

Engineering Manager Rubric

Engineering Managers are responsible for the performance, growth, and delivery of an engineering team. They balance people leadership with technical direction, ensuring their team delivers quality software while developing individual engineers.

Encourage the candidate to use the **STAR method** (Situation, Task, Action, Result). This assessment is about demonstrated experience, not theoretical understanding.

Competency Areas

A — Performance Management & Team Development · SFIA PEMT / PDSV Level 5-6

Description:

The ability to form, lead, and develop engineering teams. This includes setting objectives, providing feedback, managing underperformance, and creating growth opportunities for team members.

What to look for:

- Sets clear, measurable objectives aligned to organisational goals
 - Conducts regular 1:1s with actionable feedback
 - Uses career frameworks or structured development plans
 - Has managed underperformance through formal processes (PIPs, performance reviews)
 - Evidence of growing engineers—promotions, skill development, expanded scope
 - Builds psychologically safe environments where feedback flows both ways
 - Handles difficult conversations directly and with empathy
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B — Technical Direction & Architecture Input · SFIA ARCH Level 4-5

Description:

The ability to provide technical leadership without being hands-on. This includes contributing to architectural decisions, understanding trade-offs, and ensuring technical quality and direction within the team.

What to look for:

- Participates meaningfully in design reviews, ADRs, or RFCs
 - Understands system architecture across application, data, and infrastructure
 - Can articulate technical trade-offs (cost, performance, scalability, maintainability)
 - Ensures appropriate technical standards—code review, testing, CI/CD practices
 - Balances technical debt against delivery pressure
 - Maintains technical credibility with engineers without micromanaging
 - Champions reliability, security, and observability practices
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C — Delivery & Accountability · SFIA DLMG Level 5-6

Description:

The ability to own delivery outcomes for the team. This includes planning, prioritisation, managing dependencies, and ensuring the team meets commitments while maintaining sustainable pace.

What to look for:

- Owns delivery outcomes—takes accountability, not just responsibility

- Uses metrics to track and improve delivery (cycle time, throughput, quality)
 - Manages dependencies across teams and stakeholders proactively
 - Balances competing priorities and negotiates scope effectively
 - Identifies and mitigates delivery risks before they escalate
 - Shields team from unnecessary disruption without creating information silos
 - Evidence of delivering significant projects or programmes on time
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D — Stakeholder Communication & Influence · SFIA RLMT Level 5-6

Description:

The ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences—engineers, product, executives, and external stakeholders. This includes influencing decisions, managing expectations, and representing the team.

What to look for:

- Tailors communication to audience (exec summaries vs. technical deep-dives)
 - Builds trust with Product, Design, and other functions
 - Manages upward effectively—keeps leadership informed without noise
 - Represents the team's work, constraints, and needs to stakeholders
 - Influences cross-functional decisions using data and structured arguments
 - Navigates disagreement constructively—seeks alignment, escalates appropriately
 - Evidence of changing minds or course-correcting through influence, not authority
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E — Hiring & Team Composition · SFIA RESC Level 5-6

Description:

The ability to build and shape the team through hiring, org design, and workforce planning. This includes defining roles, running effective hiring processes, and making difficult decisions about team composition.

What to look for:

- Defines roles clearly with appropriate levelling and expectations
 - Runs structured, fair hiring processes (rubrics, calibrated interviewers)
 - Assesses candidates rigorously—avoids “gut feel” hiring
 - Builds diverse teams—evidence of intentional inclusion efforts
 - Makes difficult calls on team composition (exiting poor performers, restructuring)
 - Plans for succession and reduces single points of failure
 - Balances hiring velocity with quality—doesn't lower the bar under pressure
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Scoring Matrix

Competency	1	2	3	4	5
A — Performance Management & Team Development					
B — Technical Direction & Architecture Input					
C — Delivery & Accountability					
D — Stakeholder Communication & Influence					
E — Hiring & Team Composition					

Scorecard

Score	Definition
1	No evidence. Candidate cannot demonstrate experience in this area.
2	Limited evidence. Candidate describes the concept but examples are vague, theoretical, or from observation rather than direct experience.
3	Adequate evidence. Candidate demonstrates experience with some gaps. Examples may lack depth, recency, or scale appropriate to the role.
4	Strong evidence. Candidate demonstrates clear, relevant experience with specific examples. Minor gaps only.
5	Exceptional evidence. Candidate demonstrates deep experience with multiple strong examples. Demonstrates impact beyond their immediate scope.

Seniority Thresholds

Level	Threshold
Engineering Manager	15+
Senior Engineering Manager	20+