Minimum Interval Between Triggering Event and Action

The first attribute that warrants a comparison is the minimum amount of time between the event that "kicks off" an escalation rule or a time-based workflow rule and the corresponding action that it triggers. Take a look at how the following three triggered actions compare in terms of timing in Figure 7-1.
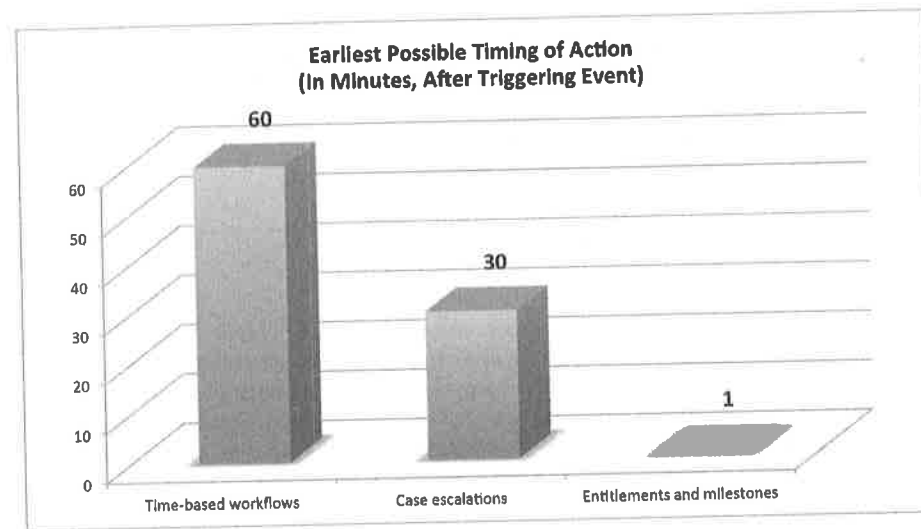

Figure 7-1. The earliest possible action is based on the triggering event and varies by source

The intervals in the figure speak for themselves. While with escalation rules and time-based workflow rules, you can only configure an action 30–60 minutes out; with entitlements and milestones, you can configure an action to occur literally 1 minute after the triggering event. Simply put, that's awesome.

■ **Note** Case escalation rules can only trigger owner changes and Email alerts; unlike workflow rules, they cannot drive automated updates of any fields other than the Case Owner field.

Variance Between Expected and Actual Minimum Intervals

The potential disparity between the expected time intervals and the actual timing of the triggered action shown in the previous figure is another critical consideration when automating your business processes. The intervals of 60 minutes, 30 minutes, and 1 minute depicted are what you configure for the corresponding actions. However, the expected time does not always match the actual interval that occurs. Figure 7-2 shows the percentage of potential variance between the actual time it takes to trigger an action and the time that it is expected to take, as it applies to both time-based workflow rules and entitlements and milestones.
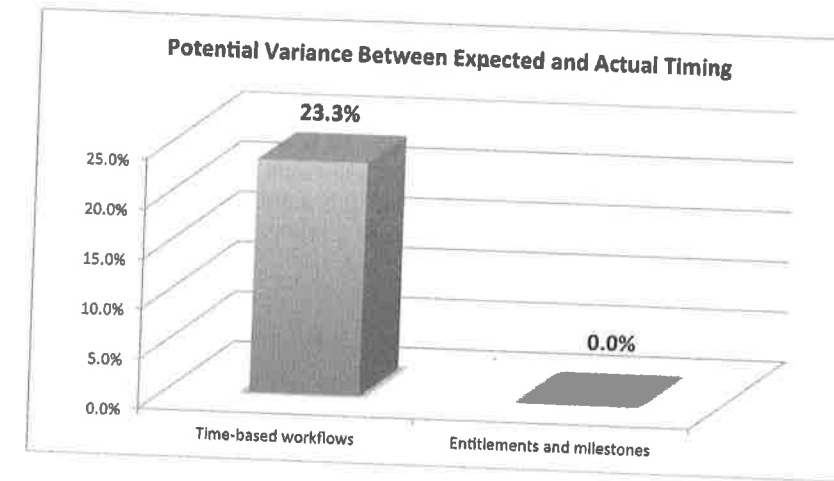
Figure 7-2. The actual timing of an automated action may vary quite a bit when using time-based workflow rules

If you're wondering what in the world I'm talking about, let me explain. A subtle, but critical, detail that you need to know about when considering declarative timing is Salesforce.com's "batching" of pending timed actions. All is not as it seems when it comes to action timing. Figure 7-3 shows a Case workflow rule with a time trigger set to fire one hour after the triggering event.

Figure 7-3. A workflow rule with a time trigger set to fire one hour after the date and time of the triggering event[1]

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