

SLO pitfalls and how to avoid them

Pitfall 1: SLOs not tied to business goals

SLOs not tied to business goals can be an unnecessary distraction and steal time from critical tasks. It's important to not monitor and remediate problems just because they exist.

How to avoid

- Ensure every SLO is tied to an SLA or internal business goal.
- Reconsider the importance of every SLO being tracked if it doesn't fall into one of the two criteria.



Pitfall 2: Using SLOs reactively vs. proactively

When SLOs are in place as a mechanism to fix something when it's broken defeats the end goal of designing highly resilient and reliable systems which require a more proactive approach to resolving issues before they affect end users.

How to avoid

- Ensure SLOs are integrated as part of the DevOps lifecycle and are evaluated against frequently.
- Automatically track error budgets and leverage Davis AI to get 'pre-crime' alerts before a violation happens as opposed to getting alerted after the fact.
- Take advantage of Davis AI to get root cause analysis and automatically trigger remediation or incident management workflows for any violations.



Pitfall 3: SLOs with no individual or team ownership

SLOs with no individual or team ownership results in 'blame game' and 'finger pointing' when SLOs are violated. Resolution times take even longer when remediation plans do not exist or are not well defined.

How to avoid

- Collaborate with Development, DevOps and SRE teams to establish an owner for every SLO created.
- Ensure SLOs are viable, relevant SLIs are monitored, thresholds are set, dashboards are setup, remediation processes are agreed upon, and alerting mechanisms are tested and in place.



Pitfall 4: Setting incorrect SLO thresholds

Setting SLO thresholds too high that they can never be achieved or too low makes them meaningless as they discourage teams from improving quality and levels of service.

How to avoid

- Review SLI history, industry standards and best practices for common SLOs before setting targets.
- Talk to the relevant stakeholder/owner of the SLO to understand thresholds and whether they make sense for the specific use case.



Pitfall 5: Manually evaluating SLOs

Looking at dashboards rather than automatic evaluation wastes precious time that can be spent on innovation.

How to avoid

- Automatically evaluate SLOs through quality gates as code moves through the delivery pipeline to enforce continuous release validation and stop bad code in its tracks.
- This prevents SLO violations from occurring in the first place and reduces the need for manual oversight and review.



About Dynatrace

Dynatrace provides software intelligence to simplify cloud complexity and accelerate digital transformation. With automatic and intelligent observability at scale, our all-in-one platform delivers precise answers about the performance and security of applications, the underlying infrastructure, and the experience of all users to enable organizations to innovate faster, collaborate more efficiently, and deliver more value with dramatically less effort. That's why many of the world's largest enterprises trust Dynatrace® to modernize and automate cloud operations, release better software faster, and deliver unrivalled digital experiences.