



Service Level Agreement Structure

create : support : manage : innovate



Contents

Section	Title	Page
1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	What are Service Level Agreements?	3
3.0	Incident and change	4
4.0	Response and resolution	5
5.0	Frequently Asked Questions	6
6.0	Contact us	7



1.0 Introduction

Service Level Agreements (SLA's) provide a framework within which to conduct a service relationship. There are many interpretations of what constitutes a Service Level Agreement.

Our belief is that SLA's are purely a conduit to afford an effective client communication channel.

This document outlines how we build our client SLA's and some frequently asked questions.

2.0 What are Service Level Agreements?

SLA's outline a broad understanding between a service provider and their clients, giving a structure to service discussions.

This is not usually a strictly contractual document, sitting outside of the core contract. The reason for this is; to be effective SLA's should be a 'living' document. This allows for evolution over the life of the SLA.

SLA's can cover the majority of activities that are undertaken between a provider and a client. A well constructed SLA will have an equal split between client and supplier responsibilities.

It is our recommendation that SLA's are published to as many people within the business as possible. This ensures that there is a much better understanding of the level of service the support partner has committed to achieve.



3.0 Incident and change

There are two distinct areas of activity that occur within the support activities for a client that constitute the requirement for an SLA; incident and change.

Incident

The resolution of ongoing incidents, to ensure the smooth functioning of an IT infrastructure, is the core service provided by Twin Systems plc. Each SLA can be constructed as a unique document, but broadly speaking there are five levels of severity:

- severity level one

A major system outage is the highest level of severity. This is typically a mail server, FTP server or similar. An incident would be judged 'severity level one' if the majority of users are unable to access critical systems or files.

- severity level two

This severity level would include sever problems affecting a small number of users, or a major incident for a VIP user.

- severity level three

Includes minor issues such as poor print quality on a printer or user difficulty in accessing a minor application.

- severity level four

Non-priority minor incident. Could be used for scheduling severity three calls for when client personnel are available. Typically used for system admin tasks such as 'new users' or moving users between systems.

- severity level five

A level five service request is for planned variance from the existing service. The types of service requests vary between organizations. Commonly these include requests for change (RFCs), requests for information (RFIs), and service extensions.

This covers the installation of new hardware/software assets, moves, changes and any planned activity.



Change

A service business is normally not the instigator of change within an organisation. In general terms, these fall into non critical categories regarding SLA delivery.

Therefore, a change request could have an SLA including anything up to ten days or more, depending on the project. Of course, SLA's can be considerably shorter upon client request.



4.0 Response and resolution

SLA's can be constructed as response-based or resolution-based. They can also be a mixture of the two.

In general, most clients opt for a response-based SLA. This is usually because of the financial, resource and time costs involved to design a resolution-based SLA.

Although response-based SLA's are usually more common, Twin Systems does operate resolution-based SLA's for a number of clients. Typically these involve the provision of dedicated support personnel, strategic spares and a more detailed operating processes with our client.



5.0 Frequently Asked Questions

How long does it take to evolve an SLA?

In our experience, it takes between six months & a year to evolve a realistic & viable SLA.

Why do I always have calls open?

The complexity of today's infrastructure means that there will always be issues requiring escalation to manufacturer level. Inevitably such organisations are less responsive than national service providers.

What are the client responsibilities?

They fall into the same areas as the supplier and are typically to:

- aim for effective and clear communication
- ensure access is always available for personnel to resolve issues
- publish the SLA to the business
- educate their own users on service expectations.

What is the purpose of the service review?

The purpose of the service review is to evolve the service relationship and SLA. This is achieved through statistics, feedback and discussion. Ultimately this should be the only forum through which to discuss service issues.

What are the major problems with SLA's?

The major issue we have encountered during the development of SLA's with our clients, is the internal communication of the completed SLA within the client business.

Isn't an SLA restrictive?

In fact, a good SLA is the complete opposite.. A mature and balanced approach to evolving an SLA ensures that every stakeholder understands what is 'business as usual' and what requires extra attention, resources or investment.



6.0 Contact us

For more information check out our website : www.twinsystems.com.

Or you can call us on : 0870 9090 898

Or e-mail us at : enquiries@twinsystems.com

We will arrange for one of our expert representatives to visit you to discuss your requirements. We will tailor a solution to meet your requirements, leaving you free to concentrate on managing your business, not your information technology systems.

Head Office:

Cedar Court
Parkway
Porters Wood
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL3 6PA



www.twinsystems.com
enquiries@twinsystems.com

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