I’m Ali Rayl.

I work on the internet.
Support is probably not your end goal.
Startup #1, the successful one, circa 2000 (pre-acquisition):

Developers are responsible for all product support.
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Startup #1: Our Support Toolset
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- Home-grown FileMaker Pro database — CMS and email support tool
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• name-support@ email addresses — all support correspondence in the database
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- Home-grown FileMaker Pro database — CMS and email support tool

- name-support@ email addresses — all support correspondence in the database

- A single phone number for support — every developer had an extension on their desk that would ring
Startups #2 through #6
Startups #2 through #6
Startup #7: Glitch
Startup #7:
Startup #7: Slack
Marc Andreessen @pmarca · Feb 9
Slide from @SlackHQ update deck. I have never seen viral enterprise app takeoff like this before—all word of mouth. pic.twitter.com/oTkUDAQbXX
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Lessons from the first major growth phase
Lessons from the first major growth phase

• Structure your support queue through a triage process
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• Choose a tool that you can grow into as your customer base grows
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• Choose a tool that you can grow into as your customer base grows

• Give yourself the ability to throttle growth if it has the potential to outstrip your ability to support it
Slack Support Triage

- Problem
- Question
- Feedback
- Feature Request

About field
Choose a support tool that can handle growth

- Hit our 20x growth moment and realized that we had no sustainable way to manage the support queue
- Resulted in lots of hacks and workarounds and wasted time
- The extra monthly cost of a better tool was more than offset by the cost of the time we lost dealing with the cheaper tool
Give yourself the ability to throttle during growth periods

• Realized early on that new user onboarding was the most support-intensive time for a user

• Users were invited to the platform when we were confident we could support them

• Provided a line-skipping mechanism (referrals) for those who weren’t keen on waiting for an invite
Marc Andreessen @pmarca · Aug 13
I first tweeted about Slack’s viral growth on Feb 9; here’s what’s happened since. Unprecedented. @SlackHQ
pic.twitter.com/U5xUdF8BHJ
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Slack Support Tickets, first year

Slack daily active users, first year

Preview Release period: 8/13–2/14

First six months of DAU, as tweeted by @pmarca, Feb. 9, 2014

Slack’s official launch, Feb. 12th, 2014
Lessons from the second major growth phase
Lessons from the second major growth phase

• Know your PR cycles
Lessons from the second major growth phase

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• Unless you have some reason to believe that this time will be different, assume it’ll be roughly the same as last time
Lessons from the second major growth phase

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- This does not get any easier
Lessons from the second major growth phase

• Know your PR cycles

• Unless you have some reason to believe that this time will be different, assume it’ll be roughly the same as last time

• This does not get any easier

• But it can be more manageable
Know your patterns

- When are tickets created?
- How important is it to answer them promptly? Do you have a service that is mission-critical?
- What expectations have you set with your customer base for turnaround time?
Know your patterns

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- How important is it to answer them promptly? Do you have a service that is mission-critical?
- What expectations have you set with your customer base for turnaround time?
Know your patterns (cont.)
Slack Support Toolset

Zendesk

• Email support
• Product built-in support

Respondly

• Twitter support
@SlackHQ is there a Jira integration that can pull in a summary of an issue when I paste a link? PS I <3 you guys.
Zendesk for everything else

(No screenshot — you can see this on the internet if you’d like)
Generic Advice Time
Not every support request is a request for product support.
Business decisions do not belong in your support queue.
Product decisions do not belong in your support queue.
You can use support as a shield.
You are problem solvers.
You cannot solve every problem.
Stay focused.