SAP MISSION CONTROL CENTER: THE BEST KEPT SECRET IN THE INDUSTRY

EPISODE 16
Transcript

Speakers

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SAP Mission Control Center: The best kept secret in the industry

In this episode Vivian Luechau-de la Roche, Senior Vice President and Global Head of the SAP Mission Control Center and Mission Critical Support talks about importance of mission critical support and especially she will shed some light into what the SAP Mission Control Center is all about.

Introduction

Oliver Huschke: Hi everyone and welcome to this episode of the changemakers podcast series - industry experts - game changing insights. I am Oliver Huschke. I am your host today, and for this episode, we are having Vivian Luechau-de la Roche with us. She's the Senior Vice President and Global Head of the SAP Mission Control Center and Mission Critical Support at SAP.

In her role she is responsible for SAP's customer businesses across the globe in mission critical situations, ensuring the continuity of those businesses through global escalation management. Vivian's experience extends over 30 years in the IT customer industry, primarily in customer sales and support functions.

With the help of Vivian, we will get to know the importance of mission critical support, and especially we will shed some light into what the SAP Mission Control Center is all about. First of all, thank you, Vivian, for taking the time for being with us today.

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: Thank you, Oliver. And thank you for having me.

Chapter 01

Oliver Huschke: I'm sure after this introduction, lots of questions are coming up asking what exactly is the Mission Control Center? How does it work and what does it cover? So, let's start with these ones.

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: Thank you, Oliver. I think everyone remembers the movie with Tom Hanks about Apollo 13 and the sentence:" Houston, we have a problem". So, this is the famous show from the NASA, and they created a room in order to bring Apollo 13 back home.

They were supporting the team in the most critical situation they could have. If you remember, they take off and they have an emergency and they needed to bring the astronauts back home. So, the MCC was inspired on this NASA situation.

And really our mission is to ensure costumers success and supporting the costumers in the most critical situations. So, we help the customers to protect the investments, and also we protect the SAP brand value by being the SAP guardian for customers in those situations.

We continuously also innovate to proactively detect and prevent those critical situations, and we transform the learnings from the resolution of those situations into SAP product and process improvements. In summary, we are a global organization. We are 24/7 available for our customers.

And we never leave customers alone.

Chapter 02

Oliver Huschke: Fantastic. That's a great statement. Tell us what you just said. We never leave our customers alone. If we take this now into the larger context of support, perhaps you can also describe what is the role of the Mission Control Center?

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: So, in summary we are an exception organization, and we support the customers in dealing with the most critical situations in order to ensure a prompt resolution. In many cases, we go beyond the product issues and we have to look holistically at the overall customer situation, even when they have a, for example, operational issues, which are having a big impact in their daily business.

For example, they have a situation where they cannot dispatch their trucks, because perhaps they cannot print the documents, eventually, then we need to jump in and help the customer really to solve this situation due to the business impact.

We focus really on the orchestration of all the SAP organizations. We work together with the customer and with account teams to solve those situations.

Oliver Huschke: So, these are really the most critical customer situations which are affecting the business and are you also connected with the product development?

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: For sure. Obviously, we are the interface to product engineering, and we also work with our experts, we have a team of experts also inside MCC, but they are in permanent contact with product support and product engineering.

Chapter 03

Oliver Huschke: Okay. And how is the SAP Mission Control Center accessible for our customers?

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: We are triggered by board members, account teams of SAP or any teams who are in contact with the customers.

In some cases, of course I get contacted, but we have mechanisms inside SAP for those front offices teams to contact us. Clearly when the customer has, for example, a very high priority one and the customer is very critical and complex, then we jump in.

But we are almost always in the background. In some situations when we have global escalations, the global escalation manager becomes the central point of contact not only for the account teams but also for the customers until the problem has been resolved.

Chapter 04

Oliver Huschke: What are the customers valuing the most from the SAP Mission Control Center?

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: I have to say, they really love us. And it's just mainly because of our capacity to help them in the most critical situations and because we are able really to integrate the teams inside SAP and even outside SAP, because it could be also that we have to work with partners and get the issues solved. So, I have to say, I truly believe that if we cannot solve it, nobody can solve it.

I'm not saying that we do it alone. Of course, we have to integrate all the different teams in SAP and then we make it happen. Also, I think what is very important for customers is to have clear communication on what is happening and to have an action plan.

Oliver Huschke: I think you also mentioned previously that you never leave a customer alone. This might be also something that customers are valuing a lot. Plus also then so in this situation, when you are being called in, you are connecting all resources, all experts within SAP to help to solve the issue.

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: Correct. Exactly.

Chapter 05

Oliver Huschke: And in the context of cloud, how does SAP ensure cloud, health and reliability and what role plays the SAP Mission Control Center?

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: Yes, obviously in Mission Control Center, we have to move from supporting one customer at the time to supporting many customers at the same time.

And this is really the impact of the cloud when you have an issue, this issue is impacting not only one customer, but eventually thousands of customers. For this reason, we have established within MCC a well-defined process to support major incidents in the cloud.

First of all, in the area of detection, the role of the Mission Control Center is to support the line of business within SAP to detect the outages or service disruptions in a timely manner and acting on them to drive resolution.

Also, we inform not only our customers but also our board members and main stakeholders inside SAP on what is happening and what are the actions that we are taking towards resolution? And clearly to do that, we have to work very closely with their line of business.

But it is very important that the organization who is informing is the MCC. And this is with the support, of course, of the experts. Equally important is to avoid reoccurrence. This is why making sure that we have a clear root cause analysis of the situation becomes very critical and we have to provide also these to our customers in a timely manner and make sure that we have a fix and that this is not going to happen again.

Chapter 06

Oliver Huschke: You also mentioned that this is an organization with a very long history. So, I think it would be very interesting also to understand how the SAP Mission Control Center changed over time, especially considering that more and more customers are moving from on-premises to cloud.

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: I mean Oliver, what is clear is that our customers have hybrid environments, especially the large customers. They not only have cloud. They still have on-prem solutions or they have also private cloud. That has changed the way we work.

We started almost three years ago a transformation that we call moving to the cloud in order to be able to support our customers independent of their deployment mode. These include on-prem, private- and public cloud. I can say really that almost 60% of our work today is on customers in the cloud.

We have expanded our processes. We are working together with the cloud line of businesses in product engineering, and we established a complete team called Cloud Reliability and Engagement in MCC to focus on business continuity for the cloud solutions.

In addition to that, obviously one of the major issues that we have in the cloud is cybersecurity. So, we started a team and we expanded our knowledge to cover security, and

we are working together with cyber legal and with all our security organizations also for communication in case we have any security incident.

And in addition to that, I mean, probably a lot of information, but we established something that we call the solution hub for all business areas in the cloud and on premise with the purpose to improve the quality and supportability of our SAP solution and to ensure our customers do not suffer service disruptions after major updates. So all in all, we really move the organization from being only on-prem to be able to cover hybrid solutions.

Oliver Huschke: Okay. And is this transformation completed or is it still ongoing?

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: I think this transformation probably, never ends because you are learning all the time but I believe that today we already have the framework and the basis in MCC to continue this journey into the cloud.

Oliver Huschke: I would also say listening to what and how you describe it, I was also getting the impression that this transformation is never ending because of all the customer situations.

You are taking this also for learning. Plus, also on the other side, all the new products and technologies that are also coming. So, this is also pushing you to continuously transform.

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: Absolutely. This transformation never ends.

Chapter 07

Oliver Huschke: And if you look a little bit into the future, how do you see the mission control center to further evolve?

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: I mean, one thing is for sure that the SAP Mission Control Center will continue being the last line of defense in SAP. But our objective is to be even more proactive and we will continue developing tools to understand when customers are in trouble before they even know it, and, if possible, solve the issues before the customer even notice they are happening. We will be focusing on becoming more preventing than ever and this is really the future: Ensure business continuity and self-healing, making ourselves more proactive to avoid customers to see any disruptions in their business processes.

Chapter 08

Oliver Huschke: How important is mission critical support and especially should customers pay higher attention to it when selecting the right software vendor?

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: Absolutely. I mean, this is an organization who has made a difference for years. And we have shared, even with our partners, the best practices that we have in our organization.

From my point of view, if I were a customer, I will be looking not only at the software but also at the capability of the organization to support in case of issues.

Oliver Huschke: And I think what you also mentioned was what the mission control center is doing, you are going beyond of the product. So, you are looking at the customer situation. And with this, most likely you are also looking into the processes. So again, not only being focused on a single product, but on the overall customer situation.

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: Absolutely. I mean, in some of the cases, the issue is not even a software issue. And some of the casing cases, the customer has an operational issue, not only a technical operational issue, but it could be also that the business transformation in the organization doesn't match the implementation of their business processes. And this is where we enter and provide also recommendations on how to bring these together.

Chapter 09

Oliver Huschke: Perfect. And why is the SAP Mission Control Center a changemaker, from your view?

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: I think the most important part is our capability to learn from failure.

So, if you are an organization that is a learning organization, you will be always providing an additional value to our customers and we are really able to provide this information to them. We are in a good position to support the changes in SAP and also to support customers who are changing. Also, to be honest, this organization is available for our customers 24/7. And we look really as we discussed previously, Oliver, we look at the holistic situation of the customer. And that makes really the big difference on everything we do that we have really this big picture.

Oliver Huschke: I think perhaps also to highlight was one comment or one statement you gave is that the mission control center never leaves the customer alone. So of course, the primary role is to fix the issue. But then you are taking this issue also, of course, to learn out of it. You take the information back into the product development that also this organization, they can use the feedback that is coming out of this issue. And I think this is also from my perspective, what I heard, would underline of being a change maker.

Vivian Luechau-de la Roche: Absolutely.

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Oliver Huschke: Fantastic. Okay. Thank you, Vivian, for taking the time and for helping us better understand the importance of mission critical support and especially the SAP Mission Control Center.

If you are tuning in from your office, your car, from home with your favorite cup of coffee, thank you so much for joining us.

Don't forget to follow us and make sure to check out services and support on sap.com to learn more about our offerings and how we guide you to the cloud and how to take the most out of it.

Thank you. Take care. Until next time.