Planned Service Maintenance Communication

The respective Business Owner and Service Owner are responsible for managing the relationship with clients using their service, and they make the final decision regarding the need for client communications. The UIT Communications team is available to assist with any communications planning and implementation as needed. You can reach the team by submitting a help request at uitcomm.stanford.edu.

The following are some questions to consider when determining if client communications is needed for service maintenance during the standard service maintenance windows.

Before you begin

1. Have you filed a Change Request (CR)?
    a. Yes: Continue to “Is client communications needed?”
    b. No: Advanced communication planning is always recommended and there will be times when you are considering communications prior to submitting a CR. Note, however, that a CR should typically be in placed and approved at a Change Advisory Board (CAB) meeting to insure there are no approval concerns before sending client communications. Continue to “Is client communications needed?”

Is client communications needed?

2. Do clients need to take action to enable, or as a result of, the service maintenance?
    a. Yes: This will likely require communications giving clients notice of the action they will need to perform and when they will need to perform it. That may include a pre-event notification(s) and reminder(s), and a post-event reminder. That said, there may be cases where clients already know they may need to take action following maintenance to a service, and communication is not required.

3. Do you expect that there will be a service interruption?
    a. Yes and maintenance is happening during a standard service maintenance window. A “Planned Outage” on the Change Request should be created reflecting the outage period. The outage may not necessarily require additional communication.
    b. Yes (or maybe) and maintenance is happening outside the standard service maintenance window. In addition to creating a “Planned Outage” on the Change Request the visibility or impact of the outage may warrant advanced notice to clients.

4. Will clients notice changes to the service after the outage?
    a. Yes: When a service will look or behave differently after maintenance, it’s a UIT best practice to provide clients advance notice of that change and how it might affect their use of the service.

How to reach clients?

The following are a few things the UIT Communications team considers with the Business Owner, Service Owner, or other UIT staff when planning client communications.

5. Who has responsibility for communication with the clients of this service?
    a. Is there a non-UIT Business Owner for the service?
        i. Some services have Business Owners outside of UIT (e.g, FMS for Oracle Financials, UHR and Registrar's Office for Axess). Sometimes these Business Owners take direct responsibility for communicating with the service's clients. The UIT representative should work directly with that Business Owner to determine the proper method for communications. If UIT is also doing communications, a UIT Communications representative can work with the Business Owner to ensure communications are aligned.
    b. UIT
        i. Who is the UIT service owner...and/or key internal stakeholders?

6. Can UIT Communications support the communications?
    a. Again, the UIT Communications team is available (uitcomm.stanford.edu) to assist with any communications planning and implementation as needed. (Communication priorities may impact resource availability.) You can:
        i. draft the communication yourself and share with UIT Communications for editorial support or
        ii. contact UIT Communications for draft support. (uitcomm.stanford.edu)
    b. Answers to the following sample questions can help UIT Communications support your client communications. UIT Communications will likely have additional questions during a consultation, but these will help you prepare.
        i. How many clients use the service? Will they all be affected?
        ii. Who are the clients? Can they be individually identified (e.g., people who are using Stanford's Duo authentication) or are they a broad client audience (e.g., people who provide and use Stanford websites)? Are there clients using other services that rely on this service and might be affected?
        iii. Can you produce a list of email addresses for the individual users?
        iv. Can we communicate the change within the application/tool/website - via banner, notice, link, etc?
        v. Can we leverage a Communities of Practice (COP) and/or affinity groups to help cascade messages or even gain information?
        vi. Will broad distribution channels (e.g., UIT newsletter, Stanford Report, IT at Stanford, broad/general email lists) be needed?.
        vii. How often/with what frequency do we need to communicate about the the planned maintenance work and its impact on clients (e.g. before, during, after)?
        viii. Should IT leadership (e.g., CIO-Council) get advance notification?