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Support → Engineering Escalation Playbook

How escalations move — predictably, with context, and with clear ownership.

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1. The Escalation Ladder

Responsibility shifts smoothly and predictably up the ladder. Escalations follow it sequentially — unless the severity warrants a leap.

Level	Owner	Core responsibilities
L1	Tier 1	Executes playbooks; collects baseline data; performs replication steps
L2	Tier 2	Technical investigation; troubleshooting; log and data analysis; reproduction validation
L3	Tier 3	Product-level diagnosis; bug-pattern identification; advanced troubleshooting; engineering-ready reproduction
L4	Engineering	Code-level debugging; SEV ownership; bug-fix creation
L5	Leadership	Customer-communication alignment; contract or PR risk review; executive outreach

2. SEV (Incident) Management Framework

A strong SEV framework is a signature of operational maturity — matching response intensity to customer impact.

Severity	Response model
SEV1	Dedicated communication bridge; on-call Engineering engaged; status-page updates; cross-functional updates every 30–60 minutes; ticket bundling to minimize noise; post-incident RCA within 48 hours
SEV2	Slower cadence with room for technical exploration; Tier 3 and Engineering engaged; customer updates every 2–3 hours
SEV3	Managed within Support / Tier 3; Engineering consulted as needed; proactive updates every 24 hours
SEV4	Standard support workflows; knowledge-base updates as required

3. Incident Communication Framework

Customers value transparency, clarity, predictability, and ownership. Every update answers five questions:

- What we know
- What we don’t know yet
- What we’re doing next
- When you’ll hear from us again
- What you should do in the meantime

Simple language. No blame. No speculation.

4. Escalation Failure Modes & Fixes

Failure mode	Fix
Over-escalation — escalating too early wastes resources and erodes trust	Clear playbooks and competency definitions
Under-escalation — waiting too long frustrates customers and increases SEVs	Severity-model enforcement
Escalation without context — Engineering receives incomplete reproductions or unclear data	Enforced escalation checklist (§6)
Escalation without ownership transfer — multiple teams assume someone else has it	Explicit ownership logging

5. Engineering Handoff Standards

Clean ticket creation — every Engineering/JIRA ticket includes

- Problem statement
- Affected-users count
- Clear reproduction steps
- Screenshots / video
- Environment conditions
- Logs
- Workflow details
- Severity (per the severity model)
- Expected vs. actual outcomes

Ticket hygiene

- No unrelated issues bundled into a single ticket
- Version numbers included
- Linked Zendesk tickets included
- Ownership always explicit

Engineering feedback loop — Engineering owes

- Acceptance
- Reproduction validation
- Fix-timeline updates
- Post-fix validation notes

6. The Signature Escalation Checklist

A good escalation must include every item below. This is the single biggest lever for resolution speed and for reducing avoidable Engineering interruptions.

- ☐ Summary of the issue
- ☐ Reproduction steps
- ☐ Expected vs. actual behavior
- ☐ Logs and data (including HAR captures and console logs where applicable)

- ☐ Customer impact
- ☐ Severity
- ☐ Steps already taken
- ☐ Screenshots when applicable
- ☐ Supporting tickets
- ☐ Case owner

7. Coaching & Enablement

Teams are trained to understand when to escalate, when not to, how to escalate, what information is required, and how to de-escalate frustrated customers — through training, shadowing, QA reviews, case studies, and playbook drills.