

The 2025 Solutions Engineering Career Guide

Salary benchmarks, career advancement, and the modern SE skillset





Sr. Solutions Engineer

4-6 Y EXP 

LVL 3

💰 \$178K

🏆 ADVR.



LVL 1



LVL 2



LVL 3



LVL 4



LVL 5



LVL 6

CONTINUE
NEW GAME
SETTINGS
EXIT



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Introduction

Solutions engineering has experienced a meteoric rise in recent years as the landscape for software sales has changed. Modern buyers have less patience for sales processes, ask more technical questions earlier in the deal, and want in-depth, customized demos. Paired with a big spike in technical implementation needs, especially for AI, solutions engineers (SEs) are in high demand.

SEs can be incredibly influential across every area of the business. Their work influences board-level metrics like pipeline conversions, customer acquisition costs, revenue retention, and more.

But how do SEs advance in their careers to get to that level of influence? And how do they know if they're being properly compensated for their efforts?



We surveyed more than 400 SEs to get answers to those questions and more.

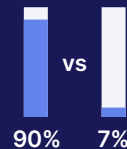
What SEs will get from this guide:

- ✓ Salary benchmarks for every stage of the SE career
- ✓ Required experience and key responsibilities for every role
- ✓ Guidance on how to advance at every stage
- ✓ Top tools to master
- ✓ Top skills to improve
- ✓ Cross-functional partnerships and best practices

Key insights from the survey

We surveyed **more than 400 SEs** about their day-to-day jobs: Their top skillsets, how they spend their time, the tools they use, and their predictions for the future of SEs. Respondents were seasoned and well-versed in this career: **79% of respondents had at least 4 years of experience; 46% had at least 7.**

Here are some of the top findings:



Soft skills are more important than technical chops for SEs

90% say communication skills are “very important” for SEs compared to 7% who say the same for technical skills.



SEs give a lot of demos — but the process is inefficient

65% of SEs spend 5+ hours weekly giving demos, but 46% spend just as much time doing manual customization.



AI will transform the role of SEs

4 in 5 SEs think it will be “important” or “very important” for SEs to adopt AI in 2025.

The SE Career Path

If you ask 10 different SEs how they got into the field, you'll likely get 10 different answers. However, the common thread is a blend of technical know-how, excellent people skills, and expert storytelling. As SEs advance in this career path, their role is likely to expand beyond Sales to influence other departments including Product and Customer Success. They'll be leading teams by setting a vision and strategy everyone can rally behind.



Associate Solutions Engineer

Curious, Energetic, Dependable



Experience: 0-2 years



\$120K

\$95-153K salary range
\$120K median

What they do

Help sales reps with demos, technical questions, and proofs of concept (POCs).

How to advance

- 1 Fill gaps in technical knowledge (e.g. gain competency with API architecture, Javascript, Python, Bash, etc.).
- 2 Improve customer-facing skills, especially the ability to translate technical speak into business value.
- 3 Seek mentorship from senior SEs to gain a deeper understanding of the sales process, especially demos and POCs.



Solutions Engineer

Capable, Technical, Storyteller



Experience: 1-3 years



\$150K

\$118-166K salary range
\$150K median

What they do

Demonstrate value throughout the sales process, from demos and custom POCs to post-sales solutions and technical support.

How to advance

- 1 Continue filling gaps in technical expertise (e.g. gain familiarity in additional programming languages and fluency in cloud architectures like AWS, GCP, and Azure).
- 2 Show initiative by finding process improvements or building sales enablement materials.
- 3 Look for opportunities to manage client relationships from beginning to end.

i Most SEs have a base salary + commission pay structure. The salary ranges in this guide reflect that by using "on target earnings" (OTE) everywhere. Salaries are for the US only. All data comes from Glassdoor and is for reference purposes only.

The SE Career Path

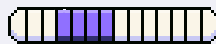


Senior Solutions Engineer

Independent Advisor,
Subject Matter Expert



Experience: 4-6 years



\$178K

\$140-193K salary range
\$178K median

What they do

Run technical discovery, build custom POCs, and develop bespoke solutions to bring in new customers and drive retention and upsells.

How to advance

- 1 Handle escalations of POCs, RFPs, and Security Reviews with composure.
- 2 Identify and implement key improvements to POCs and demos.
- 3 Find opportunities to deliver high-visibility projects and presentations.



Principal Solutions Engineer

Thought Leader,
Influencer, Deep Tech
and Business Acumen



Experience: 7-9 years



\$196K

\$172-212K salary range
\$196K median

What they do

Drive the technical side of the most complex, strategic opportunities, and present in-depth and engaging product demonstrations to existing and prospective customers.

How to advance

- 1 Find and take on leadership opportunities, especially if they involve supporting other Solutions Engineers.
- 2 Demonstrate a repeated ability to handle highly customized demos and multi-product solutions.
- 3 Expand your influence across the organization by driving success in customer retention, new business, product development, and brand awareness.

The SE Career Path



Dir. of Solutions Engineering

Strategic Tech and Business Advisor, Changemaker



Experience: 10+ years



\$227K

\$202-252K salary range
\$227K median

What they do

Lead a regional team of Solutions Engineers, establish new practices for demo engineering and technical value selling, while owning key metrics like technical win rates and time-to-value.

How to advance

- 1 Continuously exceed revenue targets, both individually and as a regional team.
- 2 Take an active role in KPIs outside new business, including retention rates, upsells, and pipeline creation.
- 3 Gain visibility with high-profile speaking slots and content.

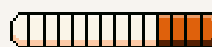


VP of Solutions Engineering

Strategic Visionary, Decisive Leader



Experience: 15+ years



\$274K

\$253-298K salary range
\$274K median

What they do

Build a thoughtful GTM strategy for SE teams, provide hand-on executive leadership to strategic opportunities, lead the SE department, and drive excellence in funnel execution, from demos and technical deep dives to POCs and negotiation.

How to advance

- 1 Provide strategic insights that have a material impact on win rates, pipeline, retention and other revenue KPIs.
- 2 Continue expanding their influence and build an organic audience through public speaking and industry recognition.
- 3 Work with C-Suite and board members to set the overarching vision and strategy for Solutions Engineering.

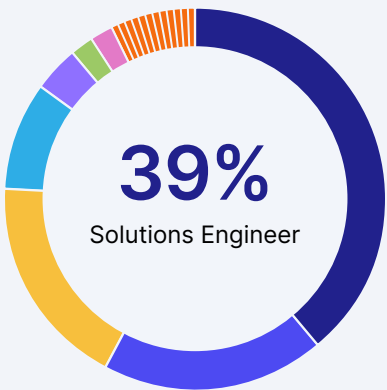
The SE Function

SE roles are sales-heavy and demo-focused. The bulk of SE work involves helping Sales run demos, build POCs, respond to RFPs, and answer technical questions. Still, most of the SEs we surveyed would like to collaborate more often with other functions, but find room for improvement in the existing demo process. They'd prefer doing higher-value, more strategic work.

Key findings

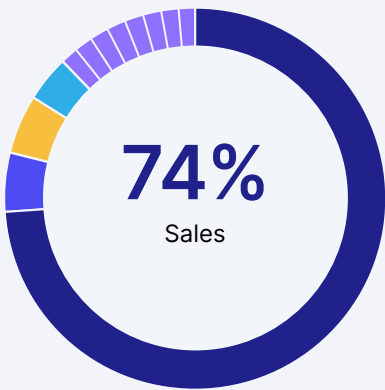
- There isn't widespread agreement on the job title yet, but consolidation is happening. Three of the top four include "Solutions", and the top two can both be shortened to "SE".
- Dedicated Solutions departments are rare. The vast majority of SEs (74%) fall under Sales.

What's the role called, anyway?



39% Solutions Engineer	4% Presales Consultant
19% Sales Engineer	2% Solution Advisor
18% Solutions Consultant	2% Presales Engineer
9% Solutions Architect	7% Other

What department is it in?



74% Sales	4% Customer Success
5% Presales / Solutions	12% Other
5% Product	

The SE Function

Where do SEs spend their time?

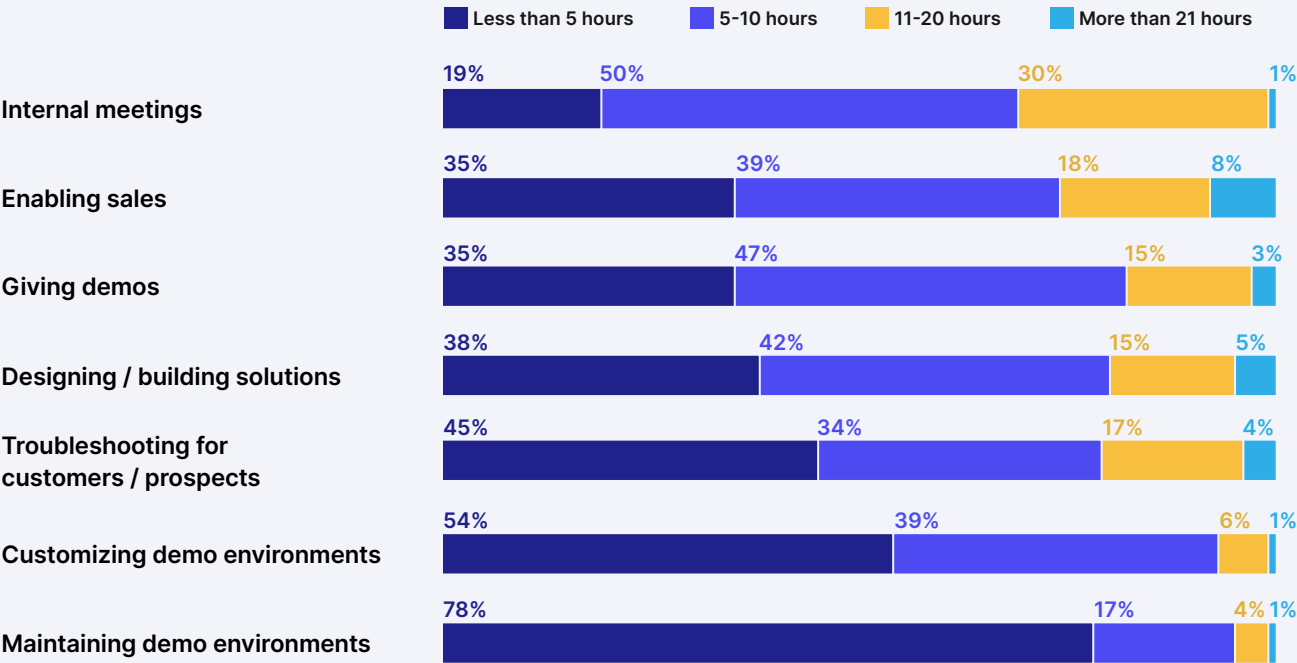
The SE role involves far more than demos. At the same time, demos occupy a significant amount of time in respondents' day-to-day jobs. SEs also spend significant chunks of time enabling their Sales counterparts and building solutions for customers.

62% of SEs spend 5–20 hours per week giving demos.

The status quo demo process is inefficient

- 46% of SEs spend at least 5 hours per week customizing demo environments.
- 23% of SEs spend at least 5 hours per week on demo maintenance.
- SEs don't have enough time for their core function: 80% of SEs spend fewer than 10 hours a week designing and building solutions.

How do SEs spend their time?

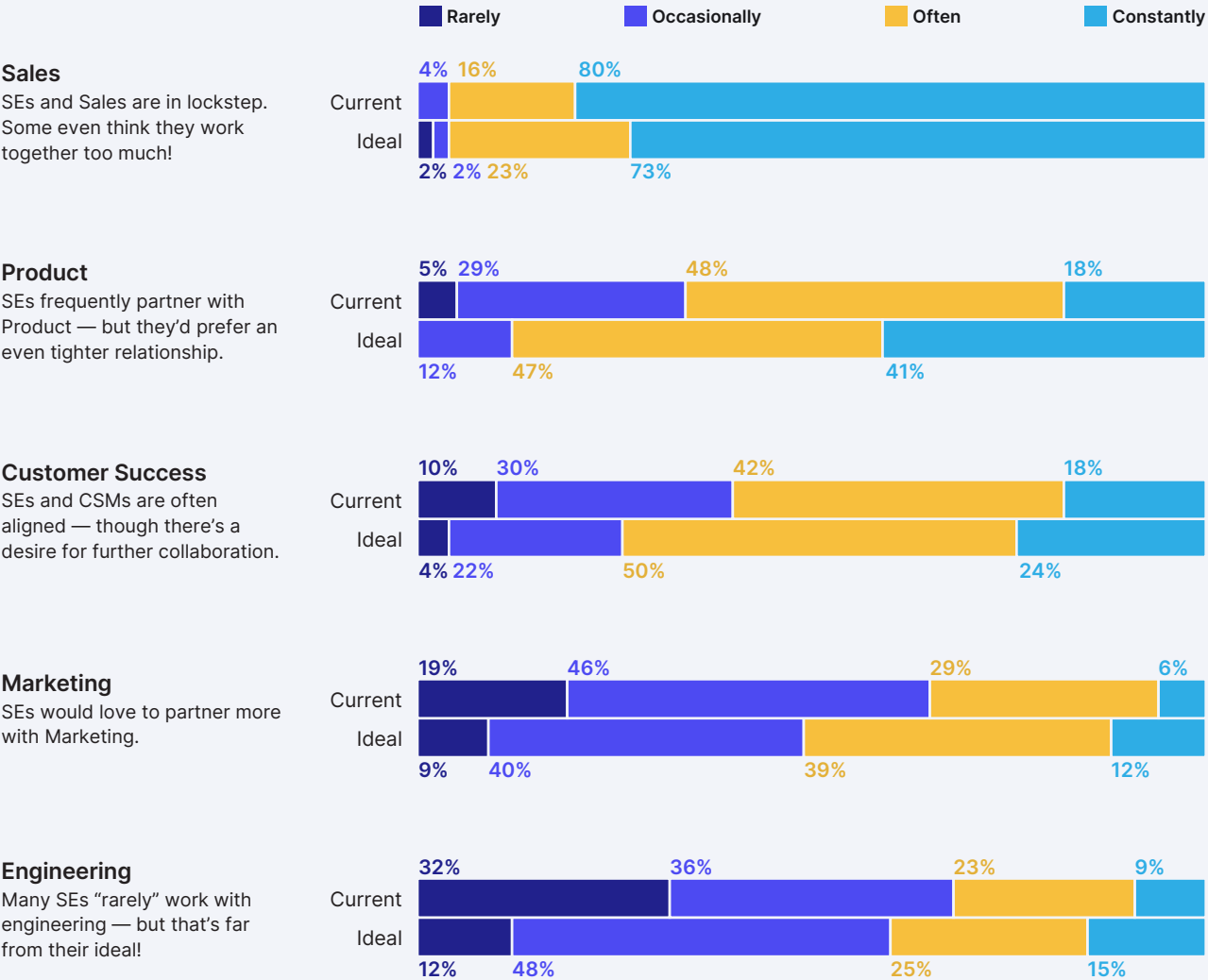


The SE Function

Who do they work with?

SEs spend the majority of their time supporting Sales, but they're in a unique position to add value across the business. They'd like to spend more time collaborating with every department, but their limited bandwidth often gets in the way.

How often do SEs collaborate with each department (and how often they think they should)?

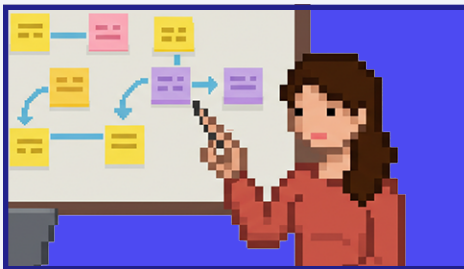


The SE Function

Here's how SEs are typically working with each of these teams

Sales

SEs work hand-in-hand with sales teams to close deals through technical demos, POCs, and custom solution design. The role is critical for sales enablement, where deep product knowledge can help train sales reps or respond to RFPs. From a strategy perspective, SEs participate in account planning, pipeline reviews, SKOs, and more.



Product

SEs are a valuable asset to product teams because they're able to translate what's happening with customers and prospects into feature requests and usability improvements. They can influence product roadmap development and participate in product launch support and sales enablement. SEs are also an excellent source of competitive intelligence for product teams.

Customer Success

The handoff from Sales to Customer Success is so crucial — that's where the SE comes in to make sure the solution is aligned with what the prospect said in the sales process. SEs also provide technical enablement to customers and resolve any issues they have with product adoption before they lead to customer churn. SEs can and should be a valuable part of retention and expansion efforts.



Marketing

The SE's knowledge is some of the best intelligence for marketing teams. No one knows better how to translate the technical jargon of your product into business language. SEs can help craft messaging and positioning, develop an ideal customer profile (ICP), and contribute to technical and product-focused content.

Engineering

SEs often work with engineering teams to address technical challenges with the product encountered during the sales and onboarding process. They can serve as a bridge between customers and Engineering, translating feature requests into product enhancements or custom solutions.



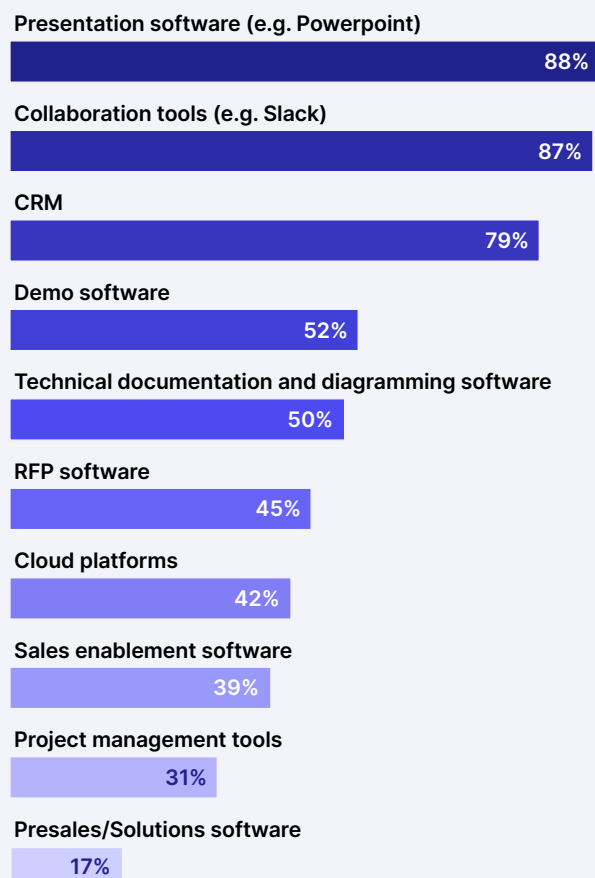
The SE Tech Stack

SEs we surveyed spend a lot of time in sales and collaboration tools like Salesforce, Slack, Zoom — the usual suspects. However, many tap into specialized tools that save time on everyday tasks like presenting and delivering demos.

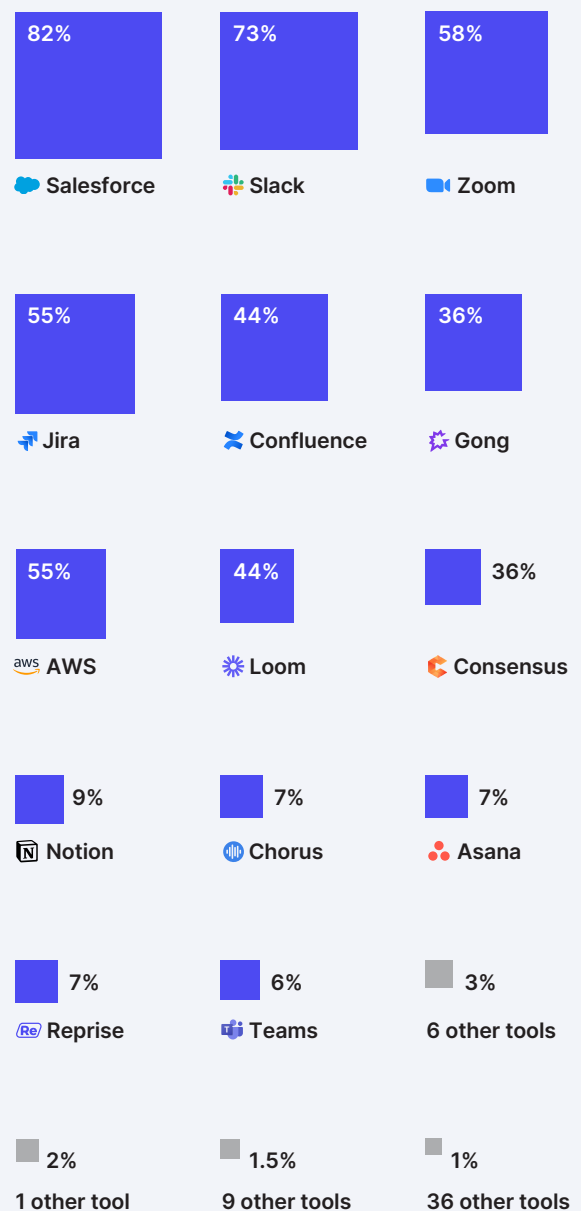
Key findings

- **63 specific tools** were mentioned
- There's consolidation at the top, with a long tail — the top 5 (SFDC, Slack, Zoom, Jira, and Confluence) comprise **62%** of the tech stack; the rest is split between the other 58!
- Demo software is the **4th most common type** of SE software

Percentage of SEs who say they use these categories of technology



Percentage of SEs who say they use each tool



The SE Tech Stack

A typical SE tech stack (according to the data)

CRM	
Cloud platform	
Collaboration tools	 slack 
Demo software	
Presentation software	 Google Slides
Project management software	 Jira
RFP software	
Sales enablement software	 HIGHSPOT
Technical documentation and diagramming software	 miro
Recording software	 GONG  loom

The SE Skillset

While technical skills are important, most SEs agree that the ability to think on their feet, work well with others, and be a good storyteller will get them further in their career.

SEs are “agile storytellers”

Communication skills and agility were cited as the top two most important skills for SEs. Along with collaboration, they’re also the skills the respondents were the most confident in.

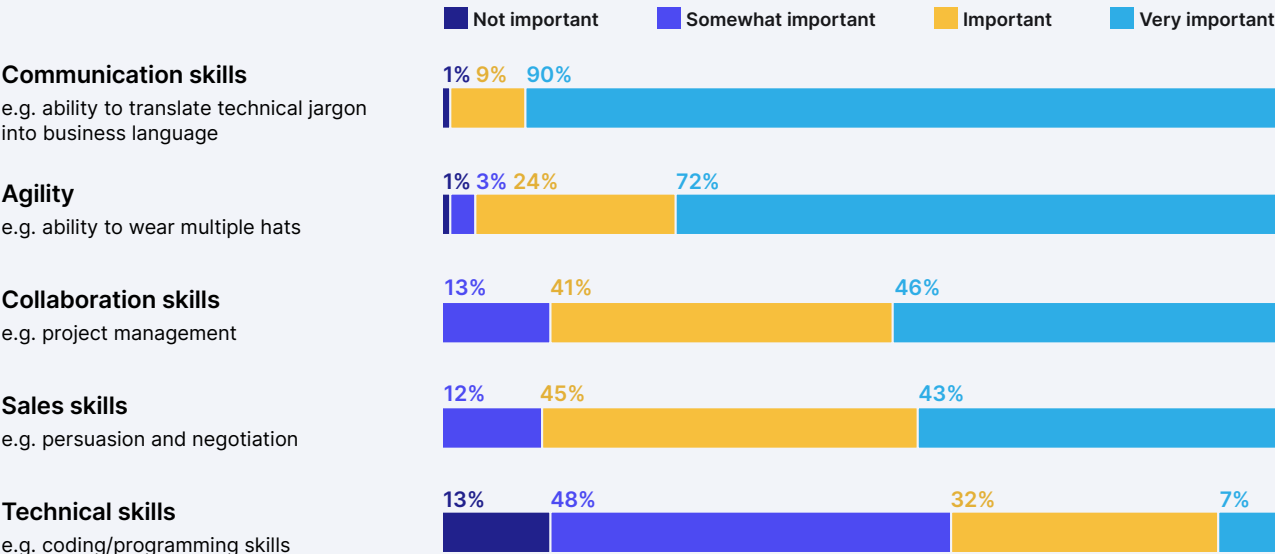
- 90% say communication skills are very important
- 72% say agility is very important

Technical skills may be the key to advancing their career

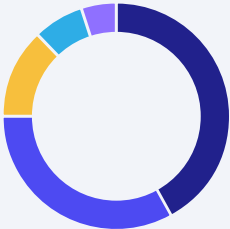
Despite the common inclusion of “engineering” in the title, technical skills aren’t the most important part of the SE function — but they are critical to advancing.

- Only 11% say technical skills are their top strength
- 13% say technical skills are “not important”
- But 42% say improving technical skills would most accelerate their career growth

How important are the following skills for SEs?



Which skill — if you improved — would most accelerate your career growth?



- 42% Technical skills
- 33% Sales skills
- 13% Communication skills
- 7% Collaboration skills
- 5% Agility

The SE Skillset

Takeaways

- Being a good SE means being a good communicator first and foremost.
- Technical skills still matter — improving them is seen as the best way to advance your career.



SEs should look to improve the most commonly used technical skills

Cloud computing



API architecture



HTML/CSS coding skills



Programming languages



Programming frameworks



LLMs and Generative AI



The Future of Solutions

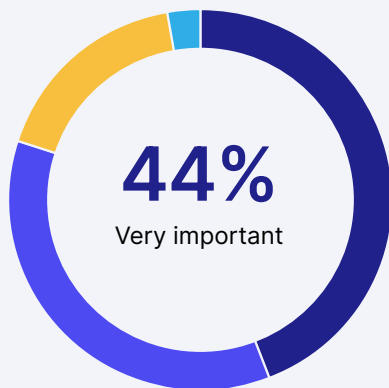
It's hard to talk about the future of any career without mentioning AI. The need for smart, hands-on people skills mean the human part of the SE role isn't going anywhere. At the same time, survey respondents acknowledge that AI and automation can make them faster and more efficient. Many are working toward improving their AI skills — whether it's talking about AI, demoing it, or building it into their workflows.

SEs are extremely bullish on the importance of AI and its ability to transform the role

- 80% of SEs say it will be important or very important to adopt AI in 2025
- 40% believe automation through AI will be the most impactful trend in 2025

SEs will increasingly need to become AI experts — if their solution isn't incorporating AI yet, it will soon or it will at the next job.

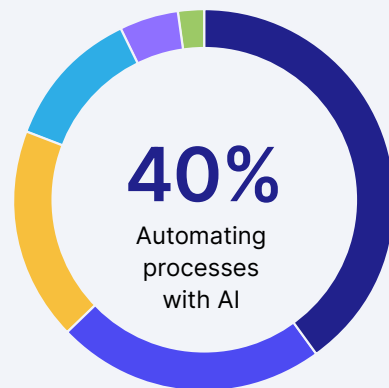
How important will it be for SEs to adopt AI in 2025?



44%
Very important
36%
Important

17%
Somewhat important
3%
Not very important

What emerging trends will be the most impactful for SEs in 2025?



40%
Automating processes with AI
23%
Onsite customer engagements
18%
Absorbing post-sales workflows

12%
Adding quota/forecasting responsibilities
5%
Unsure
2%
Other

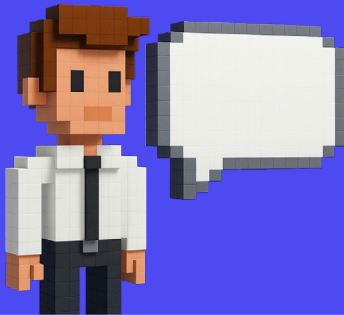
Conclusion

To advance in their career SEs should work on storytelling and people skills first. As they progress, SEs should focus on refining the technical skills that will make them a sought-after expert. They should take time to upskill their AI knowledge, since more and more companies will incorporate AI features into their products in the months and years to come.

When it comes to essential parts of the job like demoing, SEs should find ways to use AI and automation to their advantage. It's all about becoming more efficient so they can spend time in strategic ways that impact revenue. Ideally, they'll use their knowledge and skills to influence other parts of the business — including Customer Success, Product, Marketing, and Engineering.

Remember

SEs are “agile storytellers” first and foremost — but technical skills are vital to advancing through the career.



SEs need to be demo experts today — but they also need to be more efficient in their demo processes so it doesn't take up the entire week.

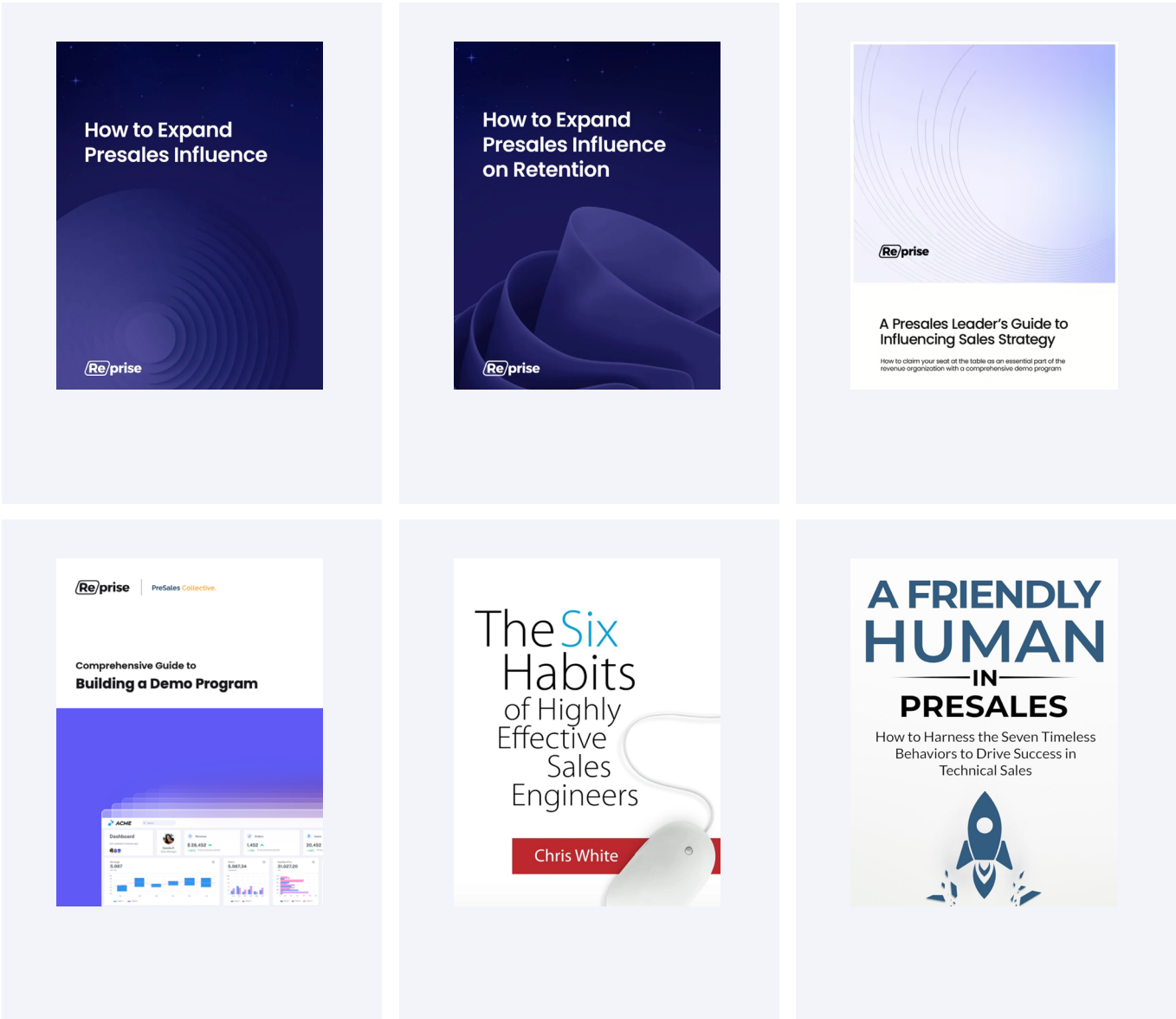


SEs will need to become AI experts — they need to demo AI, talk about AI, and implement AI into their workflows.

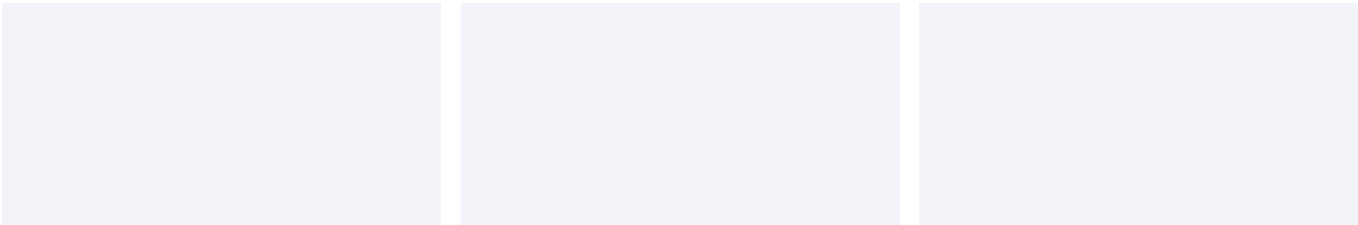


Appendix

Additional resources



Professional groups & career coaching



The 2025
Solutions Engineering
Career Guide

MISSION
COMPLETE

START AGAIN
RETURN TO MENU
EXIT GAME