-72 hours	8-12 hours	4-6 hours	2 hours

4. Define & socialize SLAs & priorities

Projects / Central Operations / Project settings

Service level agreements

Add SLA 📅

Set time goals with Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to help drive better quality of service across your service project team.

SLAs in this project:

🕐 Time to triage normal change — Edit ··· >

🕐 Time to first response — Edit ··· >

🕐 Time to resolution — Edit ··· >

🕐 Time to close after resolution — Edit ··· >
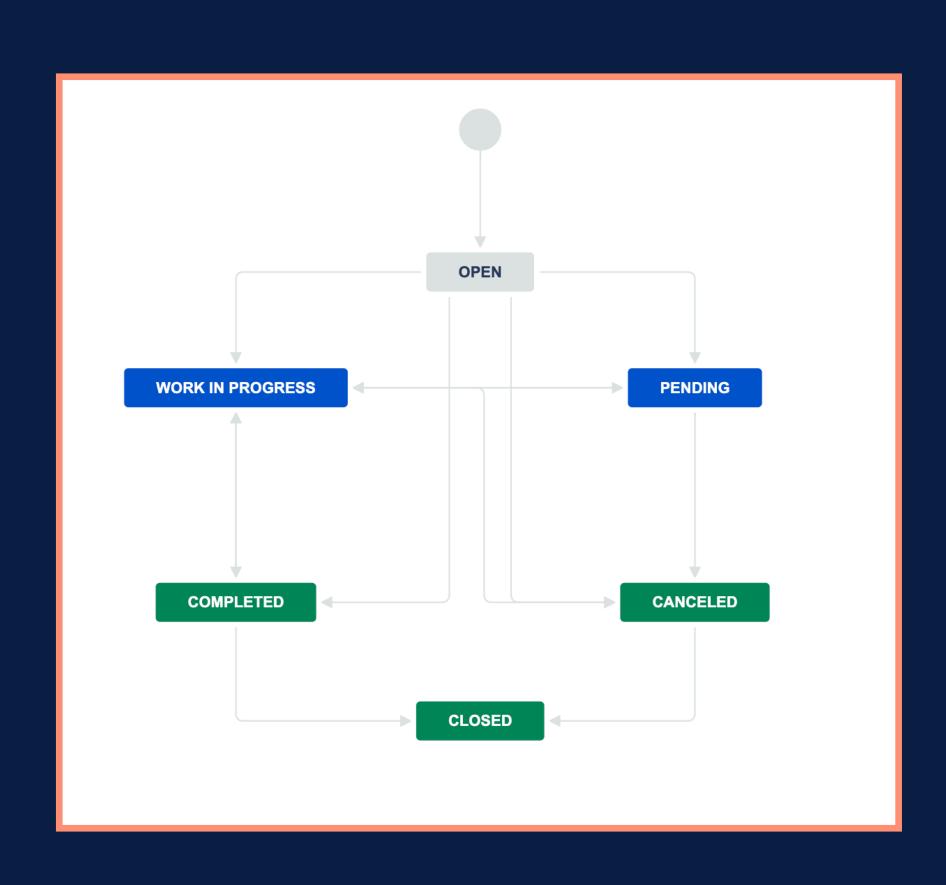
🕐 Time to soak — Edit ··· >

"

"Everything starts and ends with processes and expectations you set for communications. One of the best changes we made was adding an SLA for the time we expect a technician to communicate back to the customer."

Michael Marques
ITIL-certified ITSM Incident Manager

5. Outline workflows & status changes

- Don't overcomplicate or over-customize

- Determine if alert priority and incident priority should match

- Define which parameters change an "alert" to an "incident"

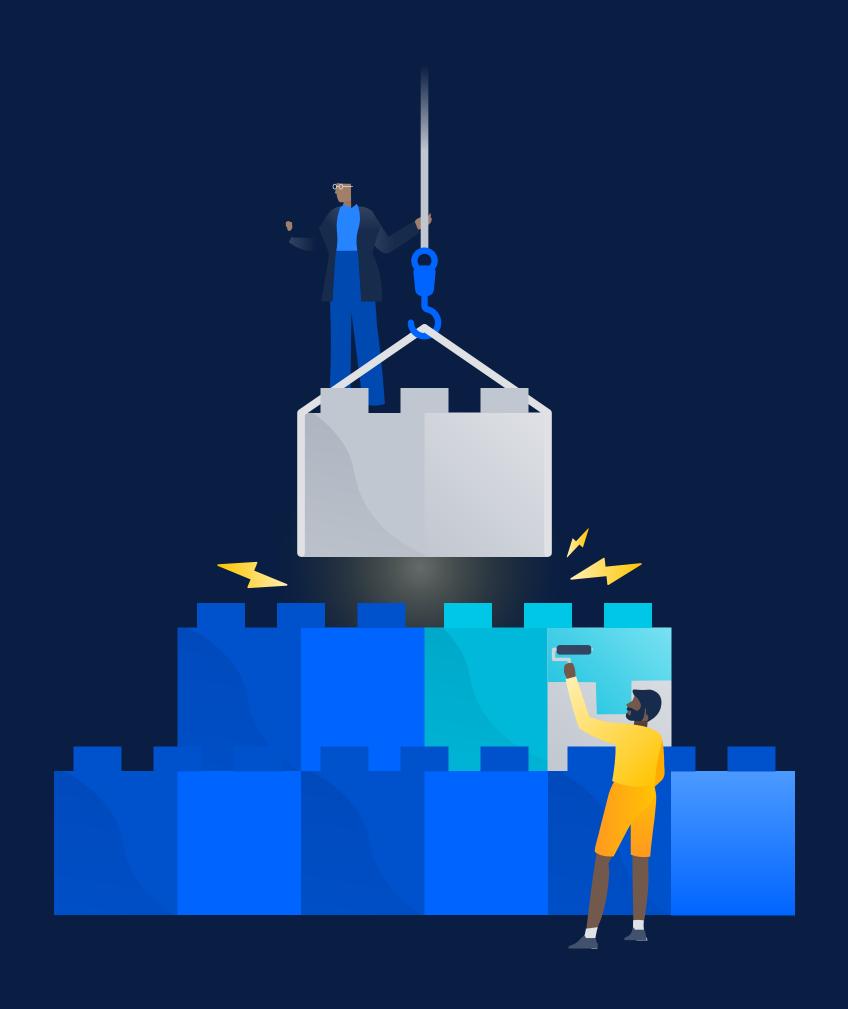- Put failsafes in place to prevent "false incidents"

5. Outline workflows & status changes

"

"When we changed our ITSM system a few years ago, instead of changing the way everyone works and leveraging what the tool had in place, we customized the new system as much as we did the old system. There is no end to the headaches this causes. If you're just starting, I would stay away from overly complicated customizations — use what's there to the best of your ability."

Michael Marques
ITIL-certified ITSM Incident Manager

6. Communicate well

Questions to ask yourself for both internal & external communication

- What channel(s) will be used for communication?

- What does effective communication look like?

- Have expectations been set and clearly communicated?

- Is the chosen style and method of communication building trust?

No but really, communicate *well*

✓ **Here's an example of a helpful communication:**

November 11, 2020 05:45 a.m. UTC

Service is currently down for North American customers. The issue was first detected at 05:30 this morning. Our team is aware and looking into the problem as well as working toward restoration. We will post the next update at 06:00. As a result of the outage customers are unable to access their profiles, don't hesitate to reach out to support with questions.

Includes:

✓ Time & date

✓ Description of problem

✓ When next update is coming

✓ Where to go with questions

7. Define incident response roles

"Let the responders do their incident-related jobs. Responding to frantic managers and customers AND trying to fix something takes more time than just working on the problem."

Patricia Francezi
Jira Admin Service Manager,
Community Leader

Incident commander	Responsible for managing the incident response process and providing direction to the responder teams.
Communications officer	Responsible for handling communications with the stakeholders and responders.
Scribe/Note taker	Responsible for documenting information related to the incident and its response process.
Subject matter expert	Technical domain experts who support the incident commander in incident resolution.

8. Practice & reflect

1. Did everyone know what to do?

2. Did everyone understand their roles?

3. Was the internal communication clear?

4. Did external stakeholders feel informed?

5. Did the process work well for the team?

"

"Plan for the disasters. Test the plans. Assume the worst will happen. Don't panic. "

Matt Doar
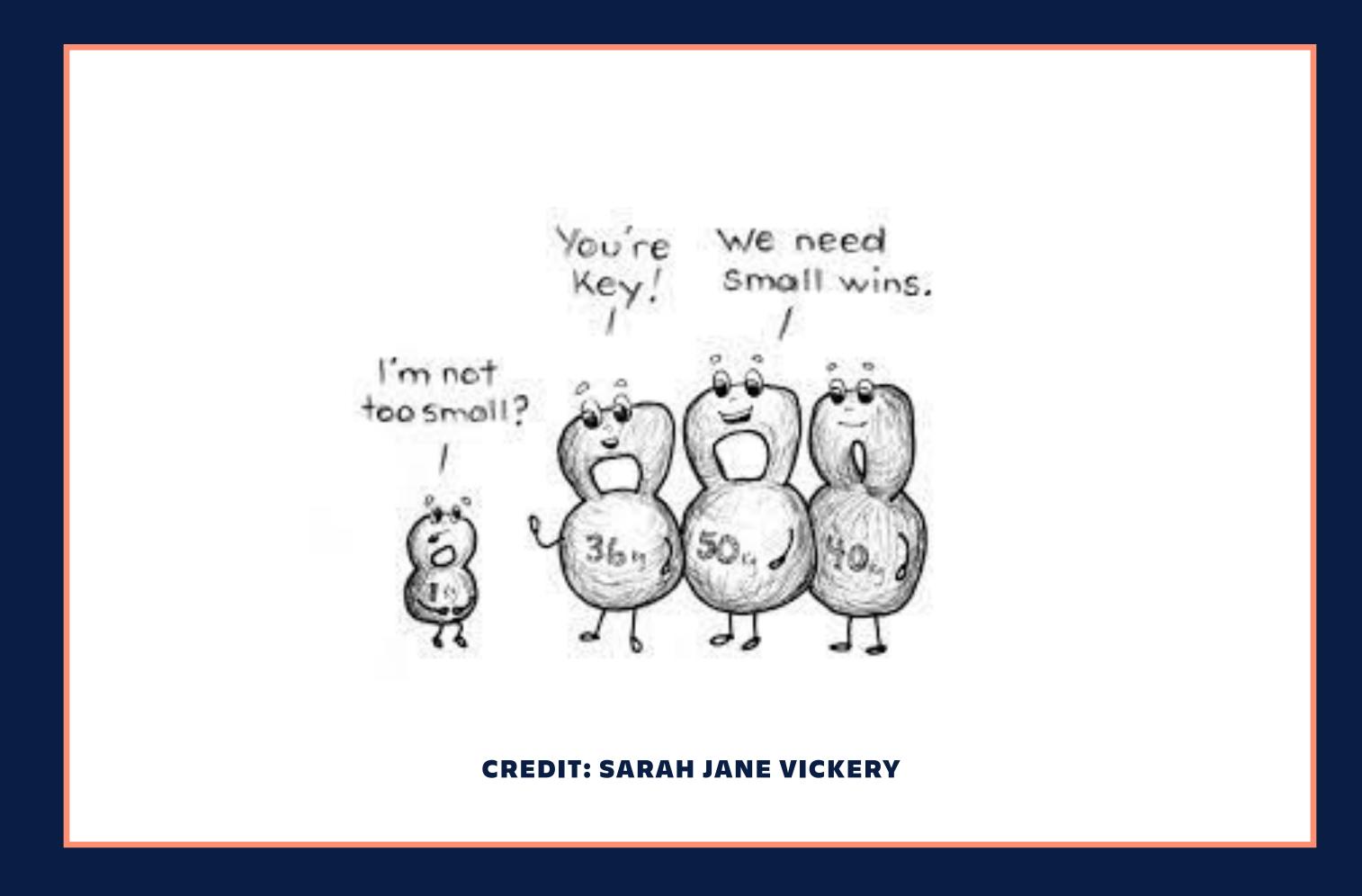Senior Jira Administrator, Community Leader

9. Socialize the processes & expectations

Socialize both internally and externally to stakeholders. Process and expectations mean nothing if they aren't well-known.

Make expectations clear to responders, stakeholders, and leadership.

10. Celebrate the good

CREDIT: SARAH JANE VICKERY

Parting wisdom

1. Get on the same page

2. Define key terms

3. Capture and identify key fields

4. Define and socialize SLAs

5. Outline workflow and status changes

Parting wisdom

6. Communicate; i.e., over-communicate

7. Define incident response roles

8. Practice & reflect

9. Socialize processes & expectations

10. Celebrate wins

Full guide at atlassian.com/whitepapers/
incident-management-guide