

Downtime Meets Its Match: AI-Driven Event Intelligence for Government Operations



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An online payment portal locks up. A 911 system slows to a crawl. A server fails. Whatever the cause of IT downtime, the consequences hit home for government staff, residents and elected officials.

Such events don't have to mean chaos for state and local IT teams. AI and machine learning (ML) built into modern event management systems — also known as event intelligence tools — can anticipate problems, understand issues in real time and orchestrate comprehensive responses.

Downtime Challenges in Government

Manual work: IT staff spend much of their time on manual tasks that could be automated. "I don't think that's healthy," says Dave Fletcher, senior fellow with the Center for Digital Government and former CTO for the state of Utah.¹ Fletcher notes that state and local IT teams often spend 90-95% of their day this way, leaving little room for innovation.

Data glut: IT professionals have dashboards, data flows and automated alerts telling them when databases crash and applications go offline, but they often lack context on related operations. If, for example, a computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system begins underperforming, IT staff need a fast way to link the slowdown to the root issue.

Event response overkill: A middle-of-the-night downtime alert might lead to 20 people being woken up, when perhaps two or three of them can solve the problem. These alerts create duplicative and wasted effort.

Technical debt: Legacy systems and data silos stall effective event response and delay adoption of modern tools that could lead to prompter responses. "The cost of not making a change when the opportunity arises is very significant," Fletcher says.

Staff burnout: Overworked IT teams get tired of dealing with similar issues day after day, potentially contributing to turnover.

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Demonstrating ROI: Agencies struggle to show the tangible value of technology that transforms event response and prevention. Fletcher recalls a study his agency conducted in Utah that documented how new technology reduced the costs for millions of online transactions. Agency leadership won't see such numbers without the proper analytical tools.

Event Intelligence Advantages

Event intelligence helps IT staff get right to the point. For instance, with AI/ML-driven tools, an IT manager doesn't have to interrupt team members mid-crisis. "Instead of having to stop and say, 'Explain to me what's going on,' I can just do a command that says, 'Catch me up,'" says Heath Newburn, global field CTO with PagerDuty, which builds AI-enhanced event intelligence software. The AI-produced summary reveals the problem, likely causes and actions that can be taken to solve it.

Other event intelligence benefits include:

Faster and smarter response: Middle-of-the-night alerts go only to a few specific, appropriate people rather than entire groups. AI/ML tools won't rouse team members for things that don't concern them.

Improved reliability and public trust: AI/ML helps agencies become more proactive and predictive. Problems get solved sooner or prevented altogether, reducing complaints from the public and agency staff.



More context: AI/ML tools put downtime incidents into context, so if one app or database fails, staff can orchestrate a rapid response that addresses downstream consequences. “I can now say, ‘We were able to detect a problem with the payment system before it could impact any users,’” Newburn says.

APIs can connect to third-party data sets from power companies, for instance, to gain insights about outages that might explain a system failure.

Better analytics: Analytics in modern event intelligence platforms help demonstrate the ROI of technology upgrades. This reassures stakeholders that the benefits justify the cost and effort.

Authentic progress: IT teams can focus on higher-value, creative problem-solving instead of being tied up with routine maintenance tasks.

Success Guidance

Focus on impact: Show leaders the tangible value of better event intelligence. Bring the need to life with real-world examples. For example, if a state system that issues hunting and fishing licenses goes down, a father and son may lose a planned weekend together. Stories like this resonate with leadership.

Start with obvious frustrations: There’s no need to address everything with event intelligence at once. Identify two or three event-related issues that frustrate staff, leadership or the public. When those solutions prove their viability, you can build from there.

Prepare data: AI/ML models require data access from across your agency’s IT ecosystem, so you’ll need to devote time to overcoming data silos. Moreover, data must be properly cleaned and classified for processing by AI/ML.

AI requires data from across your agency’s IT ecosystem, so you’ll need to eliminate data silos.

Stay transparent: Be clear about where AI/ML saves labor and creates opportunities to reassign people to other tasks.

Find allies: Don’t take on this challenge alone. Communicate with vendors, colleagues and user groups that focus on event intelligence.

Automate with nuance: AI cannot displace human judgment. Many manual tasks, meanwhile, exist mainly because IT pros haven’t found time to automate them. Identifying and prioritizing these tasks is one of the keys to success with event intelligence.

Get moving: “Don’t wait on the sidelines to see where things are going,” Newburn says. Your IT staff have the training and experience to do great things if you free them from the manual toil of managing downtime. “These are brilliant people,” he adds. “They know how to get things done within the system.”

Conclusion

Event intelligence addresses problems that have plagued public sector IT teams for decades. “Some of us waited 30 or 40 years to get to where we’re at today,” Fletcher says. “The opportunity is tremendous with AI.”

Partnering with an experienced event intelligence provider can help you apply the technology thoughtfully, gain the most value and open more space for IT staff to excel.

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