

This Product Engineer Gets to Make a Difference in the World—and Grow at Work, Too

by *The Muse Editor*



Yassine Elouri, a senior product engineer at Esri

When Yassine Elouri moved from Morocco to California to pursue a master's degree in information systems, he became interested in geographic information systems (GIS) and how this technology can help solve real-world problems. It wasn't long before he learned that [Esri](#), the market leader in GIS software, was an easy drive away.

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“My advisor informed me about a student session in a GIS company that was conveniently located about 30 miles from the school—which turned out to be Esri,” he says. “The session was extremely informative and decisive in my career plans. I had the opportunity to meet several employees and talk to them about the projects I was working on.”

Elouri was sold: He soon joined the company for a summer internship, which later turned into a full-time position. Since then, he has worked on many teams and projects, most recently as senior product engineer for the development of one of Esri's newer products, ArcGIS Insights.

“Over the past seven years, I've worked in four different teams and roles, which has given me the opportunity to discover the power of GIS and its impact in the real world, as well as to build long-lasting relationships with colleagues who have become friends,” he says.

Here, Elouri shares why the work at Esri is so rewarding, the different paths a product engineer can take, and how the company has supported him in his own professional goals.

What attracted you to work at Esri, and what has kept you at the company for seven years?

What initially attracted me was discovering how incredibly empowering GIS technology is, and the difference the company makes in the world. While I was earning my master's degree, I learned so many ways that GIS is used to solve difficult and important problems. One of the

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examples that has stuck with me over the years is the vital role that Esri and its GIS technology played in the [rescue mission](#) that helped locate the boys' soccer team and their coach who were trapped in a remote cave in Thailand.

What has made me want to stay at Esri long-term is the company's culture, the rewarding work, and the sense of belonging to a community.

What are you responsible for as a product engineer for the ArcGIS Insights Product Development team?

My main objective is to facilitate the development of the new features in [our ArcGIS Insights](#) software product. A development team typically needs a variety of supporting processes in order to be successful. I focus primarily on requirements engineering, working with our key stakeholders, developers, and UX designers to ensure the features we build into ArcGIS Insights deliver value for our customers.

I have additional responsibilities to help improve the efficiency of our team processes. For example, I develop test harnesses to ensure the high quality of our products. I also focus on building and maintaining automation systems that increase our team's ability to deliver new releases at a faster pace. I volunteered for this responsibility as a way to improve my technical skills.

What does a normal day in your job look like?

My schedule is typically split between four tasks: researching new product features, working with the UX team to develop new product designs, coding, and quality assurance (QA).

I like to tackle my most important tasks early in the morning. I'll start off my day focusing on researching new ideas and defining software requirements for future releases. I usually have meetings toward the end of the morning to align with the developers, UX designers, and stakeholders on the goals we're trying to accomplish. The majority of these meetings are development-oriented: for example, daily scrums and requirements-elicitation meetings. I also spend a few hours each day using ArcGIS Insights to find ways to improve it and provide feedback to the development team. This pattern is similar for most days of the week, though the first and last weeks of every release cycle lean heavily towards one particular task.

Additionally, as a product engineer, I find myself sporadically involved in other projects such as technical workshops, customer calls, and Esri conferences. While these are not part of my day-to-day tasks, they are great avenues for personal and professional development and part of what makes being a product engineer at Esri so rewarding.

What do you enjoy most about working cross-functionally with other teams?

There are incredible people at Esri from different backgrounds. This kind of diverse environment fosters knowledge exchange and learning that wouldn't be possible if we were working in silos. For example, software developers have helped me sharpen my coding skills, and I started to better appreciate the challenges of building intuitive and accessible user interfaces collaborating with UX designers. Through working with experts in spatial analysis, I discovered new, powerful ways that GIS can be used to solve challenging problems.

I also like the friendly competition between the teams. Personally, it pushes me forward and motivates me to continuously improve my craft. I've worked on different teams since I joined Esri, learned a lot in the process, and made amazing friends along the way.

Tell us more about ArcGIS Insights: What was it like to build something new?

ArcGIS Insights is a data exploration and visualization tool that democratizes powerful spatial analysis. It delivers an accessible platform that organizations can use to analyze and visualize their data with powerful analysis tools made simple. This is a powerful tool for data analysts who want to leverage the capabilities that GIS offers in their work.

I joined the team in charge of building this product before its first public release. At that time there were around a dozen people on the team. It felt like a startup—very agile and sometimes even chaotic. We were able to iterate incredibly fast and experiment with wild

ideas since we were building something that was never done before. To this day, and as the team has grown to include more than 30 people, we still retain that drive and continue to push the boundaries of what ArcGIS Insights can do.

What does career growth and advancement look like for a product engineer at Esri?

The product engineer role at Esri is very broad and versatile. Product engineers play a crucial role in the success of the development process. They build and maintain systems that power the building, testing, and delivery of our products to customers. Within this role, there are opportunities to specialize and grow in different paths. Personally, I chose to pursue the technical track. This path puts a greater emphasis on designing and developing automated test harnesses and continuous build and delivery systems. Meanwhile, some of my fellow product engineers are subject-matter experts in specific areas of spatial analysis, and they provide enormous value and recommendations to the development team. Other product engineers are more customer-oriented, focusing on creating documentation, lessons, and exercises that our customers rely on to be successful with our products.

The product engineer role not only provides excellent growth paths on its own, but is also a great launchpad into other roles. For example, after spending four years growing from a junior to a senior product engineer, I will soon be transitioning to a software developer role at Esri. While I greatly enjoyed contributing to ArcGIS Insights from the requirements engineering and QA sides, the more time I dedicated to DevOps, the more I realized that I missed programming. I'm looking forward to going back to my roots in software development.

In what ways does Esri support professional growth and development for its employees?

Working at Esri provides incredible advantages for professional development. For example, new employees are encouraged to take part in several on-site trainings, such as sales bootcamps and professional presentation and communication seminars. Esri has a large group of experts in many different fields, and they are always eager to mentor the next generation of leaders. I especially encourage newer employees to not be afraid of asking people they admire for mentorship.

During my first year at Esri, both my manager and mentor encouraged me to attend several courses on topics such as crucial conversations, emotional intelligence, and professional sales skills. These training sessions have had a lasting impact over the course of my career. Additionally, every year, Esri awards full scholarships to select employees to pursue higher education. This is an incredible opportunity for professional growth. I am very fortunate to have been awarded such a scholarship, and currently am pursuing a PhD program in information systems.

What do you like best about Esri's company culture?

What Esri achieves best and what I love the most about its culture is a combination of a great work-life balance and a startup-like environment. When one thinks of startups, work-life balance is typically not the first thing that comes to mind. Esri, however, is able to achieve it. Esri's investments in research and development means that development teams get to continuously pursue innovative ideas. While these teams work collaboratively with one another and with other departments, they also develop their own character and processes, giving them a startup feel.

What do you like most about working at Esri?

The best way that I can describe working for Esri is that it is intrinsically rewarding. Knowing and seeing that the products we build help organizations make a difference in the world is inspiring and a strong source of my own motivation. Esri hosts an annual conference where its global user community shares amazing examples of the impact GIS has had across different industries. Many of our customers are doing remarkable work in land conservation, emergency response, city planning, and streamlining supply chains, among countless other examples. Watching these success stories and what our customers are able to achieve with our products is the best part of working for this incredible company.



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