



Leading IT Service & Support

State of the Industry

The HDI Practices and Salary Report provides a comprehensive look at the support center field—and a glimpse of what might be coming.



UBM
TechWeb

State of the Industry

The HDI Practices and Salary Report provides a comprehensive look at the support center field—and a glimpse of what might be coming.

The HDI 2009 Practices and Salary Report is the most comprehensive and useful snapshot of the support center industry available. That's the unbiased opinion of Craig Baxter, HDI's Managing Director. It's hard to argue with that point when you can back it up with 86 pages of the most thorough and detailed information gleaned from a total of 1,053 surveys collected from support center managers worldwide between May and July 2009. The report was first published in 1998, takes almost nine months to assemble and produce the report and it contains an impressive array of cost and performance data with comparisons reaching back to 2007.

The United States makes up the majority of responses with 76% (804). Other major countries represented include Australia with 9% (97), Canada with 6% (67), and India with 2% (17). The results are segmented by 11 industries and support center size. Responses are roughly distributed equally among large (>10,000 customers), medium (2,000 to 10,000 customers), and small (<2,000 customers) organizations, drawing from centers supporting internal users, external users, and blended operations. About half of the respondents operate a single support center.

Excellence through the Downturn

A key finding highlights the current economy's impact on support center staffing and compensation. Support center managers foresee hiring and salary freezes in their support organizations this year. These are up 21.4% and 23.6%, respectively from 2008. The number of support centers whose employees are receiving bonuses is down 5% in 2009. Still, there are 19% of support centers whose management receives bonuses, and 45% where both management and staff receive bonuses.

The importance of Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework continues to grow with some 43% of respondents currently using or implementing ITIL processes and another 21% in the planning stages. ITIL seems to be particularly popular in Australia, as well in large support centers and with those who provide internal support.

In the Toolbox

With regard to tools and procedures, self-help tools are the primary implementation initiative this year for 13% of support centers, up from 10% in 2008. The use of web requests as an incident management channel continues to be utilized less than expected, but it did show a steady increase in use from 47.7% to 53.8% over three years.

According to Baxter, one of the most surprising findings was a decline in the number of centers that use of chat as a mechanism for both receiving (17.4% from 21.6%) and resolving (9.9 from 11.7%) incidents between 2008 and 2009. He attributes the drop to "declining expectations." "The original hope was that by using chat, an agent might be able to manage 3 to 5 concurrent sessions," he says. "In practice it seems that a realistic expectation is more like 1 or 2, which impacts the overall cost effectiveness of the option." For US respondents, desktop resolution had the highest average cost per resolution (\$32) while self-help had the lowest (\$12). Phone and email resolution came in at \$22 and \$21 respectively, and chat did have a lower cost per incident at \$15.

Boost in Customer Satisfaction

Support centers that survey their customers found that 75% report satisfaction ratings between 4 and 5 on a five-point scale; that is up 10% from 2008. On the average 65% of incidents are resolved by the person who receives the call, up from 63% in 2008.

Baxter had one other critical observation on the support center industry, and one that dealt with the importance of the help desk with regard to the perception of the overall IT organization. “Support generally represents about 5% of the total IT budget, however the help desk experience has a far greater impact on the users’ overall impression of IT services.” It looks as if that five percent is well spent.

About HDI

HDI is the world’s largest IT service and technical support membership association and the industry’s premier certification and training body. Guided by an international panel of industry experts and practitioners, HDI is the leading resource for help desk/support center emerging trends and best practices. HDI provides members with a vast repository of resources, networking opportunities, and the largest industry event, the HDI Annual Conference & Expo. Headquartered in Colorado Springs, CO, HDI offers training in multiple languages and countries. For more information, call +1 719.268.0174 or visit www.ThinkHDI.com.