

Chapter Objectives

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- How changes in computer technology over time have affected computer use
- Ways to classify end users
- Resources computer users need
- Major categories of end-user software
- Common problems encountered by users
- Job market demand for user support workers
- Common ways to organize and provide support services
- Typical position descriptions for user support staff
- Knowledge, skills, and abilities for an entry-level support position
- Career paths for user support workers

Additional Resources

1. Timeline of computer history:
www.computerhistory.org/timeline/?gclid=CJv_-t-Mh5kCFQpuGgodP2cJlg
2. Ergonomics guidelines:
www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/index.html
3. Help Desk Crossing – job search website for help desk jobs:
www.helpdeskcrossing.com
4. Qualities of a help desk technician:
http://www.ehow.com/list_5794824_qualities-desk-tech.html

Key Terms

- **Applications development backlog**—The excess demand for new computer applications that outstripped the existing supply of computer professionals to develop them.
- **Carpal tunnel syndrome**—Severe hand or wrist pain due to an inflammation of the tendons in a user’s hand and wrist; often a result of overuse in combination with an improper physical environment.
- **Chat service**—A web-based interactive service that allows two or more users who are both online to communicate by alternately typing and viewing messages; also called instant messaging.
- **Cloud computing**—A type of infrastructure in which powerful servers in organizations store and process information remotely, delivering information, communications, and software applications on-demand via the Internet; cloud computing is an industry trend toward centralized software and services.
- **Computer facilities management**—Support services to help users with information and questions about security, media backups, viruses, ergonomics, purchase of supplies,

preventive maintenance, and other tasks required to keep a computer system operational.

- **Computer user support**—A job function or department in an organization that provides information and services to workers or clients to help them use computers more productively in their employment or at home.
- **Computer virus**—A piece of software created with malicious intent that can destroy information, erase or corrupt other software or data, or adversely affect the operation of a computer that is infected by the virus.
- **Distributed computing**—A computing environment in which the needs of the organization and its workers determine the location of computer resources; this often includes a centralized system, such as a network server, and decentralized systems, such as individual PCs on worker desks.
- **End-user computing**—The use of computer technology for both business and personal tasks; it is designed to increase the productivity of workers, managers, students, and home users of computers.
- **Ergonomics**—The study of how to design a workspace that promotes user health, safety, and productivity.
- **External user**—An end user who is a client or customer of an organization, such as retail customers of hardware and software vendors, or corporate users who have purchased products or services from a vendor.
- **Graphical user interface (GUI)**—Screen images that enable users to access program features and functions intuitively, using a mouse or other pointing device.
- **Help desk**—A single point of contact for users in need of support services, whether in-house employees or external clients; a help desk may provide information and problem-solving services face to face, by telephone, by e-mail, or by an online chat session.
- **Hotline**—A telephone number that an internal or external user can call to reach a help desk service.
- **Information Technology (IT), Information Systems, Information Services (IS)**—The modern names of the earlier Data Processing department; this department also may be responsible for network and distributed systems, such as user PCs and support services.
- **Internal user**—An in-house worker located inside an organization who uses computers to do his or her work.
- **Keystroke logger**—A malware program that captures keystrokes a user enters and transmits the captured information to an external site.
- **Knowledge worker**—An employee whose primary job function is to collect, prepare, process, and distribute information.
- **KSAs**—The knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the tasks in a job.
- **Microcomputer**—A complete computer (often called a personal computer, or PC) built on a smaller scale than a large-scale or a workgroup system, with a microprocessor as the CPU.
- **Needs analysis**—An investigation to determine the features and configuration of hardware and software that will best match a user's specific needs; also called a needs assessment.

- **Outsource**—An agreement in which an organization contracts with a vendor that specializes in user support functions to handle support incidents for internal and external users.
- **Peer support**—An informal level of user support whereby colleagues in an organization or department exchange information and provide assistance about computer use and problems encountered.
- **Peripheral device**—A hardware add-on that plugs into a computer's system unit, either externally or internally; peripheral devices include input devices (keyboard, scanner), output devices (monitor, printer), input and output (modem, network interface card, touch display screen), and storage (magnetic media such as tapes and disks, and optical media such as CDs and DVDs).
- **Piracy**—Theft of computer resources such as software, services, or data; often involves illegal copying, distribution, or use of computer programs or information.
- **Position description**—A written description of the qualifications and responsibilities of a job in an organization.
- **Support standards**—A list of computer products that an organization allows its employees to use and that it will support; product support standards limit the hardware, software, and network components that a staff supports in order to reduce support costs.
- **Technical support**—A level of user support that focuses on high-level troubleshooting and problem-solving; whereas computer user support deals with a broad spectrum of support issues, technical support usually deals with more advanced and difficult problems that users encounter.
- **The total cost of ownership (TCO)**—The total expenditures necessary to purchase, maintain, upgrade, and support an end user's personal computer system over its expected useful lifetime; TCO includes hardware, software, network connectivity, information, training, and technical support costs.
- **User support center**—A group or department in an organization that provides a wide range of services to an organization's computer users who are primarily internal; services may include a help desk, consulting on product purchases, training, documentation, and facilities management.
- **User support team**—A formal workgroup that is organized to provide computer user support services; the team may include combinations of full- and part-time support, and peer support.