



An *Imaging Spectrum* Exclusive Report: The 2003 Printer Technician Salary Survey

Printer service technicians can repair a printer in a few hours and appear to be heroes to their customers. But perhaps more than customer appreciation, printer service technicians say it is important that the companies they work for value their opinions. While the average base salary for printer technicians working for independent companies stays competitive at \$27,138, most technicians report that they are on the lookout for work opportunities in other companies.

This eye-opening data is contained in "The 2003 Printer Technician Salary Survey" of 1,826 field service printer technicians and 122 in-house printer technicians conducted by CopierCareers.com. The Minneapolis, Minn., company collected data from April 2002

through March 2003. Answers from 1,948 technicians were separated from the CopierCareers.com yearly survey of service technicians in the copier industry. This is the first year that printer service technician data was evaluated separately, and *Imaging Spectrum* magazine has received the exclusive rights to publish this ground-breaking survey.

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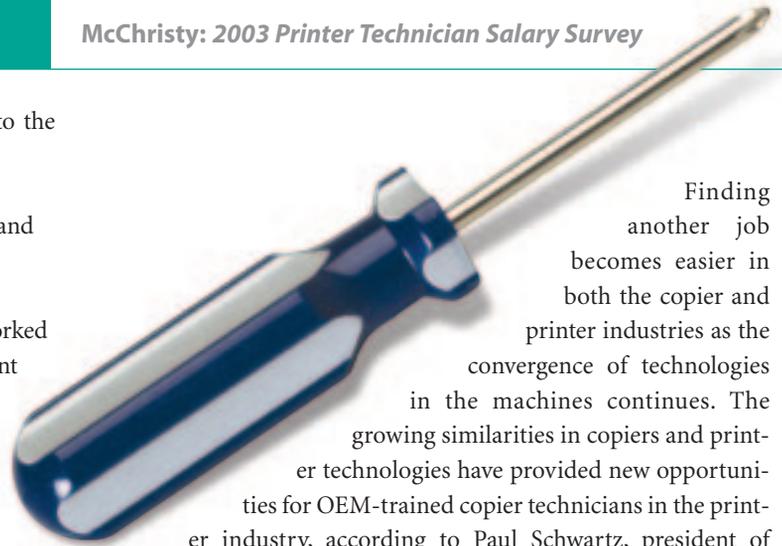


Here are some pertinent facts about those who responded to the survey:

- Respondents were 96 percent male and 4 percent female, and averaged 24.3 years of age.
- Ninety-eight percent of the printer service technicians worked for a company with fewer than 25 employees, and 2 percent said that they worked for a company with 25 to 30 employees.
- Respondents report working an average of 2.8 years for their present company.
- Printer technicians reported working an average of 44 hours per week (up from 41 hours the previous year).

The Big Picture

Overall, high-tech jobs have declined. The American Electronics Association reports a decline of 560,000 high-tech jobs in the United States in the two-year period from January 2001 to December 2002, based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In December 2002, there were 5.1 million jobs in the high-technology industry and most of the decline occurred in high-tech manufacturing, which showed a 20 percent drop. In the CopierCareers.com survey, only 2 percent of the printer technicians said that they were not actively or “somewhat actively” looking for a different job.



Finding another job becomes easier in both the copier and printer industries as the convergence of technologies in the machines continues. The growing similarities in copier and printer technologies have provided new opportunities for OEM-trained copier technicians in the printer industry, according to Paul Schwartz, president of CopierCareers.com. “The printer dealers benefit by hiring OEM-trained copier technicians who can save the dealer thousands of dollars in training costs and add the necessary skill set to the expanding product lines,” he said. OEMs trained a quarter of the printer technicians. The survey showed 71 percent were also high school graduates, 1 percent had some college and 4 percent received training in a technical or trade school.

Convergence or Convenience?

At Cartridge Technologies, Gaithersburg, Md., there are six printer technicians, according to Bragi Valgeirsson, the founder of the 12-year-old company. His technicians have trained for servicing copiers over the past year, and the company will likely hire a full-time copier service specialist in the future. Cartridge Technologies pays a bonus for finished certification, Valgeirsson said, and technicians travel for hands-on training once a year. In addition, the company tries to help technicians get the information they need by providing them with service manuals on CDs and PCs for in-house support and for looking up error codes and information on machines. “Nothing bugs a technician more than being left alone out there,” Valgeirsson said.

Cartridge Technologies is expanding to the copier segment because customers have requested the company to become more of a “one-stop shop.” Often, when working on a printer or fax machine, customers will ask if the printer technician can also work on the copier. The main reason for moving into this option is customer inquiry, Valgeirsson explained, rather than the convergence of copiers and printers. He predicted that a number of printer service companies that later migrated to faxes and color printers would be moving into the copier field. But, he added, forecasts had overstated the impact of copier/printer convergence on the printer industry as had forecasts that predicted the dominance of color.

Schwartz of CopierCareers.com noted the demand for copier technicians to cross to the printer world, “as they have the training and experience that the printer dealers are finding necessary to obtain as their product lines expand. We observe a large amount of migration from the copier industry to the printer industry,” Schwartz said. “We do not notice a large amount of migration from the printer to the

**Figure 1:
If Seeking Employment,
Why Are You Looking for a New Job? ***

Reason	Percent
Move To a Different Geographic Area	58
More Job Stability	54
Higher Compensation	51
Seeking Less Stress	44
Personal/Family Needs	32
Do Not Like Present Company's Management/Culture	32
More Interesting Work	21
Job Market Opportunities Are Too Good To Pass Up	13
More Responsibility	6
Stock Options	1
More Dynamic Company	1
Want to Join a Startup Company	1

* Respondents had the option of choosing multiple selections to this question.

copier industry. Until recently, we rarely saw copier technicians crossing over to the printer world; today it is becoming commonplace. Conversely, in the past, we saw numerous printer technicians cross over to the copier world; today they tend to stay put and increase and evolve their technological skill set within the printer industry.”

Seeking Work Elsewhere

There is no doubt that convergence has improved the chance to look for other work, and 86 percent of the printer technicians surveyed were actively seeking a job with a different employer. The survey showed 12 percent “somewhat” actively looking for a different job and 2 percent were not. **Figure 1** is a summary of the reasons given for seeking other work.

Valgeirsson noted that there are several distinct employment groups in the printer-service area. One group is constantly moving, sometimes working six months and leaving for another company. Some technicians leave to start their own businesses. Another group moves on after finding little support or challenges with a company. (Valgeirsson commented: “They have a legitimate reason for wanting to move on.”) And, of course, there is the third group comprised of good technicians the company wants to keep.

The Question of Salary

As this table shows, salary is not the primary consideration for seeking a new job, but it does matter in the overall employment picture. Technicians’ salaries showed an average increase of 7.76 percent during the year of the survey. The average salary was \$25,182 for the previous year and \$27,138 for the current year. That increase is almost double that of the national average, which reflected a 3.9 percent increase in wages among private sector employees. Salaries were supplemented by bonuses and other cash payments, amounting to an average of \$1,765 per technician. While pay may be only one of the reasons technicians gave for seeking a new job, other questions show that pay does matter on the job.

Technicians were asked to check up to seven of the job-related components that mattered the most. Base pay rated first. The second most cited reason to look for another job reflects a less tangible

cause, that “my opinion and knowledge is valued.” **Figure 2** offers the top 10 responses to this part of the survey.

Figure 2:
What Matters Most to You About Your Job? *

Reason	Percent
1. Base Pay	62
2. My Opinion and Knowledge is Valued	54
3. Company’s Understanding of the Importance of IT (Information Technology)	51
[Tied With:]	
4. Benefits	51
5. Job Stability	46
6. Financial Stability of Company	45
7. Skill Development/Educational/ Training Opportunity	44
8. Prestige/Reputation of the Company	36
9. Recognition for Work Well Done	33
10. My Work (Job) is Important to the Company’s Success	29

* Respondents had the option to choose up to seven selections when answering this question.

Next in line in this list were such items as “potential for promotion” at 25 percent, feedback on performance and regular coaching at 20 percent each, and the ability to work with leading-edge technology at 19 percent.

Health Benefits Top Other Non-cash Rewards

As for non-cash and indirect cash rewards, the top benefit (87 percent) was health insurance. The trend of companies to educate their own showed in the certification reimbursement given to 78 percent of the people in the survey, while 54 percent said that they received further education and training as a non-cash and indirect cash benefit. Fifty-six percent received a company car or car allowance. Three percent received stock options. There were also some other “perks.” Two percent received company-paid phone/fax/DSL/cable modem lines and 2 percent had tuition reimbursement for attending college. Only 1 percent reported onsite daycare or daycare subsidies, sabbaticals or extended vacations, or a stock-purchase plan. Satisfaction with the overall compensation package is reflected in **Figure 3**. (on next page)

Technicians were also asked about the reasons for receipt of direct cash payments or bonuses. Personal performance garnered the most such bonuses at 48 percent, followed by certification/training at 21 percent. Technicians were also rewarded for a project milestone completion (9 percent). Some respondents (8 percent) reported receiving a “hot skill





Figure 3:
Overall, How Satisfied Are You
With Your Total Compensation Package?

Reason	Percent
Very Satisfied	9
Satisfied	24
Neutral	38
Dissatisfied	16
Very Dissatisfied	13

premium” in addition to their base salaries. A “hot skill premium” is described as special training or skills that add unique value to the service offerings. Bonuses in the form of company profit-sharing were reported by 3 percent of respondents, while signing and retention bonuses were received by only 2 percent.

Most Technicians Work at Independent Dealerships

Most technicians in the survey work at an independent dealership in one location (98 percent). People responding to the survey were also asked to rate their company’s ability at attracting and retaining printing employees (Figure 4).

What It All Means

As the demand for more printer service technicians increases in our industry, companies with printer and/or copier service departments will

Figure 4:
Compared to its Peers, Please Rate
How Good a Job Your Company Does
at Attracting and then Retaining
Printer Industry Employees:

Rating	Attracting (%)	Retaining (%)
Excellent	1	2
Good	4	4
Fair	22	47
Poor	44	40
Totally Unsatisfactory	23	7
Don't Know	6	0

need to do more to attract and retain excellent employees. Salary and benefits are the obvious factors that matter to employees, but nearly as important are intangibles such as job stability, training opportunities, tools and support for doing the job well, and a sense of being valued as a skilled employee. Armed with this information, companies will be better able to recruit and develop strong service departments.

Editor’s Note: Imaging Spectrum magazine encourages printer service technicians to go to www.copiercareers.com to fill out the new printer technician survey, which will be compiled for 2004.

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