JOBS

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1997

Technical Support Staff In Short Supply

Do you have good communication skills? Are you patient? Adept at using Microsoft Windows on your FC? If so, you may have a future in technical support, a career category when the rise at he rise at the rise.

If so, you may have a future in technical support, a carer attegory where demand is high and carning power is a charlest support encompasses customs service reps (also called technical support reps) employed by software companies, ad well as help desk staff, PC and LAN technicians and an array of networking professionals inside organizations that use computers. Although not often highlighted in articles discussing computer related jobs, technical support is one of the fastest growing segments of the information technology (IT) job market according to those who place and hire such personnel.

Grag Scileppi, executive director of Monio Park, Calif. based RHI Consulting, division of Robert Half International me says, "Domand continuational me says, "Tomand continuational measure support professionals Association in San Diego, whose 5000 members represent over 600 software publishers, says, "A recent member survey found that finding, retaining and training customer support people was the top priority."

As to what's fueling the expanding demand, Scileppi says, "The proliferation of network computing and because network computing has been small and medium size are network in large corporations is one factor and because network computing has been small and medium size and medium

Rose makes the point that a few years ago, customer support was a job that wasn't valued or well paid by software companies. "Today, however, the pay scales are moving up to equal those of developers as companies have come to recognize the value of customer support and good customer support professionals," he says.

Rose says what has also become clear to his membership in recent years is that communication skills are more important than technical skills are critical skills needed if they have the communication skills. Selioppi also believes communication and people skills are critical since one deals with end users didly.

For those considering these occupa-

tions, Scileppi says there are both internal and external routes of entry. Externally, there are a let of training programs available, he nays. Programs offered by Compu USA and New Horizons are two that come to mind.

New Horizons are two that come to mind."

If one is inside a company, says Scileppi, one can end up in technical support from a variety of entry points, including customer service. "People coming out of customer service can move into the help deak erac by marrying their listening, communication and problem solving skills with some technical knowledge."

Rose says many software companies are combating the shortage of available talent by growing their own software support reps via in-house training "If someone is adept at using Microsoft

Finally, in terms of advancement potential, Scileppi says, "In every nrds of IT, there are two routes for advancement, one technical and one management oriented." From the help design example, as someone becomes more adopt technically, Scileppi says, "they can become hardware or software technicians or networking professionals," Alternately, he says, they can moye into management of the help designation.

Sheryl Silver can be reached by writing to her at Career Source, P.O. Bos 65754, Washington, D.C. 20035-5754.

Working Life Truth or Consequences in Your Job Hunt

By Debrah L. Jacobs
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