



---

# 2006 TECHNICAL SUPPORT SALARY SURVEY

---

PRODUCED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

---

Published by  
The Association of  
Support Professionals

122 Barnard Avenue  
Watertown, Mass. 02472  
Telephone 617/924-3944  
Fax 617/924-7288

[www.asponline.com](http://www.asponline.com)  
Copyright © ASP 2006.  
All rights reserved.

This report may not be reproduced  
without permission of the publishers.

---

# The 2006 ASP Tech Support Salary Survey

The past several years have been a rough time for software companies, and support salaries have reflected the industry's financial challenges. Even with a rebounding economy, support employees have continued to feel the squeeze: Last year, median support compensation was frozen in all seven of the job categories we track, from senior executives to entry-level employees.

But the turnaround has finally had an impact on support pay. This year's numbers (which are based on salaries paid during 2005) show across-the-board raises ranging from 5% for basic support technicians to 12.5% for senior executives. If this trend continues—always a question mark—support may once again be more than a dead-end career. That's especially important if technology companies hope to retain their most knowledgeable and competent employees.

Higher compensation for support employees also matters because the basic requirements of the job itself are becoming more demanding, requiring higher-quality staffing in the support department:

- **Many more customers are paying for support, usually as part of maintenance plans:** Customer expectations about technical knowledge and troubleshooting skills are now significantly higher than when most support was delivered as a free service. Poor quality support may translate directly into a loss of revenue or at least open the door to negotiations over maintenance fees.
- **Post-sales relationships have become increasingly strategic:** More than ever, support and related professional services are the key to customer retention and follow-on sales. This transition is especially critical at the executive level, where there is finally an emerging career path that leads from support management to overall responsibility for post-sales customer relationships.
- **Support departments are often hiring for the rest of the company:** Support has always been an informal entry point for jobs in development, professional services, and marketing. Now we're beginning to see companies (e.g., MathWorks) where the support group actively recruits for other departments, and routinely hires people who might otherwise be overqualified (and too expensive) for traditional support jobs.

To help identify benchmarks for support pay, the Association of Support Professionals compiles this annual support compensation survey. In addition to industry-wide compensation statistics (page 3), we offer a look at some of the variables—such as company size, number of support employees, application price, and geography—that have an impact on these general numbers.\* A key part of our survey methodology is a set of standardized job titles and capsule job descriptions that have remained constant for the eleven-year history of this survey. Here's how our questionnaire describes the categories we use, along with a few observations about this year's data:

★ **SENIOR SUPPORT EXECUTIVE (vice president or director level)**

*"Coordinates activities and budgets of multiple support groups or sites. Meets regularly with senior corporate management and key customers."*

Eighty-eight percent of the companies in this year's survey have *both* a "senior support executive" who coordinates several support groups and at least one "department manager" who oversees an individual support center. Overall pay for senior support executives (median \$112,500) is up 12.5% from last year. Increasingly, the top support executive has become a key spokesperson for customer relationships, and this role often puts support executive pay on a par with other top executives; currently, a quarter of the senior executives in our sample earn between \$136,500 and \$250,000.

\* One caution: Statistical reliability suffers when there are too few responses in a breakout category. We've indicated the number of responses (the "count") in every segment as a rough guide to the accuracy of each data point.

<b>Tech Support Salaries</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Median</b>
<b>Senior Support Executive</b>	116	<b>\$136,700</b>	<b>\$95,000</b>	<b>\$112,500</b>
<b>Department Manager</b>	140	<b>\$90,000</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>
<b>Analyst/Project Manager</b>	97	<b>\$80,000</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>
<b>Senior Support Technician</b>	126	<b>\$68,000</b>	<b>\$45,000</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>
Least skilled	82	\$58,000	\$35,000	\$45,000
Most skilled	94	\$80,000	\$50,000	\$64,000
<b>Field Support Technician</b>	44	<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>
Least skilled	28	\$57,500	\$35,000	\$45,000
Most skilled	30	\$80,000	\$47,750	\$62,500
<b>Support Technician</b>	126	<b>\$50,000</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>	<b>\$42,000</b>
Least skilled	87	\$42,000	\$32,000	\$35,000
Most skilled	89	\$65,000	\$40,000	\$50,000
<b>Customer Service Rep</b>	75	<b>\$40,000</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>\$35,000</b>
Least skilled	47	\$35,000	\$25,000	\$30,000
Most skilled	50	\$45,000	\$32,000	\$39,000

Source: 2006 ASP Tech Support Salary Survey. Note: "Count" is the number of responses in each salary category or sub-category. "High" salary is the median for the top 50% of all salaries in each category; "Low" salary is the median for the bottom 50%.

★ **DEPARTMENT MANAGER**

*"Manages day-to-day activity of a single support center staff."*

Most support organizations have at least one inside manager who oversees ongoing operations, including tactical areas such as productivity, recruiting, and customer satisfaction. Usually, support department managers supervise fairly small groups of technicians, and many spend part of their time on the phone during periods of heavy call volume. Department managers also saw some salary growth last year (a 7% raise to \$75,000 median), after three years in a row with no raises.

★ **ANALYST/PROJECT MANAGER**

*"Manages major business activity; usually has no direct reports."*

In addition to department managers, many support organizations have specialists who manage such areas as performance analysis, staff scheduling, Web site implementation, and automation systems. Currently, analysts and project managers earn \$65,000 in median pay—an 8.3% raise.

★ **SENIOR SUPPORT TECHNICIAN**

*"Answers escalated calls; may function as a group or team leader."*

Most support organizations have developed career paths that reward experience, in-depth product knowledge, certification, or a part-time management and training role. Often, the primary job of the "senior" technician is to provide answers to questions that first-level support reps or outsourcers can't answer. Median pay for senior technicians is now \$55,000, a 10% gain after three years of no raises. (Previously, senior technician pay had been rising steadily by 4%-6% per year.) The best-paid 25% senior support technicians earn more than \$68,000; the bottom 25% earn less than \$45,000.

★ **FIELD SUPPORT TECHNICIAN**

*"Provides on-site service, primarily for enterprise products."*

Support for products priced below \$10,000 is typically provided over the telephone, but many high-end software companies also provide on-site services, usually as part of installation or fee-based maintenance plans. In recent years, the number of responses in this category has been steadily shrinking and pay trends have been somewhat erratic. However, this year median pay for field support technicians rose by 10%, to \$55,000 median).

★ **SUPPORT TECHNICIAN**

*"Provides first-level solutions, primarily over the phone."*

At most software companies, the task of handling unescalated telephone calls is an entry-level job with relatively high turnover. Although pay levels have been flat for the past two years, this year's 5% raise (from \$40,000 to \$42,000 median) is consistent with the 3%-5%/year gains we have seen in this category since 1998. Only 25% of support technicians earn more than \$50,000, but experienced techs often move up to senior support jobs and even become analysts and managers.

★ **CUSTOMER SERVICE REP**

*"Answers routine service questions; routes calls to technicians."*

Customer service reps typically handle first-level customer contacts that don't require diagnostic skills or training, such as collecting background information and filling orders. Many companies now pay customer service reps on an hourly basis; the current industry median salary, \$35,000, is equal to \$17-\$18/hour.

**VARIABLES: REVENUES, ORGANIZATION SIZE, PRODUCT PRICE, LOCATION**

- **Annual revenues:** In the past, company size usually hasn't been a good yardstick for setting support salaries, but recently we've seen a stronger correlation between annual revenues and median pay for most job categories:

		Annual Company Revenues		
	<\$1 MM	\$1-\$10 MM	\$10-\$99 MM	\$100+ MM
Senior Support Executive	*	\$95,000	\$113,000	\$135,000
Count:	6	29	46	33
Department Manager	*	\$66,000	\$75,000	\$90,000
Count:	7	34	57	39
Analyst/Project Manager	*	\$65,000	\$60,000	\$70,000
Count:	6	25	31	31
Senior Support Technician	*	\$50,000	\$55,000	\$63,000
Count:	6	33	49	35
Field Support Technician	*	*	\$55,000	\$60,000
Count:	1	4	18	13
Support Technician	*	\$38,000	\$44,000	\$48,000
Count:	6	31	53	34
Customer Service Rep	*	\$33,000	\$34,000	\$40,000
Count:	4	23	27	19

Salaries are medians. "Count" is the number of responses in each salary category or sub-category. Asterisk (\*) indicates insufficient data (fewer than 10 responses).

- Organization size:** A more important variable for support compensation is the size of a firm's support department. Large support organizations (those with 30 or more employees) pay higher salaries in higher-skilled categories, compared to their mid-sized (10-29 employees) and small (1-9 employees) counterparts. For lower-skilled support technicians and customer service reps, however, the pay differential between large and small support organizations is relatively insignificant. In a few cases, median pay even declines slightly as groups get bigger. This pay pattern almost certainly is the result of greater job specialization in larger organizations. Support reps in small groups tend to handle a variety of tasks, skilled and unskilled, so their pay puts a kind of average value on their mix of tasks. Large groups are more likely to pay for specific job roles—more for advanced skills and less for entry-level skills.

	Support Organization Size (employees)		
	1 - 9	10 - 29	30+
Senior Support Executive	\$100,000	\$110,000	\$125,000
Count:	29	35	52
Department Manager	\$67,700	\$70,000	\$79,000
Count:	39	47	54
Analyst/Project Manager	\$65,000	\$57,000	\$65,000
Count:	23	25	47
Senior Support Technician	\$50,000	\$55,000	\$55,000
Count:	33	41	49
Field Support Technician	\$42,500	\$55,000	\$60,000
Count:	10	13	19
Support Technician	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$45,000
Count:	31	43	49
Customer Service Rep	\$34,000	\$32,500	\$38,000
Count:	19	26	28

Salaries are medians. "Count" is the number of responses in each salary category or sub-category.

- Product price:** Companies that sell high-end software (priced above \$10,000) usually provide support as part of maintenance contracts and other fee-based programs, so they tend to recruit better-paid support technicians. Support for inexpensive products (priced below \$1,000) is increasingly provided through self-service channels and outsourcing, which seems to be reducing total support employment in this segment:

	Price of Company's Best-Selling Product		
	<\$999	\$1,000-\$9,995	\$10,000+
Senior Support Executive	\$97,500	\$120,000	\$120,000
Count:	16	21	69
Department Manager	\$67,500	\$61,000	\$76,000
Count:	16	28	84
Analyst/Project Manager	*	\$54,500	\$70,000
Count:	9	21	58
Senior Support Technician	\$48,000	\$50,000	\$55,000
Count:	13	23	76
Field Support Technician	*	\$53,500	\$59,500
Count:	2	10	24
Support Technician	\$39,000	\$37,500	\$45,000
Count:	14	25	73
Customer Service Rep	*	\$30,000	\$36,000
Count:	9	15	41

Salaries are medians. "Count" is the number of responses in each salary category or sub-category. Asterisk (\*) indicates insufficient data (fewer than 10 responses)

- **Location:** Support pay is also affected by local cost-of-living differences, especially between rural and metro areas. Two states with high concentrations of technology companies—California and Massachusetts—have labor costs that are typically 15%-25% higher than national averages:

	Location of Primary Support Center	
	Calif.	Mass.
Senior Support Executive	\$130,000	\$110,000
Count:	21	19
Department Manager	\$90,000	\$90,000
Count:	24	21
Analyst/Project Manager	\$72,500	\$87,500
Count:	18	10
Senior Support Technician	\$72,000	\$66,500
Count:	21	18
Field Support Technician	*	*
Count:	6	2
Support Technician	\$50,000	\$50,000
Count:	20	20
Customer Service Rep	\$37,500	*
Count:	14	8

Salaries are medians. "Count" is the number of responses in each salary category or sub-category. Asterisk (\*) indicates insufficient data (fewer than 10 responses).

## THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF SUPPORT

This survey, our eleventh annual report on tech support salaries in the software industry, reflects survey data supplied by 171 software support organizations with a total of more than 12,000 support employees. Some key characteristics of our sample universe:

★ **Company size:** 25% of our respondents report annual sales of \$100 million or more, 36% have sales of \$10-\$99 million, 31% have sales of \$1-\$10 million, and 8% are below \$1 million.

★ **Organization size:** Although 25 companies in our survey have more than 100 support employees, the absolute size of most software support organizations is fairly small: Median organization size is currently 16 employees; 35% have 30 or more support employees, 31% have 10-29 employees, and 34% have 1-9 employees.

★ **Product price:** Many of the software companies in our sample serve high-end vertical or enterprise markets. The median price for our respondents' best-selling products is \$18,750; 63% support products that sell for more than \$10,000, another 23% support products in the \$1,000-\$9,995 range, and 15% support products that sell for less than \$999.

### Year-to-Year Comparison: Solid Raises Across the Board

	2004	2005	Change
Senior Support Executive	\$100,000	\$112,500	+12.5%
Department Manager	\$70,000	\$75,000	+7.1%
Analyst/Project Manager	\$60,000	\$65,000	+8.3%
Senior Support Technician	\$50,000	\$55,000	+10.0%
Field Support Technician	\$50,000	\$55,000	+10.0%
Support Technician	\$40,000	\$42,000	+5.0%
Customer Service Rep	\$32,000	\$35,000	+9.4%