Escalation & SLA Management SOP

Standard Operating Procedure for Triaging, Escalating, and Resolving Customer Issues

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1. Purpose

This SOP standardizes how customer-reported issues are triaged, escalated, and resolved across a high-volume enterprise SaaS portfolio. It defines severity tiers, response and resolution SLAs, and the escalation path for each tier, so that every account — regardless of assigned CSM — receives a consistent, predictable standard of support.

Applied consistently across a 1,041+ account portfolio, this framework contributed to reducing average Time to Resolution (TTR) to ~21 days and sustaining 95.8% CSAT with zero dissatisfied responses.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all customer-reported issues logged through support channels (case management system, email, or escalation from the CSM) for accounts in active onboarding or steady-state status. It covers triage, internal escalation, client communication, and post-resolution review.

3. Severity Tier Definitions

Tier	Definition	Response SLA	Resolution SLA	Example
P1 — Critical	Complete service outage or data loss affecting business operations	15 minutes	4 hours	Platform down; client cannot access the system at all
P2 — High	Major functionality broken; workaround may exist but adoption is blocked	1 hour	1 business day	A core workflow (e.g. case sync) fails for all users
P3 — Medium	Partial or isolated issue with limited business impact	4 business hours	3 business days	A report renders incorrectly for one user profile
P4 — Low	Cosmetic issue, question, or enhancement request	1 business day	Next release cycle	Label wording request; minor UI inconsistency

4. Escalation Path by Severity

Escalation is time-boxed against the SLA for each tier — it is not left to individual judgment on when to loop others in. The table below defines who is notified at each stage.

Time Elapsed	P1 / P2	P3	P4
At intake	CSM + Support Engineer notified immediately	CSM notified	Logged in queue
50% of SLA elapsed	Team Lead looped in; client proactively updated	CSM checks in with owning team	—

Time Elapsed	P1 / P2	P3	P4
SLA breached	Manager + Engineering lead escalation; executive summary sent to client	Team Lead notified; revised ETA given to client	Reviewed in weekly backlog grooming
Post-resolution	RCA required within 3 business days	RCA optional, logged if recurring	—

5. Roles & Responsibilities

- CSM (Customer Success Manager): first point of contact; owns client communication and overall account health throughout the escalation.
- Support Engineer: performs technical triage and diagnosis; implements or coordinates the fix.
- Team Lead: monitors SLA adherence; unblocks resourcing issues; approves any SLA exceptions.
- Engineering Lead: engaged for P1/P2 issues requiring code-level investigation or a platform fix.
- Account Executive: looped in when an escalation carries commercial or renewal risk.

6. Proactive Escalation Triggers

The following should trigger an out-of-cycle escalation regardless of where the issue sits in its SLA window:

- The same root cause has recurred more than once for the same account within 30 days.
- The client has explicitly indicated dissatisfaction, urgency, or executive-level attention on the issue.
- The issue blocks a go-live, migration, or contractually committed milestone.
- Resolution requires a cross-team dependency that is not responding within one business day.

7. Client Communication Standards

- P1: proactive updates at least every 2 hours until resolved.
- P2: proactive updates at least once per business day.
- P3/P4: update on status change, or within the stated SLA window if no change.
- Every client-facing update states current status, next step, and expected next update time — never just "we're looking into it."

8. Post-Resolution Review (RCA)

For all P1 and P2 issues, a brief Root Cause Analysis is completed within 3 business days of resolution, covering: what happened, why it happened, what fixed it, and what will prevent recurrence. RCAs are logged centrally so recurring patterns across accounts can be identified and addressed proactively rather than case-by-case.

9. Metrics Tracked

- Time to first response, by severity tier
- Time to resolution (TTR), by severity tier and overall
- SLA adherence rate (% of cases resolved within SLA)
- Escalation rate (% of cases requiring escalation beyond the CSM)
- Recurrence rate (repeat issues on the same account within 30/60/90 days)

Adapted from escalation and SLA management practices applied across a 1,041+ account enterprise SaaS portfolio, contributing to a reduction in average Time to Resolution to ~21 days.