



Customer Connection Program – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This FAQ document is a quick reference guide to major questions and answers about SAP's Customer Connection program – one of our influencing channels.

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1 CUSTOMER CONNECTION PROGRAM – GENERAL QUESTIONS

1.1 What is Customer Connection?

Being one of the SAP influencing channels, Customer Connection is a program that enables us to enhance and optimize our products by listening to customers and reacting to their specific needs.

In cooperation with our customers who have an active maintenance contract, SAP user groups and special interest groups collect and submit improvement requests in jointly defined “Focus Topic” cycles. Requests that are supported by a significant number of customers are then evaluated by our development team.

Improvement requests that have been selected for development are later delivered through user-friendly SAP® Notes or SAP support packages. This allows customers to deploy the improvements quickly and independently of enhancement package schedules.

We share the results of each Focus Topic cycle in the “Improvement Finder” tool on the SAP Service Marketplace extranet, and we track productive usage to ensure the improvements bring real value to our customers.

1.2 What is a Focus Topic?

A Focus Topic defines the scope of a specific Customer Connection project. Customers may submit improvement requests for all active topics at a given point in time. However, only SAP user groups and customer communities have the privilege to suggest new Focus Topics, which will then be defined in detail by SAP.

1.3 What is an improvement request?

An improvement request is a request to develop an enhancement to products in mainstream maintenance. Customers can submit requests for all active Focus Topics at a given point in time. If your improvement request does not fit into any active topic, please submit a Focus Topic request through your respective SAP user group or customer community.

1.4 Customer Connection vs. Customer Engagement Initiative – what's the difference?

There are three different channels through which customers may influence the development of SAP products. Each channel has a different focus and different processes and rules.

See below for a brief summary, or learn more about the channels at www.service.sap.com/influence¹.

- **Focus on *improvement***

Customer Connection is directed at incrementally enhancing and improving the products our customers are using today. The program is suitable for smaller enhancements only, which will be delivered through user-friendly SAP Notes and SAP support packages. The program is open to all SAP customers, who may participate by submitting improvement requests for all active Focus Topics at a given point in time. However, only SAP user groups and customer communities have the privilege to suggest new topics, which will then be defined in detail by SAP. Please get in touch with your respective user group or customer community if you would like to request a new Focus Topic as a customer. They can provide you the support to channel it to SAP. Learn more at www.service.sap.com/customer-connection.

¹ User name and password is required for SAP Service Marketplace. If you do not have one, you can request it here – [https://websmp130.sap-ag.de/sap\(bD1IbiZjPTAwMQ==\)/bc/bsp/spn/new_user_pass/userid_password_reset.htm](https://websmp130.sap-ag.de/sap(bD1IbiZjPTAwMQ==)/bc/bsp/spn/new_user_pass/userid_password_reset.htm).

- **Focus on *innovation***

The Customer Engagement Initiative (CEI) is a structured approach for close end-to-end collaboration between customers and SAP during the full development cycle for planned products and new releases or enhancements packages. CEI offers an opportunity for customers to influence SAP software development in collaboration with their peers. Contact cei@sap.com to stay informed about current projects and to be added to our distribution list.

- **Focus on *vision***

Customer Advisory Councils are organized by industry or strategic topic. We invite customers and thought leaders to discuss and provide input on business and technology trends and their anticipated impact on our customers' businesses.

1.5 How probable is it that SAP will take my improvement request into consideration?

There is no guarantee that your improvement request will be selected for development. This depends on whether the request reaches the required minimum of five subscriptions as well as on technical feasibility and how it is prioritized compared to other requests.

However, we will not start a Focus Topic project unless we have development capacity available for the respective product. So the chances are high that a significant number of requests submitted in the project can be developed.

2 FOCUS TOPICS – DEFINITION AND REQUEST PROCESS

2.1 How can I suggest a new Focus Topic for Customer Connection?

Only SAP user groups and customer communities have the privilege to suggest Focus Topics for consideration in Customer Connection. We review all incoming suggestions. If a project can be offered, it will be scheduled for the near future. If you are interested in suggesting a topic as a customer, please contact your respective user group or customer community. They can provide you the support to channel it to SAP.

2.2 Is there a deadline for Focus Topic requests?

No. SAP user groups and customer communities can submit Focus Topics throughout the year, at any point in time. We will evaluate them as soon as possible and provide feedback to the requesting user group or customer community as soon as a decision has been made.

2.3 How much time does SAP need to decide on a Focus Topic request?

In general, we respond as soon as possible when a request has been received. It may take up to three months to evaluate a request to determine whether or not it can be offered. However, based on different reasons, it might be longer or shorter for some topics. In cases in which we cannot evaluate the incoming Focus Topic request for some reason, we will set the status to “*pending*” – which means that we will communicate the evaluation and final decision within the subsequent cycle for sure.

A new Focus Topic road map, which lists all currently accepted Focus Topics, is published in the last month of each quarter.

When requesting a subsequent cycle for a Focus Topic that has been accepted in the past, please note some specifics: we will not decide on a subsequent cycle with the exact same functional scope while the previous cycle is still ongoing or in development. At the earliest, a decision can be made at the end of the development phase. Our key decision criteria are the availability of related development resources, first feedback from customers, and, ideally, first data on adoption.

2.4 How will I find out whether my Focus Topic request was accepted?

As soon as we have accepted a new Focus Topic, we communicate this via e-mail to all back offices and boards of SAP user groups and customer communities along with an invitation to participate in the related project.

The back offices and boards cascade the information to their relevant special interest groups, workstreams, and focus groups and check whether they want to participate. If so, the user group or customer community replies to SAP and states that they want to participate.

The related Customer Connection project manager will then invite the members of the relevant special interest groups, workstreams, and focus groups to an official project kickoff.

2.5 What are SAP user groups and customer communities?

SAP user groups and customer communities are independent organizations of SAP customers and SAP partners within our ecosystem. They provide education to their members, influence SAP direction and product releases, exchange best practices, and provide insight into market needs. For more information, please visit www.sapusergroups.com.

2.6 Why does the program run only at certain times for specific topics?

You may wonder why the Customer Connection program runs for specific Focus Topics only at certain points of time. And you may also wonder why you are able submit improvement requests to a topic for only a few weeks.

Working with our customers in a project-based approach, with limited timelines and a specific scope, allows us to provide the highest possible level of transparency to all participants. We can ensure that every request is reviewed. The focused approach of Customer Connection also allows us to work very closely and in direct contact with our customers throughout the process.

3 PARTICIPATING IN CUSTOMER CONNECTION MONTHS AFTER

3.1 How can I participate in Customer Connection?

As our customer, you may participate in an existing Customer Connection project or Focus Topic and submit your improvement requests if you fulfill the following prerequisites:

- You have an active maintenance contract.
- Your product versions are in mainstream maintenance.
 1. You actively use the scope covered by any of the currently nominated Focus Topics.
- Your needs are not covered by current releases or enhancement packages.

Please contact your SAP user group or customer community to learn which Focus Topics are currently offered and how you can easily participate.

In addition, all SAP customers can use the improvements that are delivered as part of a Customer Connection project. To search for improvements and learn how to implement them (mainly via SAP Notes), go to www.sapimprovementfinder.com.

3.2 How much effort is needed to participate in Customer Connection projects?

Customers who are involved in a Customer Connection project should participate in the project milestone calls, which take place every one to two months and take one hour each. During the collect phase, which lasts two to three months at the beginning of the project, customers can submit improvement requests via the Customer Connection online collaboration tool and promote their request with other customers to get their subscriptions. In addition, they can subscribe to requests from other customers.

If customers submit an improvement request that is selected for development by SAP, they will be asked to review the specifications and participate in testing.

3.3 Is there any cost associated with participating in Customer Connection?

Enhancements that are delivered as a result of the Customer Connection program through SAP Notes or SAP support packages are covered by the respective maintenance fees. Therefore, customers who have valid licenses for both the respective products and related technologies can use these enhancements without additional license fees on a cost-free basis.

3.4 Is it mandatory to be a member of an SAP user group or a customer community?

No. As our customer, you may participate in an existing Customer Connection project or Focus Topic and submit your improvement requests if you fulfill the requirements noted in section [3.1](#).

However, only SAP user groups and customer communities have the privilege to suggest Focus Topics for consideration in Customer Connection. Therefore, it is in your advantage to be a member of a user group or customer community if you would like also to be involved in suggesting topics.

3.5 Can SAP partners participate in Customer Connection?

There are several possibilities for partners to participate in the Customer Connection program:

- **Consulting partners** who lead or participate in a special interest group may coordinate and consult during the collection of improvement requests. However, they should not submit or subscribe to requests unless they are using the related product as a customer. We will not count subscriptions by partners who are not using the related product towards the required minimum of five subscriptions.

- **Hosting partners** who host solutions for customers can submit, vote on, and subscribe to improvement requests on behalf of their customers. The subscriptions of a hosting partner can be counted several times, if the partner provides the names of customers for whom they host the solution and who will ultimately profit from the improvement. However, if at all possible, it is preferable that customers subscribe themselves and not through the hosting partner.
- **Development partners** might be involved in the development of improvement requests that are selected for implementation. However, they should not submit, vote on, or subscribe to requests unless they are using the related product as a customer. We will not count subscriptions by partners who are not using the related product towards the required minimum of five subscriptions.

3.6 Can I participate in Customer Connection if my maintenance contract has expired?

No. Only customers that fulfill the requirements mentioned in section [3.1](#) are qualified to participate.

4 CUSTOMER CONNECTION PROCESS

4.1 How much time does the Customer Connection process consume? How long do I have to wait until my improvement request is addressed?

Once a Focus Topic or project is officially kicked off, customers have up to approximately two months of time to submit improvement requests related to the topic. Subsequently, SAP takes one to two months to analyze the requests and determine which can be developed. The subsequent development phase takes up to six months. By the end of the period, improvements are delivered via SAP Notes or SAP support packages.

All in all, if your improvement request is selected and qualifies for development, the time from submitting a request to its general availability is about nine months. However, it can sometimes take more or less time for it to be delivered.

4.2 How and where can I submit an improvement request in Customer Connection?

Customer Connection uses an online collaboration platform to collect improvement requests. Once a Focus Topic or project is launched, a new workspace will be made available in the tool where customers can submit all requests related to this project.

4.3 What granularity is expected when describing an improvement request?

Once you submit an improvement request, it should be comprehensible to other customers in order to allow them to understand the content and afterwards subscribe to the request. As Customer Connection is a global offering of SAP, customers take part in a project at an international level. Therefore, please provide the request in English (at least a summary of it) in order to enable others to understand, follow up, and support your needs with their subscriptions.

At a later stage of the process, we might get in touch with you to ask for more details on your request.

4.4 What decision criteria does SAP use to select improvement requests for development?

For improvement requests for small enhancement to ensure product quality and to improve support for your day-to-day business, our selection criteria include:

- Identifying the global relevance of the improvement in order to reach as many customers as possible (this program is not a channel for localization implementation)
- Requested improvements qualified by a minimum of five subscribed customers
- Realization time and effort – maximum of six months of development phase
- Easy and fast deployment (for example, notes, support packages) – no structural changes and “switchable”
- Downport to release in mainstream maintenance at Customer Connection delivery point and feasibility

4.5 Will customers be able to review specification for improvements before they are developed?

Yes. At a minimum, the improvement request owner (meaning the customer who initially submitted the request on the Customer Influence site) will be asked to review the specification(s).

4.6 How are customers involved during development?

The improvement request owner (meaning the customer who initially submitted the request on the Customer Influence site) will be asked to review the specification(s) and participate in testing activities. Additional customers can be involved if they want to – details can be discussed with the responsible development team.

4.7 How can customers participate in testing activities?

The improvement request owner (meaning the customer who initially submitted the request on the Customer Influence site) will be asked to participate in testing activities. Additional customers can be involved if they want to – details can be discussed with the responsible development team.

To participate in testing, customers will be asked to sign a Confidentiality and Privacy Statement (also known as “C-User Agreement”). Testing might take place remotely or onsite at the SAP headquarters in Walldorf, Germany, depending on the project setup and customers’ preferences. Details can be discussed with the responsible development team.

5 THE CUSTOMER INFLUENCE SITE – OUR ONLINE COLLABORATION PLATFORM

5.1 How can I get started on the Customer Influence site?

If you fulfill all prerequisites to participate in the Customer Connection program, please register on the Customer Influence site once. For registration, you can use any existing S-user from SAP Service Marketplace or you can create a new user identity during the registration process.

In addition, at the beginning of each Customer Connection project, respective SAP User Groups and Customer Communities invite all of their interested members to a kickoff call.

If you want to make sure that you'll be involved, we recommend that you join all special interest groups of your SAP user group that reflect your areas of interest. During the kickoff call, the SAP project manager will demo the Customer Influence site and explain the registration process as well as its main functionalities.

5.2 What is the difference between Focus Topics and private communities?

If they want to, SAP user groups and customer communities can request a private space on Customer Influence to help organize and facilitate their internal discussions. However, SAP will not review or consider any of the requests that are collected in these spaces.

Within the Customer Connection program, we will review and consider only those requests that are submitted in an active Focus Topic project.

5.3 Can I move or copy an improvement request from one space into another on Customer Influence?

The functionality to move an improvement request from a private space to a Focus Topic project is limited to the SAP project manager. The special interest group lead responsible for the private space should contact the SAP project manager to discuss how to move the precollected requests at the beginning of a project.

5.4 Can I hide a particular improvement request from the public?

No. All requests will be visible to all registered users who have authorization for the Customer Connection area in the collaboration platform. However, this is a good thing, because we will consider your request only if it has subscriptions by a minimum of five customers.

5.5 Status and reason descriptions for improvement requests – what do they mean?

5.5.1 Improvement Request – Status

Status	Definition
Identified	Improvement request is submitted by a customer (the request owner) on the Customer Influence site.
Qualified	Improvement request is subscribed to by at least five customers after the end of collect phase and is, as a next step, analyzed by SAP in the selection phase.
Scoped	Improvement request is planned for development within the develop phase of the Focus Topic.
Handed-over	Improvement request needs to be analyzed and decided upon by additional parties within SAP or could not be considered in the current development plan. It is in evaluation by SAP until a final decision has been taken (planned for a later cycle, in development scope, rejected). It is not a long-term status. In addition, it is tracked frequently within SAP – during and after Focus Topic project timeline. Regular updates and a final decision will be made available on request.
Rejected	Improvement request is not planned for development by SAP in the foreseeable future.

5.5.2 Improvement Request – Reason

Reason	Definition
Approved within SAP decision meeting	Improvement request was analyzed and is implementable and shippable via a note/consulting note, or support package.
Already in development planning	Improvement request was analyzed and is already part of an existing product backlog and/or is planned to be shipped via an enhancement package or a new product release.
Addressing country-specific/legal requirements	Improvement request was analyzed and is part of a localization product that was not part of the Focus Topic scope.
Exceeding size and effort	Improvement request was analyzed and is not implementable and shippable via a note or support package.
Lack of subscribed customers	Improvement request was subscribed to by less than five customers.
Out of scope	Improvement request does not fit into scope of Focus Topic; a new topic needs to be requested (please refer to section 2.1 – “How can I suggest a new Focus Topic for Customer Connection?”).
Prioritization	Improvement request was analyzed and could be shippable via a note or support package; however, due to the number of implementable improvement requests, a project backlog prioritization had to take place.
Violating design rules	Improvement request was analyzed and is not implementable and shippable via a note or support package and violates SAP design rules.
Addressing partner solution	Improvement request was analyzed and addresses a partner product.

6 SUBSCRIPTION TO IMPROVEMENT REQUESTS

6.1 What does it mean to subscribe to an improvement request, and why is it important?

Customers who subscribe to an improvement request state that they plan to use the improvement productively in their own systems if it is selected and qualifies for development by SAP.

Customer subscriptions are critical in Customer Connection, since we only consider improvement requests with a minimum of five or more subscriptions. This is to ensure that we focus on those requests that matter most to our broad customer base.

6.2 How do you count the subscription of a hosting partner?

Hosting partners should provide the names of customers for whom they host the solution and who will ultimately profit from the improvement. Each customer will then be counted as one subscribing customer towards the minimum of five subscribed customers.

6.3 How do you count the subscription of a corporation and of its subsidiaries?

Each customer with a separate installation number counts as one subscribing customer. If two subsidiaries of the same corporation have two different installation numbers, they will be counted as two separate subscriptions towards the minimum of five subscribing customers. Nevertheless, there is no kind of weighting between customer votes at all – each subscription counts equally, regardless of the company size, business relation, or any other imaginable characteristics.

6.4 As a subscribed customer, I stated that I plan to use an improvement productively. How soon after delivery do I have to do that?

All Customer Connection improvements are delivered via SAP Notes or SAP support packages, so the effort to implement them is relatively low. Usually, customers do the implementation within six months after the improvement becomes available. Around that timeframe, we will start asking about the status of your implementation and your feedback on the improvement.

7 DELIVERY OF CUSTOMER CONNECTION IMPROVEMENTS

7.1 How does SAP ensure that delivering new functionality in SAP support packages does not affect the stability of my system?

The development of new functionality in SAP support packages is governed by specific development rules and a thorough internal quality check and approval process. Any new functionality delivered through Customer Connection needs to be actively turned on by the customers in order to use this. We apply this rule to help ensure that we deliver innovation without disruption: changes to the business processes do not become active unless our customers actively decide to change them.

7.2 Will improvements delivered via Customer Connection be down-ported to previous product versions?

Yes. Depending on market relevance and technical possibilities, improvements might be down-ported to all product versions in mainstream maintenance.

7.3 Can participating customers implement improvements even before they are made generally available?

In most cases, improvements will be made available via SAP Notes or SAP support packages to all customers at the same time. In some exceptional cases, the development team might decide to pilot-release an improvement to some of the participating customers for testing purposes.

7.4 How and when does SAP inform me about new functionality that is made available through Customer Connection?

Customers who actively participated in the related project will be informed in a meeting or Web conference ("Customer Connection Delivery Call").

All customers can find improvements delivered in Customer Connection under www.sapimprovementfinder.com. This tool not only offers search functionality by industry and functional area; it also has direct links to the corresponding SAP Notes.

8 MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CUSTOMER CONNECTION PROGRAM

You can find specific information about the Customer Connection program through several platforms.

You can visit us at:

- Our public Web site at www.sap.com/cc
- Our Web site within SAP Service Marketplace at <http://service.sap.com/influence>

Or you can also follow us to get frequently updated information and also exchange ideas with others about the topic at :

- Twitter through <https://twitter.com/SAPCustCon>
- SAP Community Network through <http://scn.sap.com/community/customer-connection>

If you have a specific question or need for change, you can send an e-mail to customer-connection@sap.com.



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