

2007 Copier Careers Technician Salary Survey By Scott Cullen

Feeling unappreciated by their employers, techs continue to scan the want ads for better opportunities and less stressful work environments.

It's time once again to unveil the results of Copier Careers (www.CopierCareers.com) annual salary surveys. In this, the first of three separate salary surveys, we present the findings from the 2007 Technician Salary Survey, arguably one of the most demanding positions in the copier industry. Subsequent surveys will focus on sales managers and service managers.

By the Numbers

This year's survey garnered the largest response ever from technicians with 3,745 responding. That's an increase of 136 from last year's 3,609 respondents. Clearly, money talks or we should say technicians like to talk about money and their profession.

The majority of respondents (2,435) describe themselves as Field Service Technicians while 1,261 are Senior Lead Technician/Team Leader, and 49 label themselves as House Technicians.

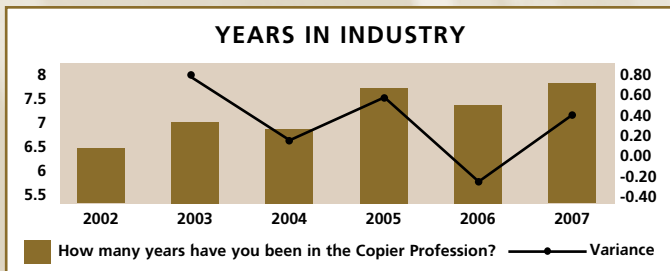
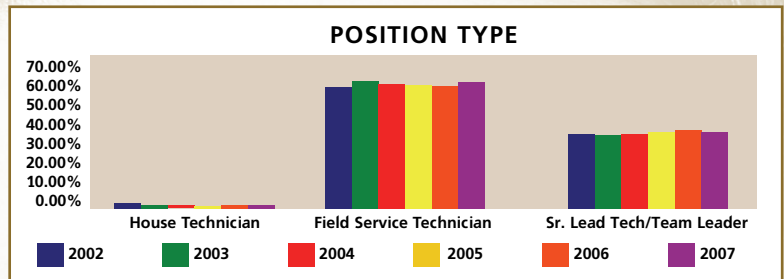
Most respondents are male (91%), and most (2,099) are high school grads. Fully 529 have had some college, 807 have had OEM training, and 300 have attended a tech/trade school. Ten have AA degrees.

Reflecting the size of the majority of dealerships represented in the survey and their job titles, 2,866 say they do not supervise anyone while 879 supervise 1-10 people.

Technicians who responded to this year's survey are on average 37.3 years old and have been in the industry a total of 7.8 years, up .4 years from 2006. As a frame of reference, in 2002, the first year of the survey, technicians had been in the industry for 6.5 years and were 36.5 years old.

The average tenure at their current employer is 4.9 years, down from the 5.8 years noted in last year's survey. Prior to joining their current employer, this year's techs spent 2.5 years at their previous employer.

It may be negative thinking on their part, but techs responding to the survey don't seem to have a lot of faith that they'll be with their current employer for the long haul. When asked, "How many years do you expect to stay at your current employer before changing jobs?" the response was 5.4 years. Fully 40 percent of this year's respondents said that they expect to change jobs--the same number as last year.



"That figure doesn't surprise me and is consistent with recent years," says Dave Grandelis, director of recruiting for Copier Careers. However, that figure is inconsistent with what techs said in 2002 when just 15 percent of respondents expected to change jobs.

"Back in the beginning when we started doing this, we always made the assumption that these folks were super stable and didn't go anywhere -- the cradle to grave types," notes Paul Schwartz, president of Copier Careers. "They'd go to work for a dealership and they'd be there 20 years later. There's still a lot of truth in that, but I think some of these folks are starting to see that they are a valuable asset and that someone else might be willing to reward them a little more, so I don't think they're as afraid to make a move."

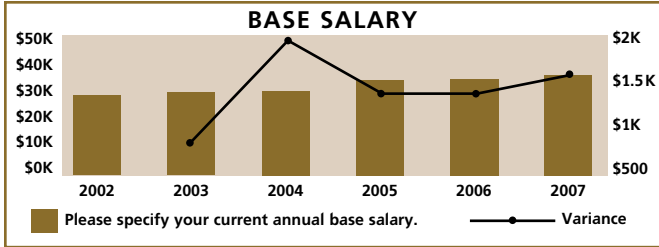
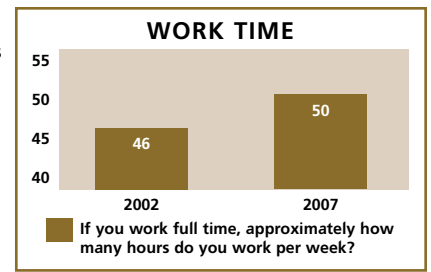
As might be expected, most respondents (60%) work for an independent dealership with one location. Twenty percent work for a regional dealership with more than one location and 6 percent work for a national publicly traded sales and service organization. The remaining respondents are employed either by an OEM (5%) or a third-party service organization (4%) while 5 percent were employed by the somewhat vague "other".

The majority of dealerships (66%) employing this year's group of respondents enjoy \$1-\$10 million per year in annual revenues. Fully 21 percent of

respondents work for an organization with annual revenues between \$10,000,001 and \$50 million. Only 9 percent work for dealerships with less than \$1 million in annual revenues and 1 percent work for dealerships with annual revenues in excess of \$50 million.

On the Clock

It's too early to tell if a trend is developing, but technicians are logging less hours per week than they did in last year's survey. This year they say they're clocking in to the tune of 50 hours per week compared to the 51 hours per week noted in the previous two surveys. As an aside, this year's respondents report that they worked on average 47.2 hours per week the previous year.



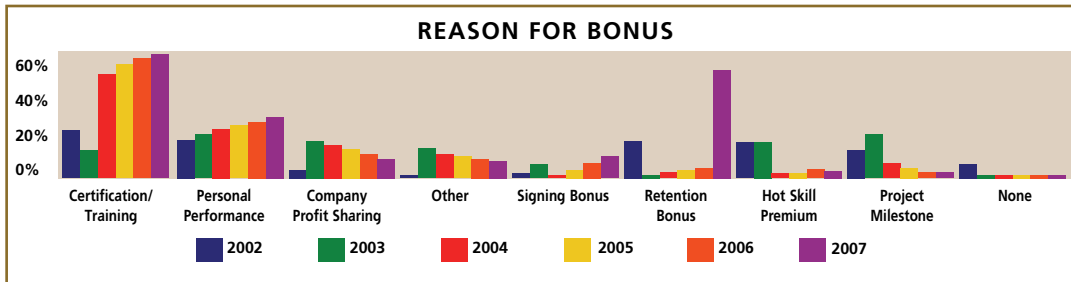
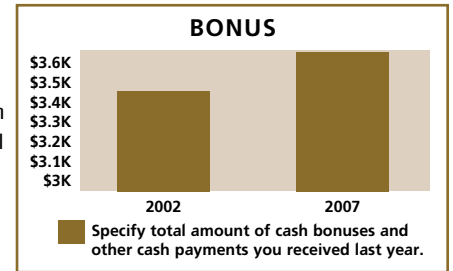
"Compared to 2002 when the average work week was 46 hours, that's just short of a 10 percent jump and can likely be attributed to companies running shorter in the tech department, which means they're working their key techs harder," says Grandelis. "We recently had a tech call us and he said, 'I've been here 13 years and they've got me traveling between 300-400 miles a day and I'm worn out after a month of that and I want a new job.'"

When asked how many hours per week they are on call to solve problems after hours, this year's techs noted 4.4, down slightly from the 4.7 noted last year, but well within the average of 4.5 to 4.8 noted throughout the history of the survey.

Pay Day

The average annual base salary reported by this year's respondents is \$39,220.94. That's up \$1,688.94 from last year's \$37,532. Comparing those numbers with last year's survey, we find that the average annual base salary reported in 2006 was \$37,532 reported last year and \$36,510, reported in 2005.

Add to those annual base salaries bonuses averaging \$3,602 and technicians are taking home on average \$42,822.94 a year. This year's group has seen a slight bump in bonus activity compared to last year's respondents who took home \$3,501 in bonuses.



Bonuses are paid out for certification/training (65%), retention (57%), personal performance (28%), signing (12%), and company profit sharing (11%). It's interesting to note that in 2002, only 16 percent of techs surveyed received a retention bonus.

"That's something we really haven't seen a whole lot of in the past," says Schwartz. "Overall, that speaks to the dearth of quality techs available. As a result, a lot of companies are rewarding somebody for not quitting. I think companies are deciding that it's in their best financial interests to throw some money at these people because they know the difficulty of finding somebody else and the costs associated with that."

In addition to cash compensation, employers provide technicians with an array of non-cash and indirect cash rewards. The most popular (95%) is health benefits, followed by certification reimbursement (81%), company car or cash allowance (72%), further education/training (43%), and 401(K) match (24%).

"Most of these represent the primary non-cash and indirect cash rewards that techs in this industry have come to expect and have consistently shown up in our top five throughout the years we've been conducting this survey," notes Schwartz. "What has risen dramatically since we started doing the survey in 2002 though is certification reimbursement, which was cited by just 54 percent of techs that year. Clearly, this reflects the skill sets necessary for servicing digital technology and the many solutions that dealers provide to customers today. I expect that number will continue to rise in future surveys." Techs who have been fortunate to receive stock options value those at a modest \$602. Not to beat a dead horse, but that's one of the areas that has seen the biggest decline through the history of the survey. Last year it was an equally modest \$899. Compare those figures to the good old days of 2002 when respondents were enjoying \$8,520 a year in stock options. Since then it's been downhill all the way.

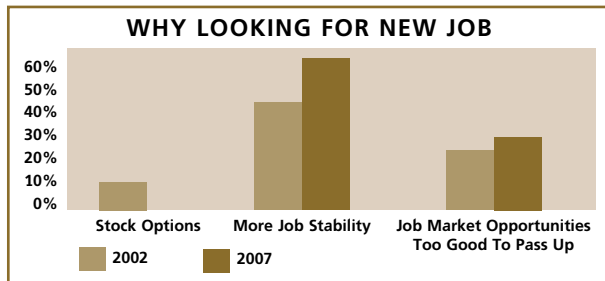
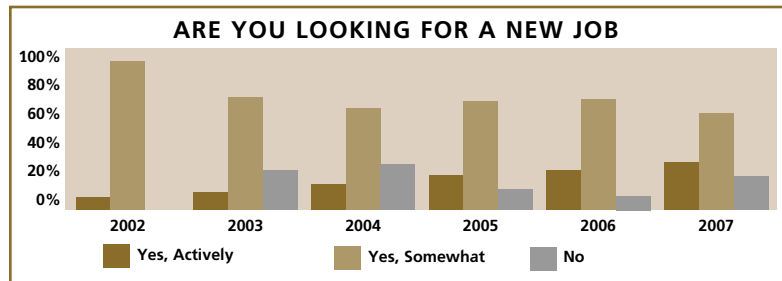
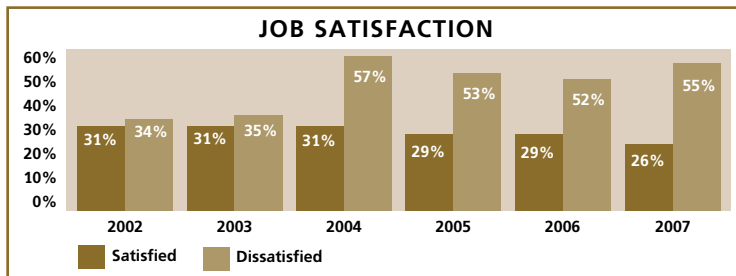
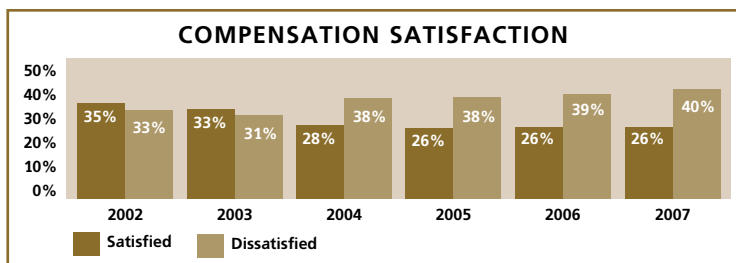
Not So Satisfied

Certainly the majority of technicians feel their paychecks should be bigger when asked how satisfied they were with their current compensation package. Only 8 percent were very satisfied and 18 percent satisfied with their compensation while 34 percent remain neutral on the issue. On the negative side, 20 percent are dissatisfied and 20 percent very dissatisfied with their compensation. It's little wonder then why so many expect to change jobs. Incidentally, satisfaction numbers are nearly dead on with last year's figures, give or take 1 percent in either direction.

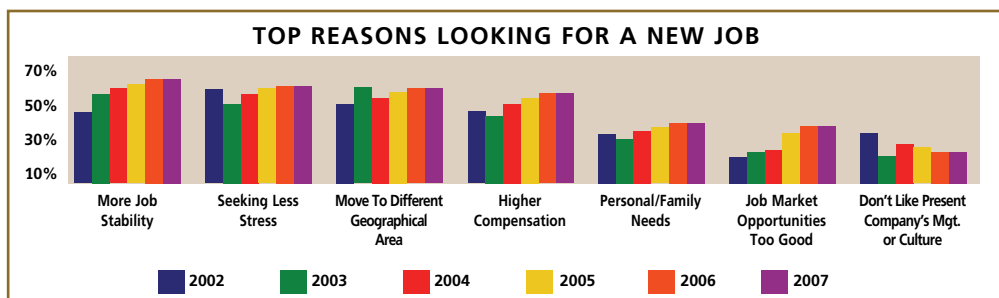
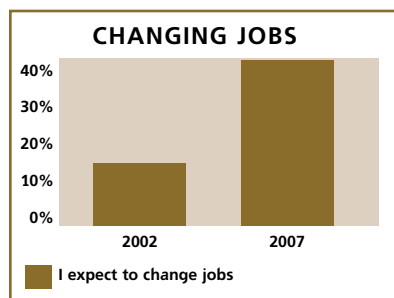
When asked how satisfied they were with all aspects of their job, more than half of respondents were unhappy with 30 percent feeling very dissatisfied and 25 percent dissatisfied. Fully 19 percent were neutral about their jobs while 19 percent were satisfied and a meager 7 percent very satisfied.

"Looking at these satisfaction levels year after year, it's not surprising that technicians are shopping around their services," says Grandelis.

Twenty three percent of respondents are actively looking for a new job and 61 percent are somewhat looking. The latter group are the folks who are open to discussion should they be approached or should a primo position fall into their laps. Only 16 percent aren't looking at all. And how does that compare with last year's survey? In 2006 20 percent were actively looking and 70 percent somewhat looking while 10 percent weren't looking.



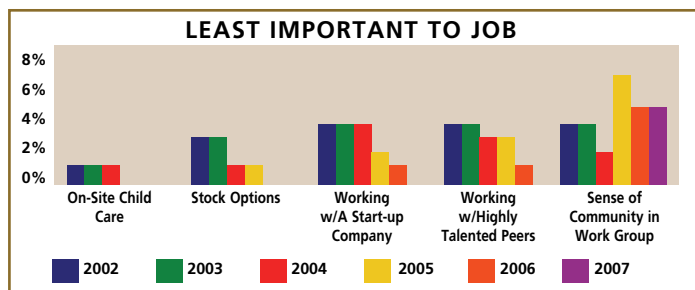
The techs that are looking for a new position have their reasons, albeit obvious ones. First and foremost, respondents are seeking less stress (66%). A close second at 64 percent is that they want more job stability. Rounding out the top five responses why technicians are looking include higher compensation (59%), a move to a different geographic area (57%), and personal/family needs (46%).

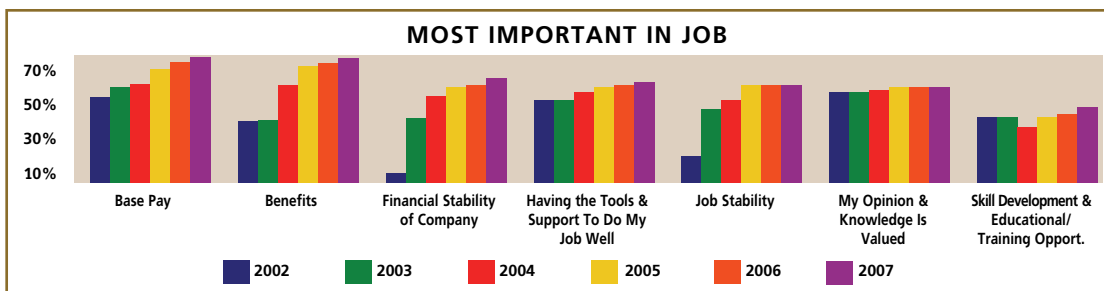


"While the sales manager and service management surveys tend to place higher compensation at the top of the list, techs often identify 'seeking less stress' and 'more job stability' as their primary reasons for wanting to move on," says Grandelis. "That, no doubt, is the nature of the position where techs find themselves constantly racing against the clock while under constant pressure to accomplish more in less time and with less help."

The Things That Matter

Technicians were asked to select from a list of 38 the seven things that matter most to them about their jobs. Topping the list were base pay and benefits both





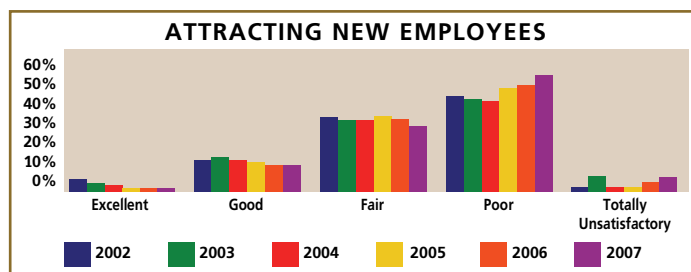
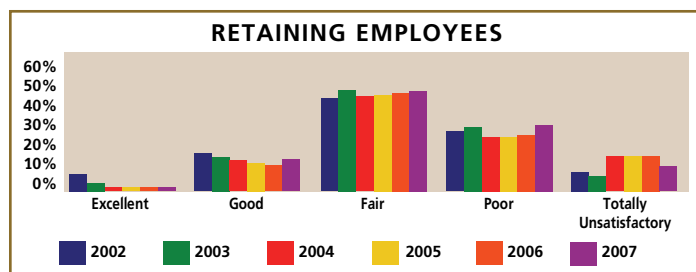
at 78 percent, followed by financial stability of company (69%), job stability (61%), vacation time/paid time off and having the support and tools to do my job well (60%), my opinion and knowledge is valued (59%), and bonus opportunities (50%).

Employer Scorecard

Employers receive low grades from techs for their efforts at attracting and retaining copier industry employees. Employers who rated 'Excellent' at attracting employees were just a blip on the chart (1%). Ten percent rated 'Good' and 29 percent rated 'Fair' in their attraction efforts. The majority of employers (53%) received 'Poor' ratings from their technicians while 6 percent labeled their efforts at attracting copier industry employees 'Totally Unsatisfactory'. The remaining 1 percent 'Didn't Know'.

"Respondents tend to be highly critical of their employers efforts at attracting and retaining copier industry employees," says Schwartz. "It's been that way since day one of the survey and I don't expect to see that ever change. This is an opportunity for them to anonymously vent about their employer and they typically don't hold back."

Things aren't much better on the retention front. Here, not a one received an excellent rating. Just 11 percent garnered a good rating and 49 percent rated fair. Thirty percent of employer's retention efforts were rated poor with the final 10 percent labeled totally unsatisfactory.



"I think some of the employers out there need to take a more proactive stance when they're trying to recruit people," opines Grandelis. "It always seems that the client is waiting for the candidate to do all the returning of the calls and pursue them instead of them taking an active part in pursuing the candidate."

The Sum of His Parts

The good news for technicians based on the results of this year's salary survey is that salaries have gone up once again, albeit modestly. The bad news is that despite being valuable employees within the dealership, they still feel under appreciated. Still, it's a good time to be a tech, especially those who are shopping around their skills.

The want ads that Copier Careers monitors weekly throughout the country reveal that there is indeed a demand. Schwartz reports that want ads for techs rose 28 percent during the fourth quarter of 2006 and the first quarter of this year compared to the same two quarters the previous year.

"It's the biggest total number we've seen in that period of time and the biggest increase of companies looking for technicians," says Schwartz. "We even saw a dealer in the Northeast offering technicians a 20 percent pay increase over what they're currently making," reports Schwartz.

"Being the front-line warriors that they are, there's definitely a shortage of people with customer service skills who also have a good technical background," says Grandelis. "At some point they have to be trained by the OEMs. It's a finite group and they're only cranking out so many a year."

— Scott Cullen has been covering the office equipment industry since 1986.