2005 Copier Careers
Service Technician Salary Survey

by Scott Cullen

Meet the average copier service tech. He or she – more likely a he – has been in the business for nearly 8 years, is approximately 37 years old, works about 51 hours a week, is somewhat satisfied with their current salary, but is mostly dissatisfied with their current employer. Those are just some of the findings from the Copier Careers 2005 Service Technician Salary Survey, a recruiting organization that places experienced imaging professionals within independent dealerships across the United States.

Title Talk

The fourth year of the survey had 3,574 participants compared to 3,528 the previous year. Respondents all hold staff positions in the dealerships where they work. Most (2,283) are field service technicians while 1,245 are senior lead technician or team leaders. Forty six are house technicians. Most respondents (2,754) do not supervise anyone, while 820 said that they supervise between 1-10 people. That's 54 less than in last year's survey.

What is your level of responsibility? (Please choose the level that matches how you spend the majority of your time.)	2002	2003	VARIANCE	2004	VARIANCE	2005	VARIANCE
House Technician	98	68	-30	48	-20	46	-2
Field Service Technician	2011	2223	212	2268	45	2283	15
Sr. Lead Technician/Team Leader	1124	1131	7	1212	81	1245	33
Service Manager	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Op Manager	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
VP Service	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Personal Profile

Survey respondents average 7.6 years in the copier business, an increase of one half year compared to the 2004 survey. These individuals have been in their current positions for a total of 5.6 years and logged 2.3 years at a previous employer before joining their current company.

The average age of respondents is 36.8 years, a very modest 0.60 increase from the previous year. Looking at respondents' educational backgrounds, 2,133 are high school graduates, 522 have some college, 735 have OEM training, and 176 have tech/trade school training. Ten have an Associate's Degree.

When asked how many years they expect to stay at their current company, the response was 5.1 years. In 2002, the first year of the survey, respondents expected to remain with their current company for 10 years. Equally telling is 1,356 respondents expect to change jobs. Returning again to the first year of the survey, which had 3,233 responses, only 549 said they expected to change jobs. Clearly job stability and job security isn't what it once was just four short years ago.

Which of the following best describes the "SEGMENT OF" industry in which you work?	2002	2003	VARIANCE	2004	VARIANCE	2005	VARIANCE
Independent Dealership (w/1 Location)	64%	62%	-2%	61%	-1%	61%	0%
Regional Dealership (w/more than 1 Location)	15%	17%	2%	16%	-1%	18%	2%
National Publicly Traded Sales & Service Org.	4%	6%	2%	10%	4%	0%	-10%
OEM	1%	5%	4%	6%	1%	6%	0%
Third Party Organization	8%	1%	-7%	2%	1%	4%	2%
Other	8%	1%	-7%	5%	4%	5%	0%

Which of the following ranges best describes the annual revenues of your company? (For government, educational and non-profit institutions, use your organization's operating budget, that is, its annual expenditures.)	2002	2003	VARIANCE	2004	VARIANCE	2005	VARIANCE
Less than $1 Million	22%	24%	2%	21%	-3%	11%	-10%
$1 – $10 Million	58%	52%	-6%	53%	1%	63%	10%
$11 – $50 Million	20%	18%	-2%	21%	3%	21%	0%
$51 – $100 Million	–	6%	6%	3%	-3%	3%	0%
Above	–	–	–	2%	2%	2%	0%

"When respondents say they're planning on staying at their current position for only another 5.1 years, more than likely when they leave, they're leaving the industry altogether," observes Dave Grandelis, Director of Recruiting for Copier Careers. "This coincides with why more people are openly looking for work right now. Eighty seven percent of techs are keeping their eyes open, looking for employment, which corroborates why they don't expect to be around as long."

Company Profile

As has been the trend since the first year of the survey, most respondents (61%) work for independent dealerships with one location. That number has been consistent over the last three surveys (in 2002, 64% noted they worked for an independent dealership with one location). This year 18% of respondents work for a regional dealership with more than one location, 6% work for an OEM, 4% work for a third-party organization and 5% noted other.

Respondents are employed primarily by companies in the $1-$10 million revenue range (63%). The second largest group of respondents (21%) work for companies with revenue of $11- $50 million per year, followed by 11% who are employed by dealerships with less than $1 million in revenue per year. The latter is a 10% drop from the previous year.

Fifty-two percent of the dealerships where these technicians work employ 25-50 people. Thirty-one percent employ less than 25 and 6% employ 51-100. The latter response is down 3% from last year. Holding steady are dealerships that employ 101-500 employees (5%), 501-1,000 (3%), and 1,001-5,000 (2%).

Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents (93%) are male. That's a 1% decrease from last year's survey.

Copier Careers

Working Stiffs

The number of hours worked is on the rise with respondents clocking in at 51 hours per week, an increase of 1 hour from the previous year and 5 hours more than respondents were averaging per work week in 2002.

Those longer hours may be the result of belt tightening coinciding with the effects of a still volatile economy. "Unemployment figures in the U.S. remain consistent while worker productivity is on the rise," says Paul Schwartz, President of Copier Careers. "Rather than add another person or half person, employers are requiring more out of their employees and this industry is a good example of that. It seems a lot of service techs are frustrated because they're working harder and working longer days."

We spoke with a number of service techs about how many hours they work each week. One noted 40-45 while another reports that he is now back to a 40-hour week because his employer has not been compensating him for overtime. The tech who logs 40-45 hours per week says it's because the service department is understaffed and the company "is not managed well."

But not all techs are logging outrageous hours. A Wyoming-based tech says he is in the field about 30 hours or so a week with another 10 spent in the office. He's been in the business for 10 years now and has found that number relatively consistent.

It wouldn't be a stretch to think that a work week that is consistently creeping upwards at a little more than one hour per week per year since the first survey is influencing a service tech's feelings about their employer. We'll delve into that issue later on.

Things That Matter

"What matters most to you about your job?" When asked, service techs present a wide range of opinions with "Benefits" the top response at 73%, followed by "Base pay" at 71%. The third most popular response was "Financial stability of company" (63%). The fourth most popular response was a three-way tie with "Job stability," "My opinion and knowledge is valued", and "Having the tools and support to do my job well" all garnering a response rate of 58%. Those responses were followed by "Recognition for work well done" (49%), "Skill development/Educational/Training opportunity" (43%), and "My work is important to the company's success" (34%). No other responses yielded percentages above 28%. What's clear from these responses is that service techs care about the companies they work for and their jobs. But that they also are focused on making a living and taking care of themselves and their families. What matters most with service techs tends to be consistent with the things that matter to most workers no matter what the industry.

The biggest deviation from last year's survey was an increase of 12% in the respondents who cited "Benefits" as one of the factors that matter most. The second biggest change from last year's survey was "Financial stability of company" which saw a 9% increase from the previous year. "Recognition for work well done" went up 8% and "Base pay" rose 7% from the previous year.

The IT Factor

Also up 7% was "Company's understanding of the importance of IT," which suggests more techs are thinking about IT issues, whether its training or their dealership's commitment to IT.

"A candidate's ability to rise in the industry and within their company is dependent on his or her IT training," observes Grandelis, who sees this more often in his recruitment efforts when talking to service techs and clients. "Any employer who wants to attract a candidate has to show he can grow along those lines," adds Grandelis who is finding more clients interested in hiring candidates with an IT background. Similarly, he's also seen candidates turn down positions because they weren't convinced the dealership had a strong enough commitment to IT issues.

Most of the service techs we spoke with felt that their employers were committed to IT, albeit some had reservations as to just how strong that commitment is. "[The company I work for] has a good understanding of the importance of IT, but isn't willing to pay for the expertise," says a Dallas-based tech. Another tech notes that his company has a good IT understanding on the service side, but "not well at all" on the sales side of the business. Similarly, the Wyoming-based tech feels that the small dealership he currently works for is behind the curve from an IT standpoint, but so far this hasn't been a big issue with customers. "Our sales reps aren't as knowledgeable about technology as the sales reps I worked with at IKON," he says.

Part of the commitment to IT encompasses providing service techs with the right tools to do their jobs. Indeed, support tools are important to this group as much as financial stability of the company and the company's ability to provide training. "It's also important to provide tools that will allow them to climb the ladder and start servicing high-speed copiers and wide format products," observes Schwartz. "They

What matters most to you about your job? Please check up to 7 of the job-related issues that are the most important to you.	2002	2003	VARIANCE	2004	VARIANCE	2005	VARIANCE
Flexible Work Schedule	18%	18%	0%	13%	-5%	11%	-2%
Telecommuting/Work at Home	22%	6%	16%	3%	-3%	1%	-2%
Challenge of Job/Responsibility	16%	20%	4%	21%	1%	18%	-3%
Prestige/Reputation of the Company	8%	24%	16%	23%	-1%	25%	2%
Vacation Time/Paid Time Off	23%	23%	0%	24%	1%	24%	0%
Bonus Opportunities	18%	18%	0%	19%	1%	19%	0%
Stock Options	3%	3%	0%	1%	-2%	1%	0%
Potential for Promotion	24%	25%	1%	22%	-3%	23%	1%
Job Stability	20%	46%	26%	54%	8%	58%	4%
Casual Attire	17%	17%	0%	15%	-2%	17%	2%
Company Provided Laptop/Home PC	6%	10%	4%	12%	2%	18%	6%
Effectiveness of Immediate Supervision	12%	12%	0%	16%	4%	18%	2%
Seeing How My Job Helps Achieve Company Goals	6%	6%	0%	7%	1%	6%	-1%
Base Pay	56%	62%	6%	64%	2%	71%	7%
Understanding Company's Business Strategy	12%	12%	0%	17%	5%	16%	-1%
Corporate Culture & Values	8%	8%	0%	12%	4%	12%	0%
Involvement in Company Strategy/Goals	9%	9%	0%	5%	-4%	3%	-2%
Ability to Work w/Leading Edge Technology	19%	19%	0%	22%	3%	26%	4%
Commute Distance	14%	14%	0%	22%	8%	21%	-1%
Working w/a Start-up Company	4%	4%	0%	4%	0%	2%	-2%
On-site Child Care	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	-1%
Working w/Highly Talented Peers	4%	4%	0%	3%	-1%	3%	0%
Sense of Community in Work Group	4%	4%	0%	2%	-2%	7%	5%
Able to Work on Creating "New" IT Solutions	21%	14%	-7%	18%	4%	22%	4%
Effective Career Path Planning & Support	13%	13%	0%	11%	-2%	7%	-4%
Recognition for Work Well Done	34%	33%	-1%	41%	8%	49%	8%
My Job is Important to Company Success	29%	29%	0%	31%	2%	34%	3%
Commitment to Quality Work in Company	9%	9%	0%	11%	2%	13%	2%
Regular Coaching & Feedback on Performance	20%	20%	0%	21%	1%	26%	5%
My Opinion & Knowledge is Valued	54%	54%	0%	56%	2%	58%	2%
Have Tools & Support to Do Job Well	51%	51%	0%	54%	3%	58%	4%
Company's Understanding of IT Importance	18%	18%	0%	21%	3%	28%	7%
Geographic Location of Job	15%	15%	0%	18%	3%	22%	4%
Benefits	41%	41%	0%	61%	20%	73%	12%
Skill Development/Education/Training Opportunity	43%	43%	0%	39%	-4%	43%	4%
Job Atmosphere	15%	12%	-3%	9%	-3%	7%	-2%
Financial Stability of Company	12%	43%	31%	54%	11%	63%	9%
Domestic Partner Benefits	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

recognize those qualities make them more valuable. It all intersects with each other. If they're not providing techs with the proper tools, they're going to look around for someone who will," says Schwartz.

One of those tools is a laptop. Most of the techs interviewed say that they are provided with a laptop. However, one tech notes that except for doing firmware upgrades (a must on Sharp products) he'd rather have a hard copy. "It's much faster and easier to read than a PDF on a small, slow laptop screen," says the tech. "In my opinion, having a laptop is highly over rated, unless you are working on Kyocera Mita [products] because you have to carry so many manuals to keep that equipment running, that if you don't have a laptop you won't have room for car stock."

Making Sense of the Dollars

The current annual base salary of this year's group is $36,510, a $1,404 increase from the previous year's survey. These numbers have been rising consistently – as well they should even in a tough economy – since the first year of the survey when respondents noted that their current annual base salary was $32,334. Respondents report that their previous year's annual base salary was $35,106, which amounts to a $1,962 raise over the previous year.

Bonuses still play a big part in the take-home pay of service technicians with the total amount of bonuses earned last year averaging $3,411, a modest $83 increase over 2004. Service technicians continue to be rewarded for certification/training with 61% earning bonuses in this area. That was followed by bonuses for personal performance (24%), company profit sharing (15%), and other (11%). The latter very likely being year end or holiday bonuses. All other responses were in the low single digits. (See graphic for more detail.)

Looking at non-cash bonuses and perks, the figures remain fairly consistent from the previous year with the exception of a company car or car allowance which climbed to 71% this year, a 10% increase from 2004. Fully 93% of respondents receive health care, 68% receive certification reimbursement, 41% are offered further education/training, and 26% receive 401(k) Match.

Stock options continue their downward spiral with those receiving them reporting a stock value of a meager $980. That's $123 less than 2004 and a whopping $7,540 less than what techs reported in the first survey in 2002.

Satisfaction Not Guaranteed

There were no major variances in satisfaction levels from last year to this year regarding overall compensation. Eight percent of respondents were very satisfied and 18% were satisfied, while 36% were neutral. Some 19% said that they were dissatisfied, a 2% drop from the previous year, while those who were very dissatisfied rose 2% to 19% in 2005.
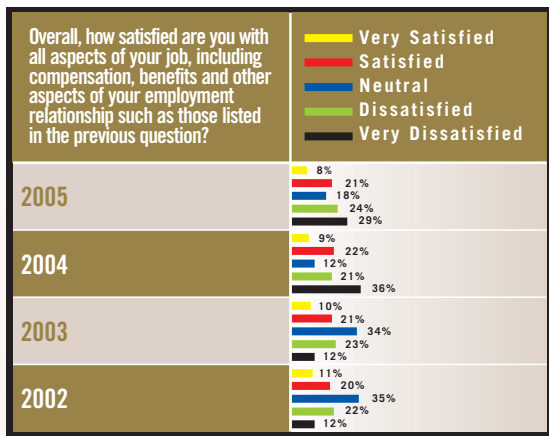
When asked how satisfied they were with all aspects of their job, just 8% said they were very satisfied and 21% said they were satisfied. Both of those are down 1% from last year's survey. More than half of those surveyed said they were dissatisfied (24%) or very dissatisfied (29%) and 18% were neutral. The latter went up 6 percent from last year while those who were very dissatisfied went down by 7%. Techs who were simply dissatisfied went up 3%.
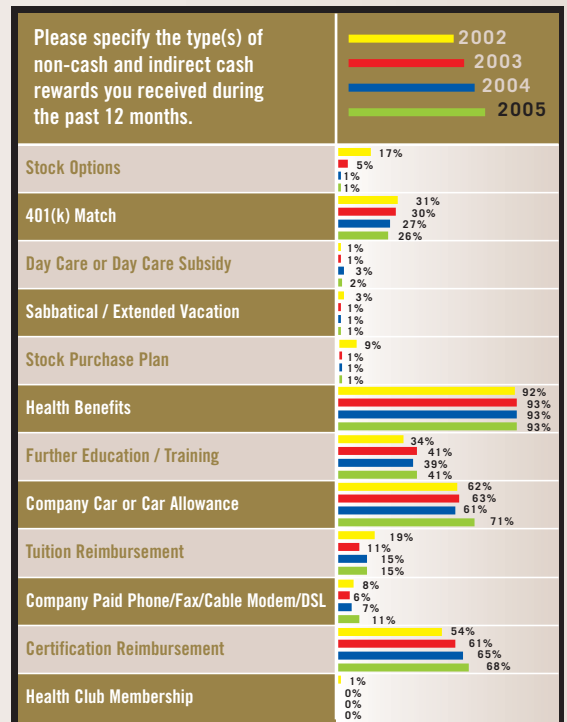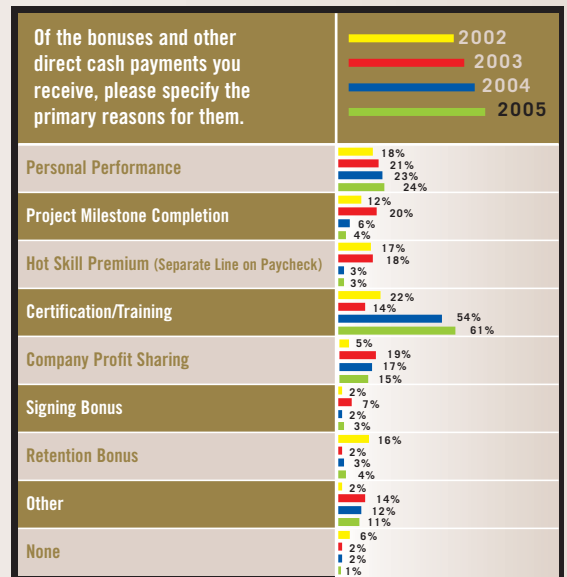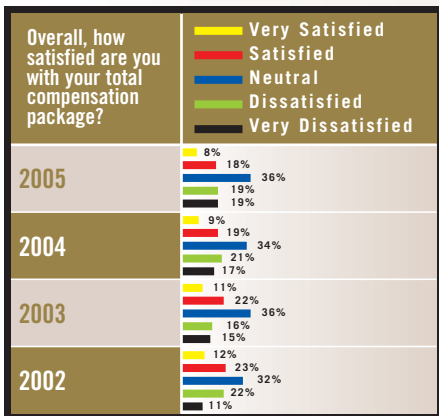
If a lot of these folks aren't satisfied then it stands to reason that they'd be looking around for better opportunities. Nineteen percent are actively looking and 68% say they are somewhat looking. Those numbers represent increases over the previous year's survey of 7% and 5%, respectively. Thirteen percent of respondents said they weren't looking – 12% less than last year.

Off the record conversations with service techs offer the impression that things could certainly be better. "Another thing that is remarkably consistent is how badly technicians are treated by employers and how knowledge of this is increasing," notes a 10-year veteran service tech. "Employers increasingly drive the good technicians away with paltry pay, ridiculous work rules and inequitable expectations from good and bad techs." He says that he expects this situation to increase with time.

Asked to elaborate about those ridiculous work rules, he describes how Sharp factory training recently changed their training entry prerequisites so that techs must pass online tests on fax machines, networking, computers and printers before being allowed to go to Sharp factory training.

Of the bonuses and other direct cash payments you receive, please specify the primary reasons for them.	2002	2003	2004	2005
Personal Performance	18%	21%	23%	24%
Project Milestone Completion	12%	20%	6%	4%
Hot Skill Premium (Separate Line on Paycheck)	17%	18%	3%	3%
Certification/Training	22%	14%	54%	61%
Company Profit Sharing	5%	19%	17%	15%
Signing Bonus	2%	7%	2%	3%
Retention Bonus	16%	2%	3%	4%
Other	2%	14%	12%	11%
None	6%	2%	2%	1%

Please specify the type(s) of non-cash and indirect cash rewards you received during the past 12 months.	2002	2003	2004	2005
Stock Options	17%	5%	1%	1%
401(k) Match	31%	30%	27%	26%
Day Care or Day Care Subsidy	1%	1%	3%	2%
Sabbatical / Extended Vacation	3%	1%	1%	1%
Stock Purchase Plan	9%	1%	1%	1%
Health Benefits	92%	93%	93%	93%
Further Education / Training	34%	41%	39%	41%
Company Car or Car Allowance	62%	63%	61%	71%
Tuition Reimbursement	19%	11%	15%	15%
Company Paid Phone/Fax/Cable Modem/DSL	8%	6%	7%	11%
Certification Reimbursement	54%	61%	65%	68%
Health Club Membership	1%	0%	0%	0%

Overall, how satisfied are you with your total compensation package?	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
2005	8%	18%	36%	19%	19%
2004	9%	19%	34%	21%	17%
2003	11%	22%	36%	16%	15%
2002	12%	23%	32%	22%	11%

Overall, how satisfied are you with all aspects of your job, including compensation, benefits and other aspects of your employment relationship such as those listed in the previous question?

Legend: Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied

Year	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
2005	8%	21%	18%	24%	29%
2004	9%	22%	12%	21%	36%
2003	10%	21%	34%	23%	12%
2002	11%	20%	35%	22%	12%

"Our company expected techs to do this on their own time with no compensation," he explains. "Then they threatened to fire anyone who didn't complete these courses by the end of 2004. When they saw that they were going to lose a number of quality techs because they hadn't completed the course, they pulled them out of the field and into the shop to finish these prerequisites." He goes on to say that techs who completed this training on their own time were not compensated for that time.

"This and the never-ending battle of working overtime and not getting paid for it seem to be constants. I have now reached the point where I am always busy after 5 p.m. and before 8 a.m."

Another tech rattles off a litany of reasons why he's dissatisfied with his employer: "They're poorly managed, don't care about employees, or their families. Techs are encouraged to ignore problems and lay low and are punished for trying to do what is right for customers."

He adds, "I hope that didn't sound too bad. Well, actually it should. It's the truth, and the truth is, it's bad."

Greener Pastures

The majority of those service techs looking for a new job are seeking "More job stability" (63%) and "Less stress" (63%). Other top responses are "Move to a different geographical area" (56%), "Higher compensation" (53%), and "Personal/family needs" (41%). The biggest deviation from last year's survey was "Job market opportunities are too good to pass up." Last year 27% cited this factor, while this year 34% noted it.

"I'm not actively looking right this moment," says one tech. "The companies in the Dallas area where I work are so horrid that I'm planning on moving to Florida. Of all the companies I've worked for in Dallas this seems to be the best so far and they are dreadful. After I get settled in Florida with another copier industry job, I will actively be seeking to get out of this industry."

Another tech notes that he is looking for a new job and is planning on staying in the industry…for now. "But if I get a better offer outside I would leave the industry," he says.

Meanwhile, the Wyoming-based tech says he is currently looking for another opportunity in another organization. High on his list are benefits and a change in geographic location. That said, he prefers working for a smaller organization as compared to a national dealer organization where he was just a number and didn't really matter as long as his numbers were there. "At least I have a say here and they listen to me," he says.

Attracting Talent

Asked to rate how good a job their employer does at attracting and retaining copier industry employees, only 1% said their employer did an excellent job of attracting while 11% said they did a good job. Thirty-four percent said employers did a fair job. Fully 48% said their employers did a poor job and 3% said totally unsatisfactory.

As far as retaining copier industry employees, the numbers were slightly more positive, but not by much. Only 1% of respondents felt their employers did an excellent job of retaining copier industry employees and 11% felt their employers did a good job. Another 47% rated their employer's efforts as fair. Twenty-six percent said their employers did a poor job and 15% said totally unsatisfactory.

When asked how good of a job his dealership is at retaining service techs, one respondent simply states, "Not good at all."

Compared to its peers, please rate how good a job your company does at attracting and then retaining Copier Industry employees:

Legend: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Totally Unsatisfactory, Don't Know

Year		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Totally Unsatisfactory	Don't Know
2005	ATTRACTING	1%	11%	34%	48%	3%	3%
2005	RETAINING	1%	11%	47%	26%	15%	0%
2004	ATTRACTING	2%	12%	32%	43%	3%	8%
2004	RETAINING	1%	12%	46%	26%	15%	0%
2003	ATTRACTING	3%	14%	32%	44%	6%	1%
2003	RETAINING	3%	14%	49%	29%	5%	0%
2002	ATTRACTING	5%	12%	33%	46%	2%	2%
2002	RETAINING	6%	15%	44%	28%	7%	0%

Final Thoughts

If one were to place service techs within the realm of blue-collar workers, employment trends suggest that these individuals possess hot skills in today's job market. CBS News reports that the Labor Department predicts 2.5 million new skilled trade workers will be needed over the next 8 years. And with baby boomers retiring, worker shortages are expected in a range of industries in many of the skilled trades from electricians to copier repair.

The challenge for copier service technicians, especially talented ones, is getting employers to acknowledge them – before they move onto another company or out of the industry altogether. With the customer service focus that permeates the industry, and the importance of service techs in the customer service equation, it should be a higher priority with employers than it currently is.

"Techs are looking for work and are open to new opportunities – given the right opportunity, they are willing to leave their current job for financial reasons or for a change in venue," says Grandelis.