



2007 TECHNICAL SUPPORT SALARY SURVEY

PRODUCED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

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The 2007 ASP Tech Support Salary Survey

Last year, the ASP's annual salary survey recorded a significant upturn in support salaries for all of the seven job categories we track. This year saw at least a modest retreat in most of these categories, especially for lower-skilled jobs. However, a decline in average salaries isn't always bad news: When companies are expanding their headcount (which seems to be happening now), an influx of new hires often brings *average* salaries down without affecting the pay of veteran employees. As the newcomers gain experience and qualify for raises, there's a good chance that average pay levels will rise again.

In fact, our data reflects an important restructuring of the whole technology industry that seems to be gaining momentum. A decade ago, the support world was dominated by relatively small PC software companies that sold inexpensive retail products. Today, consolidation and the emergence of "enterprise" markets has shifted the market toward much larger vendors, much higher product prices, and bigger support organizations. In just the past year, for example, the median support headcount among our respondents has risen from 16 to 23 employees. And the percentage of respondents with \$100 million or more in sales has gone from 25% of our sample base to 34%.

As a result of this shift, support organizations are beginning to change in ways that directly influence pay levels and career paths. Larger organizations mean more openings for middle-level managers and professional staff (our "analyst/project manager"), and higher product prices generally correlate with fee-based service offerings that require more knowledgeable senior support technicians. Old-style desktop software companies could cut corners on support; that's clearly an unacceptable strategy for the enterprise-oriented companies that now dominate the market.

Moreover, these much larger companies now employ a substantial majority of *all* support workers, so the pay levels set by this group are becoming a de facto standard for the whole industry. (The 50 support groups with less than ten employees in this year's survey employ a total of only 255 employees, for example; meanwhile, the large support groups in our sample employ more than a quarter-million people.) For better or worse, support is becoming a big-company career — and that's true of pay levels as well.

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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 twelve-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."

Sixty-five 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 \$111,500) is down slightly (0.9%) from last year. Increasingly, the top support executive has become a key spokesperson for customer relationships and overall services management, 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 \$135,000 and \$300,000.

* 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.

Tech Support Salaries	Count	High	Low	Median
Senior Support Executive	126	\$135,000	\$95,000	\$111,500
Department Manager	149	\$90,000	\$61,000	\$75,000
Analyst/Project Manager	109	\$80,000	\$50,000	\$62,000
Senior Support Technician	150	\$63,000	\$42,000	\$52,000
Least skilled	102	\$58,000	\$38,000	\$42,000
Most skilled	106	\$75,000	\$50,000	\$64,000
Field Support Technician	68	\$67,600	\$42,000	\$53,500
Least skilled	42	\$60,000	\$37,000	\$45,000
Most skilled	43	\$85,000	\$50,000	\$65,000
Support Technician	139	\$52,000	\$35,000	\$40,000
Least skilled	100	\$45,000	\$32,000	\$37,000
Most skilled	103	\$60,000	\$39,000	\$50,000
Customer Service Rep	75	\$38,000	\$26,000	\$32,000
Least skilled	57	\$35,000	\$25,000	\$30,000
Most skilled	54	\$45,000	\$30,000	\$39,000

Source: 2007 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 saw zero salary growth last year (\$75,000 median), but held on to gains they made in 2005 after three years 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 \$62,000 in median pay, a retreat from last year's \$65,000 compensation level.

★ **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 \$52,000, again a small retreat from the previous year's \$55,000 median. (Historically, senior technician pay has risen more or less steadily by 4%-6% per year.) The best-paid 25% senior support technicians earn more than \$63,000; the bottom 25% earn less than \$42,000.

★ **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 the past, field technicians were the industry's highest paid support reps; in the past few years, however, their salary profile has become more closely aligned with the "senior support technician" category. Pay trends for this relatively small group have often shown big year-to-year gains and losses; last year, field support technician pay declined from \$55,000 to \$53,500.

★ **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 that may lead to a "senior" support technician title or even a job in development or sales. Although we've seen a fairly steady year-to-year trend (roughly 3%-5% per year) toward higher pay since 1998, median pay in this category last year dropped from \$42,000 to \$40,000.

★ **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, \$32,000, is equal to a little more than \$15.00/hour.

VARIABLES: REVENUES, ORGANIZATION SIZE, PRODUCT PRICE, LOCATION

- **Annual revenues:** Company size is becoming a very predictable factor in support pay. In all seven of our job categories, big companies now pay the highest salaries, and the smallest companies generally pay the lowest:

		Annual Company Revenues		
	<\$1 MM	\$1-\$10 MM	\$10-\$99 MM	\$100+ MM
Senior Support Executive	*	\$92,000	\$111,500	\$130,000
Count:	5	43	42	44
Department Manager	*	\$65,000	\$75,000	\$82,500
Count:	6	32	53	50
Analyst/Project Manager	*	\$55,000	\$60,000	\$70,000
Count:	6	24	32	43
Senior Support Technician	*	\$44,000	\$50,000	\$60,000
Count:	5	35	56	48
Field Support Technician	*	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$61,000
Count:	1	15	23	25
Support Technician	*	\$36,000	\$40,000	\$50,000
Count:	1	33	51	47
Customer Service Rep	*	\$29,500	\$31,500	\$35,000
Count:	0	18	26	30

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:** Another important variable for support compensation is the size of a firm's

support department. Large support organizations (those with 30 or more employees) generally pay substantially 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 often relatively modest.

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 managerial jobs and less for entry-level skills.

	Support Organization Size (employees)		
	1 - 9	10 - 29	30+
Senior Support Executive	\$105,000	\$106,500	\$122,500
Count:	28	34	64
Department Manager	\$75,000	\$70,000	\$80,000
Count:	33	43	73
Analyst/Project Manager	\$55,000	\$60,000	\$65,000
Count:	20	26	63
Senior Support Technician	\$51,000	\$50,000	\$58,500
Count:	36	42	71
Field Support Technician	\$55,000	\$45,000	\$55,000
Count:	11	19	37
Support Technician	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$45,500
Count:	29	43	66
Customer Service Rep	\$30,000	\$35,000	\$32,000
Count:	10	22	42

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 and even pay a premium for customer service reps. Mid-priced products (\$1,000-\$9,995) don't seem to generate enough services revenue to justify support salaries that are much higher than in the desktop (<\$999) category:

	Price of Company's Best-Selling Product		
	<\$999	\$1,000-\$9,995	\$10,000+
Senior Support Executive	\$110,000	\$106,000	\$120,000
Count:	26	32	70
Department Manager	\$72,000	\$71,000	\$80,000
Count:	27	24	82
Analyst/Project Manager	\$54,000	\$57,000	\$70,000
Count:	16	26	58
Senior Support Technician	\$42,000	\$50,000	\$60,000
Count:	21	37	76
Field Support Technician	*	\$51,000	\$63,000
Count:	7	16	34
Support Technician	\$34,500	\$40,000	\$45,000
Count:	21	30	73
Customer Service Rep	\$24,750	\$30,000	\$35,000
Count:	12	15	36

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	\$145,000	\$100,000
Count:	12	13
Department Manager	\$96,000	\$85,000
Count:	15	18
Analyst/Project Manager	\$87,500	\$54,000
Count:	12	10
Senior Support Technician	\$60,000	\$58,500
Count:	15	22
Field Support Technician	\$67,500	\$60,000
Count:	12	19
Support Technician	\$50,000	\$46,900
Count:	15	16
Customer Service Rep	*	*
Count:	9	5

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 12th annual report on tech support salaries in the software industry, reflects survey data supplied by 175 software support organizations with a total of more than 250,000 support employees. Some key characteristics of our sample universe:

★ **Company size:** 34% of our respondents report annual sales of \$100 million or more, 35% have sales of \$10-\$99 million, 26% have sales of \$1-\$10 million, and 5% are below \$1 million.

★ **Organization size:** Although a growing share of support employees now work for very large companies, there is still a proliferation of smaller companies that helps keep the median organization size at modest levels. Median support headcount for all the companies in our sample is currently 23 employees; 44% have 30 or more support employees, 27% have 10-29 employees, and 29% 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 \$12,000; 56% support products that sell for more than \$10,000, another 27% support products in the \$1,000-\$9,995 range, and 17% support products that sell for less than \$999.

Year-to-Year Comparison: For Most Support Job Categories, Salaries Trend Downward

	2005	2006	Change
Senior Support Executive	\$112,500	\$111,500	-0.9%
Department Manager	\$75,000	\$75,000	0.0%
Analyst/Project Manager	\$65,000	\$62,000	-4.6%
Senior Support Technician	\$55,000	\$52,000	-5.5%
Field Support Technician	\$55,000	\$53,500	-2.7%
Support Technician	\$42,000	\$40,000	-4.8%
Customer Service Rep	\$35,000	\$32,000	-8.6%