

Customer Engineering Career Ladder

Introduction and Concepts

This document describes a sample career path progression for a technical customer support organization. The listed requirements are for internal promotion only; external hires may be brought in at any level but the hiring requirements should be very similar to the internal promotion requirements.

Available Paths

We recognize that not everyone wants to, or is suited to, move into management as their career progresses. In order to ensure that senior individual contributors (ICs) are able to continue progressing in their career, an IC path is available, as well as a management path. After a stint in the **Core Role** of Customer Engineer, engineers can choose whether to progress on the **IC Path** or the **Management Path**. An alternative progression path may also be available, depending on the needs of the team, and is outlined under **Alternative Path** below. These paths are *not exhaustive*—other roles may from time to time be added depending on the needs of the team. They are also not *mutually exclusive*. If an engineer wishes to move from the IC Path to the Management Path, or vice versa, they may do so if they meet the requirements for their desired role and that role is available.

Once an engineer has spent two years with the support team, they may explore other opportunities across the company. Support team leadership will work with individual engineers on a plan to transfer into another team, pending availability and approval by the other team's leadership.

Peer Review

A promotion should be more than just a manager's decision. In order to successfully attain the next level in the support organization, a candidate must undergo a peer review process. This consists of a presentation and discussion with teammates: either the entire support team in cases of small teams, or a suitable subset in larger support organizations. The presentation consists of a portfolio of support tickets and other team-related projects of which the candidate is proud, the goal being to establish that the candidate has a track record of successful troubleshooting and issue resolution, as well as the breadth of expertise to qualify as a subject-matter expert (SME) in one or more relevant categories. The peer group will review this portfolio, ask relevant questions, and come to a consensus on whether the candidate has successfully shown their expertise to qualify for the requested role.

Documented need for role

Promotions to some roles, particularly those in the management path, are only available when there is a specific need for that role. When these roles open up, anyone on the team who meets the role requirements is invited to apply.

Initiating Advancement Review

If an engineer meets the requirements for an advanced role, she may request a review at any time. Her manager may also initiate this review process if the requirements are met.

Requirements Waiver

Requirements for advancement may, from time to time, be waived at the discretion of team leadership. This is a rare occurrence, and only in cases of urgent need for a role to be filled.

Core Role

This is the level that most new team members will start at.

Role Name	Level	Responsibilities	Requirements
Customer Engineer	1	• Primary point of contact for support issues initiated during on-duty hours • Occasional on-call hours on weekends and holidays as schedule requires • Responsible for full ticket cycle including: ◦ Customer communication, live and written ◦ Engaging assistance from SMEs ◦ Handing off to counterparts in Sales and Customer Success • Able to resolve 75% of support issues without assistance	• Understanding of product to be supported as well as ancillary technologies • Technical competence in specific topics necessary for the role, including: ◦ Networking ◦ Linux • Interest and expertise in technical troubleshooting

		Additional duties as assigned by manager	
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IC Path

Some more senior new hires may start as Senior Engineer, or (very rarely) at Staff Engineer. In most cases, however, Customer Engineers will move into these more senior roles after gaining sufficient experience and expertise on the support team.

Role Name	Level	Responsibilities	Requirements
Senior Engineer	2	Same as Customer Engineer, plus: - Assists team leads and managers with onboarding new engineers - Mentor new and earlier career team members - Serves as technical backstop for more complex customer issues - Able to resolve 90% of support issues without assistance - Proactively improves and updates team processes and technology - Builds and leads knowledge sharing sessions for support team and related technical teams	1 year at Level 1 - SME in at least two core skillsets (list elsewhere) - Successful peer review
Staff Engineer	3	Same as Senior Engineer, plus: - Able to resolve 95% of support issues without assistance - Owns and is responsible for maintenance and improvement of one or more team processes or tools - Creates new team tools and processes	2 years at Level 2 - SME in at least four core skillsets (list elsewhere) - Successful peer review

Management Path

For engineers who wish to move into a more managerial role over time, the management path provides an entryway via team lead and proceeds into a full management role. New staff may be hired in as managers or senior managers if there are no suitable candidates already within the organization.

Role Name	Level	Responsibilities	Requirements
Team Lead	2	Same as Customer Engineer, plus: • Leads team of 3-4 ICs in addition to normal support duties • Assists in onboarding and training new team members • Serves as technical backstop for complex support issues • Assists team members with personal development goals • Assists manager with ensuring coverage for all required hours as well as weekend and holiday shifts	• Documented need for role • 1 year at Level 1 • Documented success in peer onboarding/coaching OR past experience in people management • Successful peer review
Manager	3	• People manager for team of 4-8 ICs, possibly including 1-2 team leads • Responsible for support coverage for a given region or time zone • Works with team members to determine and achieve personal development goals • Collects team metrics and makes recommendations for headcount and team goals to company leadership • Covers open support shifts as needed, including weekends and holidays	• Documented need for role • 1 year at Level 2 • If coming in from IC path, documented success in peer onboarding/coaching OR past experience in people management • Successful peer review

Senior Manager	4	Same as Manager, plus: • People manager for team of 2-4 managers • Responsible for support coverage over several teams or time zones • Works closely with company leadership to set and evaluate team goals and metrics	• Documented need for role • 2 years at Level 3 • If coming in from IC path, documented success in peer onboarding/coaching OR past experience in people management • Successful peer review
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Alternative Path (optional)

Occasionally, specialized roles are needed in the overall support organization. This alternative path is designed to provide space for these roles as they become necessary.

Role Name	Level	Responsibilities	Requirements
(varies)	2+	(varies)	(varies)
Example: Automation Engineer	3	Same as Senior Engineer, plus: • Team SME for internal and cross-team automations and tools • Works with support organization leadership and counterparts on other teams to build and maintain tools and automations • Available to cover on-call and weekend/holiday support shifts as needed	• Documented need for role • 2 years at Level 2 • SME in automation processes and tools • Successful peer review