

DELTA COLLEGE  
COUNSELING/ADVISING & CAREER SERVICES  
**COMPUTER NETWORK SPECIALIST**

Salary Range: \$39,000 – \$100,500

Personal Interests: Working with various computers and network systems; detailed work

Work Environment: Primarily indoors in one location

**Description**

Computer network specialists design and set up computer labs or workstations that connect to the main computer system or with each other. Network specialists maintain support of software products. They are responsible for the efficient use of networks by organizations.

Computer network specialists schedule the installation of hardware, supervise the uncrating and placement of equipment, maintain network hardware and software, analyze problems, monitor the network to ensure availability to system users, and test the operating system. They gather data to identify customers' needs and then use that information to identify, interpret, and evaluate system and network requirements. Computer network specialists provide up-to-date information to network users on new software developments and programming changes or enhancements. Network specialists aid workers to become familiar with software applications and help them solve problems, as they occur, to get the most out of the computer network. Network specialists arrange educational programs to train customer personnel before, during, and after installation. They may evaluate the efficiency of the system and work to improve production and workflow.

Computer network specialists work with computers and peripheral equipment, computer printouts, graphs, charts, drawings, and various other types of data. They also work with computer network servers and related equipment and cables and wiring.

Computer network specialists may specialize in the following areas:

administration, security, data recovery, or control operation.

**Working Conditions**

Although network specialists work independently, they must maintain regular contact with personnel in other departments since their duties involve a wide range of activities. They meet with people at all levels of the organizations, including managers, technical personnel and clerical staff in addition to outside vendors. In large companies or on major projects, they may work as part of the team.

Network specialists usually work in offices that are comfortable, well-lighted and air conditioned. They may spend some time traveling between home offices, branch offices, and vendor offices. Although the 5-day, 40 hour week is standard, overtime is often required to complete projects and resolve problems. Their work can be stressful, particularly during the initial development phase, as they attempt to schedule work and meet deadlines.

**Training, Other Qualifications**

Employers prefer to hire computer network specialists who have a bachelor's degree in computer science, computer information systems, or data processing. They generally seek applicants who also have a background in business management or a closely related field.

No special licensing or certification is required for computer network specialists. However, voluntary certification is available through the Institute for Certification of Computing Professionals (ICCP). ICCP

offers the designation Certified Computing Professional (CCP) to those who have at least 4 years of work experience as a computer professional, or at least 2 years experience and a college degree. Candidates must pass a core examination testing general knowledge plus exams in 2 specialty areas, or in one specialty area and 2 computer programming languages. Professional certification may provide a job seeker with a competitive advantage.

Although there is a way to advance in the computer industry without a college degree, it is important to give careful consideration to long-term career goals. College graduates tend to do the more theoretical part of computer networking including the development of hardware and software. College graduates are also the ones who get promoted to middle and upper management jobs.

Major companies such as IBM, Microsoft, and Novell offer postsecondary training in network administration and engineering. You may also complete required training courses either at a local licensed education center or on your own. If you are already employed, it is wise to become certified by a program designed to complement the system your company is using. Not all companies require certification due, in large part, to the rapidly changing world of networking.

**Job Outlook**

The number of local area network (LAN) specialists employed in Michigan is unknown. Approximately 9,650 computer system and network analysts and administrators were employed in Michigan in early 2005.

Employment of network specialists is expected to increase much faster than average as the industry matures and users develop a more sophisticated knowledge of computers. Users should become more

aware of the machine's potential and better able to suggest operations that will increase their productivity and that of the organization. The need to design computer networks that will facilitate the sharing of information will be a major factor in the rising demand for LAN administrators and specialists.

**Earnings**

Economic Research Institute (survey of salaries in 2007):

	National		Michigan	
	Per year	Per hour	Per year	Per hour
Starting Salary	\$39,000	\$18.75	\$42,500	\$20.50
Average salary	\$59,000	\$28.25	\$65,000	\$31.25
Salary with experience	\$91,000	\$43.75	\$100,500	\$48.25

**Related Occupations**

Applications Programmer, Computer Systems Analyst, Local Area Network Administrator, Software Engineer, Systems Programmer, and Web Page Designer.

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Sources: Michigan Occupational Information System, eDISCOVER

Career Center  
D 132  
Bay City/Saginaw: (989) 686-9072  
Midland/Auburn: (989) 495-4000, Ext. 9072  
Frankenmuth, Birch Run, Reese & Vassar: (989) 758-3400, Ext. 9072  
<http://www.delta.edu/careercenter>

These materials were developed under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth. (Project 7021-4.)

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