Priority micro-adjust PRD

Context

Customer Messaging

Make fine-grained adjustments to priority levels within basic categories. If you implement a stack-ranking system for your tasks and projects, this is specifically made for you!

Problem

A very common use case we encounter is global stack-ranking: customers want to form a stable, opinionated order of priority across all of their backlog items. Today, we provide a global manual ordering feature, which we recommend for these cases.

There are several key issues with the current manual ordering system:

1. **Instability.** Manual sort is often unstable. Users often do not treat this ordering with care because it feels so low-stakes. They often make changes without realizing someone is relying on the ordering.
2. **Local vs. Global Sorting.** In other apps, manual sort is often local. Users are often surprised we have global manual ordering.
3. **Redundancy with Priority Field.** We currently have both manual sort and a priority field. If the goal is to create a global priority stack rank, it's awkward to have a priority field that doesn't agree with your sort.

When users express these problems, it's often through indirect feature requests.

1. We often get the request for "custom priority levels" because the 4 basic buckets don't offer enough granularity
2. Or we get the request for custom fields, for the purpose of adding a "ranking" column, that's just a numerical stack-rank

Solution

Priority levels are a natural fit for this, but today they are just broad buckets (low, med, high, urgent) and don't offer enough control for customers that want to literally rank every single item.

We're simply going to allow users to adjust and rearrange the relative priority of their issues **within** a priority bucket, through drag-and-drop.

Once we have this, we will strongly recommend to users that all stack-ranking use-cases be achieved through priority + micro-adjust.
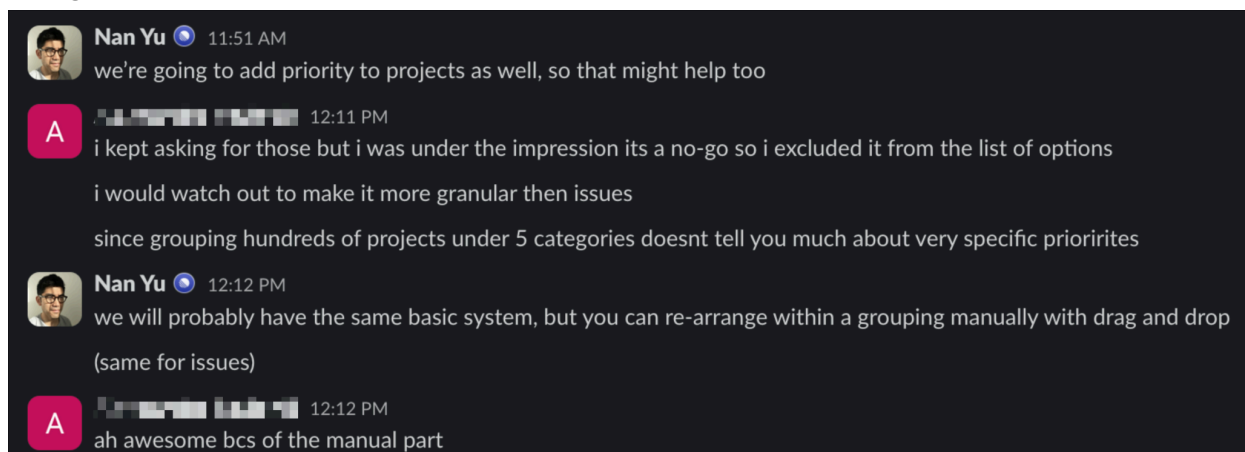
Options we considered but decided against

1. **Custom priority levels.** Doesn't really solve for stack ranking, and would encourage stack-rankers to make way too many distinct categories
2. **Custom fields.** Would solve for stack-ranking, and many other asks, but it's out of character for Linear. Our ease-of-use comes from having opinionated defaults that reliably work the same everywhere

Prior art

We know of no other tool that offers manual adjustment within priorities; they all take one of the options we decided against, so this is an opportunity to differentiate. We offer a more compelling story by integrating priority and stack-ranking together into a single system.

Usage scenarios

User A asks for priority on projects (which we are planning to ship) and more priority categories

With priority micro-adjust: when User A wants to organize according to very specific priorities, she can simply drag issues and projects around to the order she wants, within the same priority level. This lets her avoid the complexity of defining new priority levels and educating her team on what those levels mean exactly. She's just able to say "this issue is higher priority than the other high-priority issues"

User B proposes a mockup of issues ordered by a custom field they call "importance", which they proposed to be an integer value that can be defined on each issue
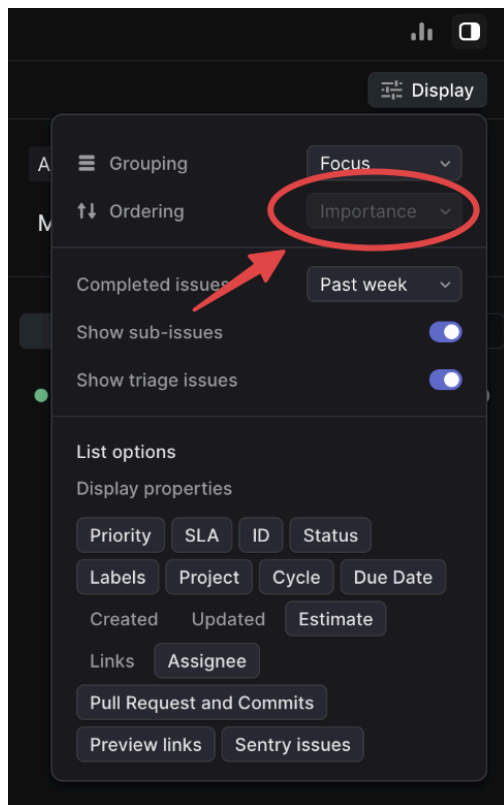
With priority micro-adjust: when User B wants to be specific about the relative importance of an issue, he can just re-arrange the order visually. This is less mentally taxing than trying to think of an arbitrary integer or having to explain what such a number means to the members of his team.

Milestones

MS1: Internal

Specs

When ordering by priority, allow drag-and-drop within a priority to determine fine-grained ordering

- When dropping an item into a set of items with a different priority, change its priority to match
- When dropping in between 2 sets of priorities
    - If the movement was upwards, take the lower priority
    - If the movement was downwards, take the higher priority

Mockups & prototypes

Adjust issues within and between priorities

Rider app › Active issues ☆

Filter   Display

⊙ In Review 2   +

⚠ RIDE-78 ⊙ Send marketing materials to ambassadors   🚗 Split fares   ◇ Australia beta   🔥 24h   Apr 27   Jul 18

RIDE-74 ⊙ Launch on iOS and Android   🚗 Split fares   🔥 7d   Apr 26   Jul 18

⊙ In Progress 7   +

⚠ RIDE-56 ⊙ Beta Testing   🤖 Android UI Refresh   🔥 24h   Apr 26   Jul 18

RIDE-52 ⊙ User Feedback   🤖 Android UI Refresh   🔥 7d   Apr 26   Jul 18

RIDE-77 ⊙ Soft-launch with local community   🚗 Split fares   ◇ Australia beta   🔥 7d   Apr 27   Jul 18

RIDE-54 ⊙ Training Materials   🤖 Android UI Refresh   🔥 7d   Apr 26   Jul 18

RIDE-76 ⊙ Grace period (24hr post-ride)   🚗 Split fares   🔥 7d   Apr 26   Jul 18

RIDE-55 ⊙ Integration with Accounting Systems   🤖 Android UI Refresh   Apr 26   Apr 26

RIDE-53 ⊙ Performance Monitoring   🤖 Android UI Refresh   Apr 26   Jul 18

○ Todo 7   +

⚠ RIDE-75 ○ Split the fare 4 ways   🚗 Split fares   🔥 12h   Apr 26   Jul 18

⚠ RIDE-50 ○ Automated Alerts   🤖 Android UI Refresh   🔥 12h   Apr 26   Jul 18

RIDE-64 ○ Feature request - Split fares   ● Feature   ♥ Customer feedback   🔥 +2mo   Apr 26   Apr 26
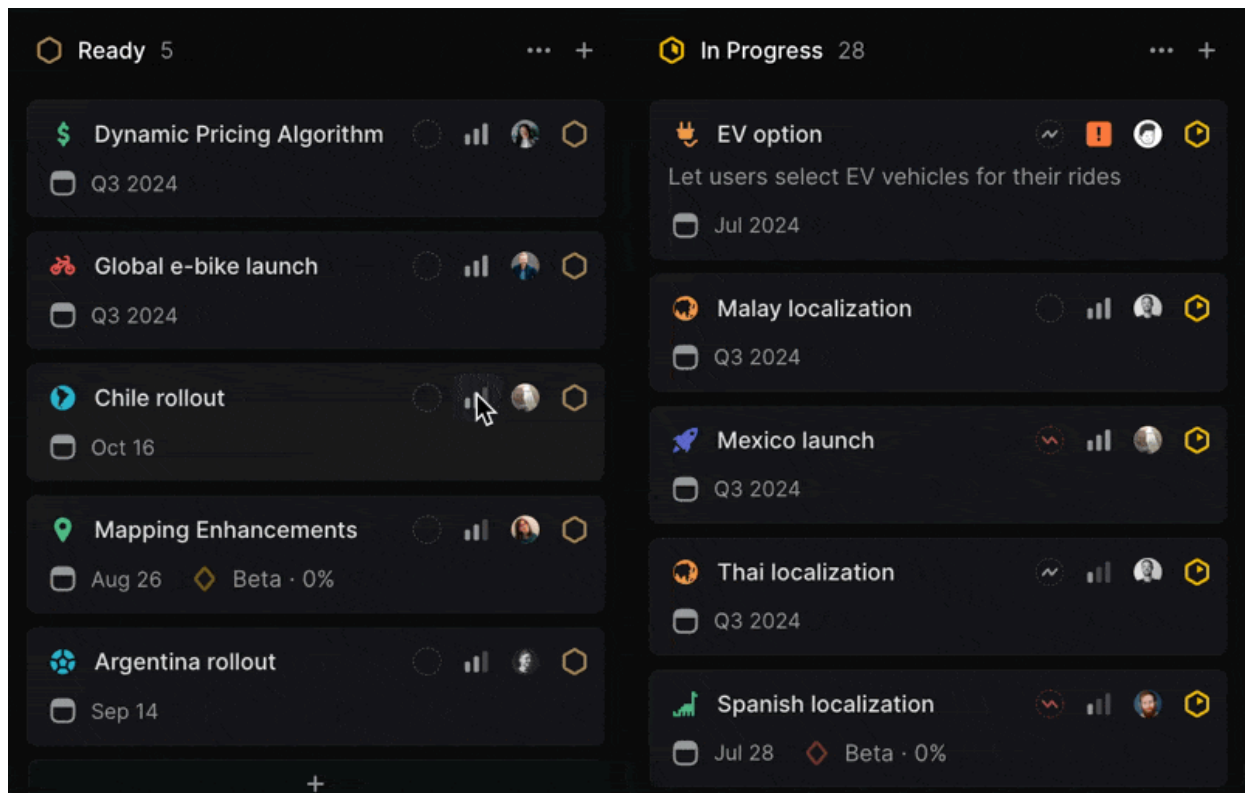
RIDE-51 ○ Transaction History   🤖 Android UI Refresh   Apr 26   Apr 26

Changing priority buckets through selection and drag-and-drop

MS2: Beta

Change management

Initialize using the manual sort index. When releasing this to actual users, we need to bootstrap their initial microadjust ordering. We can use the existing manual sort index as a starting point because this has been our recommended solution for stack-ranking issues.

MS3: GA + Changelog

Announce alongside project priorities

We will release **priority micro-adjust** and **project-level priorities** in the same changelog to tell a more cohesive story about the priority system within Linear.
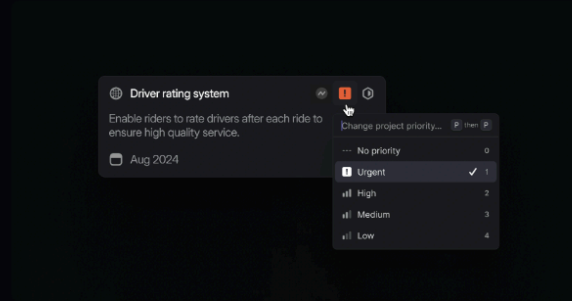
Resulting changelog

Changelog

New updates and improvements to Linear.

July 25, 2024

Priority for projects

We've improved how prioritization works in Linear. You can now give projects a priority level, ensuring the most important projects are always in focus. Project priorities use the same scale as issues (Urgent, High, Medium, Low, or No priority).

Micro-adjust priority

Sometimes you want to indicate that a specific piece of work is more important than another one, even if they share the same priority level. You can now do this by micro-adjusting the priority within a list of issues or projects.

On any view ordered by priority, simply drag & drop an issue or project above other ones to indicate it is more important. The exact position will be saved globally across your workspace, so that anyone else looking at a view ordered by priority will see these issues or projects in the same relative positions.

If the moved item is dragged above an issue or project with a different priority level, it will adopt the priority level of the item right below it. By default, items without an assigned priority level are now always sorted last. Learn more by visiting the docs or watch Sagan from our product team walk you through how to micro-adjust priority.