Triple Pat Check-in service

"Is my alarm working?" as-a-service

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Triple Pat

If you have pockets, then when you go outside the house you do a triple-pat to make sure you have wallet+keys+phone.

A little gesture that helps you have confidence that you are prepared

We'd like to give that sort of casual confidence to people who run software systems

We're starting with a largely-ignored question in devops - **Is the alarm system working?** Because right now there are no alarms going off, and that's either good or very bad.

Modern best practices for SRE/devops

Applications produce metrics

Prometheus (or OTEL or something else) captures those metrics into a DB

AlertManager (or Grafana or something else) polls the DB to make sure things are okay

- If they are not okay, then PagerDuty gets notified

PagerDuty wakes up the people on call

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THIS IS GOOD!

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But how do you know it's currently working?

How do you know the alert pipeline is working?

The person asking this question is the person who is running the alerting.

Asking them to set up more alarm services just recurses!

- “How do I know the alarm is working?”
- “How do I know the alarm’s alarm is working?”
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- “How do I know the alarm’s alarm’s alarm’s alarm is working?”
- …

How do you know the alert pipeline is working?

In a stable system, the alarm system working is a negative signal - there's no alarms!

This means "no alarms are firing" and "the alarm system is broken" have the same signal - no alarms!

We need to tease those apart

What we want to guard against

Help operators guard against themselves! Operators are the main reason for outages and they know this.

Asking them to set up more alerting systems just doubles down on forcing them to trust themselves.

They need a small independent alerting system that inverts the existing alerting paradigm of “no news is good news”.

How do you know the alert pipeline is working?

How would you know if it isn't?

Our solution

- Fire an alarm every 15 minutes
- Immediately squelch the alarm and note the time in a third party system
- Third party system has the job of notifying if the "last seen alert time" is greater than 30 minutes

This is great! Now "no signal" causes a notification, and you aren't depending on yourself for running your own services to provide backup for your services

The Triple Pat Check-In Service

https://triplepat.com/api/v1/checkin/550e8400-e29b-41d4-a716-446655440000

https://triplepat.com/api/v1/getlastcheckin/550e8400-e29b-41d4-a716-446655440000

Write cron jobs that “check in” to specific UUIDs when everything is okay (aka GET or POST to the first URL)

Use the Triple Pat app to monitor those UUIDs and alert if they are too old (aka poll the second URL with GET)

The Triple Pat Check-In Service - Incentive compatible

You pay me to run it (5/month or 50/yr)

If it is broken and check-ins stop working, then the alarm goes off and you'll unsubscribe from the service and I'll go out of business

It uses infrastructure that is definitely independent of your infrastructure

You don't run it, so it will fail in ways and times that are different from how your stuff fails

- I can't promise lack of failure (and you shouldn't trust anyone who does!)
- But I can promise independence of failure

The Triple Pat Check-In Service - Incredibly reliable

https://triplepat.com/blog/2025/01/09/dependencies

Two independent DNS names+providers - triplepat.com and triplepat.net

5 independent servers across 5 different cloud provider/region combos

- triplepat.com, a.triplepat.com, b.triplepat.com, c.triplepat.com, d.triplepat.com
  triplepat.net, a.triplepat.net, b.triplepat.net, c.triplepat.net, d.triplepat.net
- DBs function in master-master mode thanks to CRDTs.
- GCP in US and EU, AWS in US and EU, and TILAA in NL

As long as at least one DNS provider and one region in one cloud provider is up, then the service 100% works

The Triple Pat Check-In Service - iOS and Android

I’m writing/have written apps for both kinds of phones. The iOS one is slightly ahead of the Android one.

All “write once” frameworks abstract everything except

- App store subscriptions
- Notifications/Alerts
- Background tasks

Those three things constitute basically the whole app! So I have to write a Swift one and a Kotlin one instead of using e.g. Flutter+Dart or something similar.

Triple Pat Check-In Service

Costs 5/month for extra peace of mind for ops people

Incentive-compatible with your reliability

Highly-reliable service architecture+design

Service is 100% up for more than a month now

Available soon for both iOS and Android

Get on the beta-testers list now!