Security, Availability and Maintenance Windows
Exploring Update Behavior of Professional Administrators

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Experts agree that keeping systems up-to-date is one of the most powerful security measure. However, previous work found that users often refrain from performing timely updates, often due to bad experiences. While these findings are already alarming, another important user group has largely been neglected in the literature: system administrators, who are responsible for keeping complex and heterogeneous system landscapes available and secure.

In this paper, we aim at understanding the administrators' behavior, experiences and attitudes in a corporate environment. Based on the results of an interview study, we developed an online survey and quantified common practices and obstacles (e.g., downtimes or lack of information about updates). Our findings indicate that even experienced administrators struggle with update processes as the consequences of an update are sometimes hard to assess. We argue that more usable monitoring and update processes are needed to warrant IT security at scale.