

Using a physical object as a reminder

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On our team, we have a mailing list where people can report problems. Those people could be testers from our team or they could be people from elsewhere in the company. Everybody on the team is expected to keep an eye on the messages and debug problems in their area. The job of monitoring the mailing list to ensure that every issue is ultimately addressed rotates according to a predetermined schedule, and in addition to receiving a piece of reminder mail at 4pm the business day before it's your turn, you will also find a Mickey Mouse ears hat on your desk when you arrive in the morning.

I bought this hat in Disneyland a few years ago and somehow managed to convince the person operating the sewing machine to stitch the name "Dev O'Day" on the back. "It's an Irish name," I explained, but it also stands for "Developer of the Day", which is the title we use for the person who monitors the mailing list.

One of our team members went on vacation to Disneyland the following year and brought back a back-up hat, which sits in my office. The back-up hat is occasionally brought into service when the primary Dev O'Day hat goes missing, at which point a Search and Rescue mission is undertaken to locate the hat and restore it to circulation. (It's usually just sitting in the office of someone who was Developer of the Day recently and merely forgot to hand the hat off at the end of the day.)

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