



2008 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

Copyright © ASP 2008.
All rights reserved.

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

The 2008 ASP Tech Support Salary Survey

Support pay took a dramatic upturn during 2007. In five of the seven job categories that we track, median paychecks grew by double-digit rates (11% to 15%); the two slowest-growing categories, senior executives and customer service reps, gained a respectable 8% and 9%. Last year, we predicted that a “restructuring” of the support industry would lead to across-the-board pay increases, and clearly that forecast was right on target.

Of course, it’s human nature to compare the latest compensation data against personal experience, and the results are often counter-intuitive. “Senior support reps got an \$8,000 raise? Nobody I know did that well,” a cranky reader might say. That’s a fair perspective, but salary surveys are more like a stock market index: The Dow Jones may rise a hundred points, but that doesn’t mean every company’s stock price will gain equally (in fact, many will lose ground). Salary surveys reflect composite trends, including the following five key factors:

- **Competition:** Right now, there’s a shortage of people in several niche support disciplines—e.g., Web support and fee-based account management—so companies are paying premium salaries here that help push up average pay for the support world as a whole.
- **Customer pressure:** Once customers begin to pay for support, they demand higher-quality people.
- **General inflation:** The technology world is reasonably prosperous these days, so most companies are budgeting for higher pay levels for almost everyone. (This is especially true at bigger firms.)
- **Attrition at the bottom:** This is a subtle but important factor. When companies were hiring lots of entry-level employees, *average* salaries dropped. Now, with less turnover and more outsourcing of low-level jobs, average support pay has risen even where individual raises have been minimal.
- **Greater productivity:** When companies prune away (or automate) low-value, repetitious jobs, the eventual result is higher profit and higher revenue per employee. At least some of these productivity gains will be available for higher salaries—though the trickle-down effect is mostly long-term.

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 thirteen-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.”

Seventy 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 \$120,000) is up significantly (7.6%) 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 \$150,000 and \$320,000.

* 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	118	\$150,000	\$100,000	\$120,000
Department Manager	126	\$100,000	\$70,000	\$83,000
Analyst/Project Manager	94	\$90,000	\$58,000	\$71,000
Senior Support Technician	120	\$74,000	\$47,000	\$60,000
Least skilled	81	\$60,000	\$39,000	\$50,000
Most skilled	89	\$85,000	\$56,000	\$65,000
Field Support Technician	53	\$73,000	\$50,000	\$60,000
Least skilled	33	\$65,000	\$45,000	\$55,000
Most skilled	34	\$90,000	\$58,500	\$70,000
Support Technician	122	\$55,000	\$37,000	\$45,000
Least skilled	79	\$50,000	\$34,500	\$38,500
Most skilled	78	\$65,500	\$40,000	\$52,000
Customer Service Rep	75	\$44,000	\$32,000	\$35,000
Least skilled	44	\$35,000	\$28,000	\$32,500
Most skilled	43	\$50,000	\$35,000	\$40,000

Source: 2008 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 a 10.7% rise in pay last year (\$83,000 median), after several years with essentially no growth in compensation.

★ **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 \$71,000 in median pay, a remarkable 14.5% gain over last year's \$62,000 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 \$60,000, again a major gain (15.4%) over last year's \$52,000 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 \$74,000; the bottom 25% earn less than \$47,000.

★ **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 rose 12.1% from \$53,500 to \$60,000.

★ **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. We've seen a fairly steady year-to-year trend (roughly 3%-5% per year) toward higher pay since 1998, but last year median pay in this category jumped 12.5%, from \$40,000 to \$45,000.

★ **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, \$35,000, is equal to about \$17-\$18/hour.

VARIABLES: REVENUES, ORGANIZATION SIZE, PRODUCT PRICE, LOCATION

- **Annual revenues:** Company size is becoming a very predictable factor in support pay. With only a few exceptions (senior support techs in small companies and CS reps in mid-sized firms), big companies now pay the highest salaries, and the smallest companies the lowest:

	Annual Company Revenues		
	<\$10 MM	\$10-\$99 MM	\$100+ MM
Senior Support Executive	\$95,000	\$116,500	\$147,000
Count:	29	48	40
Department Manager	\$72,000	\$80,000	\$94,000
Count:	33	49	44
Analyst/Project Manager	\$59,000	\$70,000	\$88,000
Count:	24	35	35
Senior Support Technician	\$59,000	\$55,000	\$62,000
Count:	32	47	41
Field Support Technician	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$61,500
Count:	15	21	18
Support Technician	\$44,500	\$45,000	\$54,000
Count:	34	49	39
Customer Service Rep	\$35,000	\$39,750	\$36,000
Count:	17	32	26

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	\$115,000	\$110,000	\$135,000
Count:	29	34	53
Department Manager	\$79,000	\$80,000	\$85,250
Count:	32	33	55
Analyst/Project Manager	\$75,000	\$65,000	\$80,000
Count:	21	27	45
Senior Support Technician	\$60,000	\$51,000	\$60,000
Count:	32	35	53
Field Support Technician	\$65,000	\$57,500	\$57,500
Count:	11	18	24
Support Technician	\$45,000	\$45,000	\$48,000
Count:	36	34	51
Customer Service Rep	\$40,000	\$36,000	\$35,000
Count:	15	21	38

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. In general, moreover, higher-priced software is likely to be more technically complex and customized, requiring more advanced skills and greater domain knowledge among support reps.

	Price of Company's Best-Selling Product		
	<\$999	\$1,000-\$9,995	\$10,000+
Senior Support Executive	\$101,500	\$115,000	\$125,000
Count:	16	21	67
Department Manager	\$65,000	\$78,000	\$90,000
Count:	19	29	67
Analyst/Project Manager	\$60,000	\$66,500	\$80,000
Count:	15	18	52
Senior Support Technician	\$43,000	\$58,500	\$60,000
Count:	17	30	63
Field Support Technician	*	\$60,000	\$60,000
Count:	4	14	32
Support Technician	\$37,000	\$45,000	\$49,000
Count:	17	29	64
Customer Service Rep	*	\$35,500	\$37,000
Count:	6	20	42

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	\$140,000	\$140,000
Count:	21	19
Department Manager	\$90,000	\$100,000
Count:	23	22
Analyst/Project Manager	\$85,000	\$89,000
Count:	15	14
Senior Support Technician	\$75,000	\$75,000
Count:	18	19
Field Support Technician	\$72,500	*
Count:	10	6
Support Technician	\$50,000	\$66,200
Count:	19	20
Customer Service Rep	\$35,000	\$47,750
Count:	13	10

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 13th annual report on tech support salaries in the software industry, reflects survey data supplied by 148 software support organizations with a total of more than 22,000 support employees. Some key characteristics of our sample universe:

★ **Company size:** 32% of our respondents report annual sales of \$100 million or more, 40% have sales of \$10-\$99 million, and 28% have sales of \$10 million or less.

★ **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 18 employees; 40% have 30 or more support employees, 27% have 10-29 employees, and 33% 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 now \$20,000; 57% support products that sell for more than \$10,000, another 25% support products in the \$1,000-\$9,995 range, and 18% support products that sell for less than \$999.

Year-to-Year Comparison: For Most Support Job Categories, Double-Digit Growth in Pay

	2006	2007	Change
Senior Support Executive	\$111,500	\$120,000	+7.6%
Department Manager	\$75,000	\$83,000	+10.7%
Analyst/Project Manager	\$62,000	\$71,000	+14.5%
Senior Support Technician	\$52,000	\$60,000	+15.4%
Field Support Technician	\$53,500	\$60,000	+12.1%
Support Technician	\$40,000	\$45,000	+12.5%
Customer Service Rep	\$32,000	\$35,000	+9.4%