

Hot Jobs 2010 Briefs

Computers and Data Systems



JOBS

Computer Support Specialists, Computer Programmers, Network Systems and Data Communications

VACANCIES

Computer Support Specialists = 194
Computer Programmers = 132
Network Systems and Data Communications = 108

REGIONAL INFORMATION

Hiring is expected to increase across this industry in 2009, according to data collected in the fourth quarter *2008 Job Vacancy Survey*. Western Massachusetts companies are expected to increase hiring by 36%, while businesses on the Cape and the Islands, as well as in the Greater Boston area, are expected to increase hiring by 29%.ⁱ

SALARY AT THE 75TH PERCENTILE OF THE JOB'S WAGE RANGE (meaning 75% of people are paid at or below the represented wage):ⁱⁱ

Computer Support Specialists = \$70,180
Computer Programmers = \$100,160
Network Systems and Data Communications = \$98,000

BENEFITS

Health and dental benefits are offered in many of these positions.ⁱⁱⁱ Paid vacation time and sick leave are also standard. And many employers encourage and pay for continuing education courses.

WORK SCHEDULE

Regular, Monday through Friday, 40-hour workweek Individuals in Computer Support Specialist positions may be required to take on-call shifts as well as shifts on weekends. Some companies allow telecommuting.

IS THIS THE JOB FOR ME?

Employees in this field typically work in office buildings and individuals' homes. Positions at companies requiring the repair of computers at multiple locations may involve a significant amount of travel. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics *2008 Current Population Survey*, women made up 22.4% of computer programmers, 27.7% of computer support specialists, and 23.7% of network systems and data communications analysts.^{iv}

Computer Support Specialists provide support and advice when people encounter computer hardware and software problems. This position involves answering calls and resolving technology-based problems. Other titles for this position include Technical Support Specialist and Help Desk Technician. This job is well suited to someone who likes working with the public, is a patient problem-solver, can explain things clearly, and finds technology interesting.

Computer Programmers write, test, and maintain detailed instructions called programs that computers follow to perform their functions. Programmers also conceive, design, and test logical structures for solving problems by computer. This job is well suited for someone who is very logical, mathematical and detail oriented.

Network Systems and Data Communications: This is a complicated occupation to classify because there are many jobs under this heading with wide ranging requirements. Jobs in this field can require anywhere from a two-year degree to a doctorate, depending on the industry, specialization and scope of responsibility. Most two-year programs are tied to specific industries, such as the Database Administrator for a medical office or an academic center. Other titles for these positions include Database Administrators, Database Managers and Computer Specialists. These jobs are well suited for someone who is very logical, mathematical and detail oriented.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING REQUIRED

Despite a growing number of employers' preference for those with a bachelor's degree, two years of training at a community college, in addition to some experience and skills, can substitute for a degree. To be admitted to training programs, a high school diploma or a GED is required.

Having practical experience (such as through an internship) in addition to a degree will increase a job seeker's chance of being hired.

Because the computer technology field is constantly changing, many employers require their employees stay up-to-date on the latest computer developments and trends. To facilitate employees' continuing education, many employers either offer courses on the job or tuition reimbursement for classes taken offsite.

CAREER PATHWAYS

Continuing education is required by many employers and is essential in gaining advancement within a company. Individuals can be promoted to management positions, usually after obtaining a bachelor's degree or above.

RESOURCES

- U.S, Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos268.htm>.
- Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development, Career Information System: <http://www.masscis.intocareers.org>.
- American Association of Community Colleges, Directory of Massachusetts Member Institutions: <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Pages/CCFinderStateResults.aspx?state=MA>.
- Education Portal: http://education-portal.com/articles/Associate_of_Computer_Systems_Specialist%3A_Degree_Overview.html.
- Institute for the Certification of Computing Professionals: <http://www.iccp.org>.

ⁱ Data taken from *The Massachusetts Business Hiring Expectations for the 1st Quarter 2009: As Collected in October and November 2008 as part of the semi-annual 2008 4th Quarter Job Vacancy Survey*. The industry "Technical and Scientific" is labeled as "Professional and Technical Services" in this report.

ⁱⁱ Median Annual Salary in Massachusetts in 2008, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics

ⁱⁱⁱ Information in each of these sections was taken from the *2008-2009 Occupational Outlook Handbook* as viewed at <http://www.bls.gov>.

^{iv} U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2008). *Current Population Survey, Household Data Annual Averages for Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity in 2008*.