Objectives

• Learn about some job roles and responsibilities of those who sell, fix, or support personal computers
• Learn what customers want and expect beyond your technical abilities
• Learn how to interact with customers when selling, servicing, and supporting personal computers
Job Roles and Responsibilities

• PC support technician
  – Works on-site and closely interacts with users
  – Responsible for ongoing PC maintenance
• PC service technician
  – Pays service calls to customers
• Technical retail associate
  – Responsible for selling computers
Job Roles and Responsibilities (cont’d.)

• Bench technician
  – Works in a lab environment
• Help-desk technician
  – Provides telephone or online support
Certifications and Professional Organizations

• Benefits of certification and advanced degrees
  – Proof of competence and achievement
  – Enhanced job opportunities
  – A higher level of customer confidence
  – Qualification for other training or degrees
Certifications and Professional Organizations (cont’d.)

• Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA)
  – Most significant certifying organization for PC technicians
  – Sponsors A+ Certification Program and manages exams
  – CompTIA Web site: http://www.comptia.org
Figure 2-3  CompTIA A+ Certification Web page
Courtesy: Course Technology/Cengage Learning
Certifications and Professional Organizations (cont’d.)

• A+ Certification
  – Pass the A+ 220-701 exam
    • Covers hardware, operating systems, security, soft skills
    • Validates entry-level skills
  – Pass the A+ 220-702 exam

• A+ Certification industry recognition

• Other vendor specific certification programs
  – Microsoft, Novell, Cisco product certifications

• Ongoing education
  – Requires staying abreast of new technology
Record-Keeping and Information Tools

• Working for a service organization
  – Tools for the job provided
    • Printed forms, online record keeping, procedures, manuals
  – Software provided
    • Programs supporting remote control of customers’ PCs
    • Control-F1 by Blueloop: http://www.blueloop.net/
    • Windows XP/Vista Remote Assistance
Record-Keeping and Information Tools (cont’d.)

• Other resources, records, information tools
  – Specific software or hardware supported
  – Copy of user documentation
  – More technical software or hardware documentation
  – Online help targeted to field/help-desk technicians
  – Expert systems to analyze and solve problems
  – Call tracking systems (electronic or paper-based)
    • Ticket entered into the call-tracking system
    • Ticket stays open until issue resolved
What Customers Want: Beyond Technical Know-How

- Two types of customers
  - Internal: an associate within the company
  - External: an individual outside the company
- Traits of an exemplary PC technician
  - Positive and helpful attitude
  - Listening without interrupting your customer
  - Proper and polite language
  - Sensitivity to cultural differences
  - Taking ownership of the problem
  - Dependability
What Customers Want: Beyond Technical Know-How (cont’d.)

• Traits of an exemplary PC technician (cont’d.)
  – Credibility
  – Integrity and honesty
  – Know the law with respect to your work
  – Looking and behaving professionally
Planning for Good Service

• Customers want good service
• Servicing customers on the phone, online, on site, or in a shop
  – Requires good plan from beginning to end
Initial Contact with a Customer

• Scenarios
  – Retail setting
  – Travel to the customer’s site
  – Customer calls on the phone
  – Customer reaches technician via chat or e-mail

• Always follow employer specific guidelines
Initial Contact with a Customer (cont’d.)

• General guidelines to begin a site visit professionally
  – Be prepared: know call circumstances
  – Arrive with complete set of appropriate equipment
  – Greet customer in a friendly manner
    • Use Mr. or Ms. and last names rather than first names when addressing the customer
  – At a residence:
    • Never stay at a site when only a minor is present
Initial Contact with a Customer (cont’d.)

• General guidelines to begin a phone call professionally
  – Identify yourself and your organization
  – Ask for and write down the name and phone number of the caller
  – Follow company policies to obtain other specific information
  – Be familiar with company customer service policies
  – Open up the conversation for the caller to describe the problem
Interview the Customer

• Troubleshooting
  – Begin by interviewing the user
    • Ask questions, take notes, and keep asking questions until problem thoroughly understood
  – Have customer reproduce problem
    • Carefully note each step taken and the results

• Questions to determine problem and its root cause
  – Can you please describe the problem?
  – When did the problem start?
  – What was the situation when the problem occurred?
Interview the Customer (cont’d.)

• Questions to determine problem and its root cause (cont’d.)
  – What programs or software were you using?
  – Did you move your computer system recently?
  – Recent thunderstorm or electrical problem?
  – Any recent hardware, software, or configuration changes?
  – Has someone else used your computer recently?
  – Is there some valuable data on your system that is not backed up?
  – Can you show me how to reproduce the problem?
Set and Meet Customer Expectations

• Creates expectation of certainty with customers
  – Do not leave them hanging
  – They should know what will happen next

• Setting expectations
  – Establish timeline with your customer for project completion
  – Provide customer opportunity to make decisions
Working with a Customer on Site

- Avoiding distractions
  - No personal cell phone calls
  - Keep work calls to a minimum
  - Be unobtrusive
  - Consider yourself a guest
  - Protect customer’s confidential materials

- Follow general guidelines when working at user’s desk

- Technician may consider themselves a support to the user
Working with a Customer on the Phone

• Phone support
  – Requires more interaction with customers than any other PC support type

• Phone support skills
  – Visualize what customer sees at the PC
  – Excellent communication skills, good phone manners, patience
  – Drawing diagrams, taking notes when speaking with the user

• Practice good phone manners
Dealing with Difficult Customers

• Tips for when customer is not knowledgeable
  – Be specific with instructions
  – Do not ask customer to do something that might destroy settings or files without backup
  – Frequently ask the customer what is displayed
  – Follow along at your own PC
Dealing with Difficult Customers (cont’d.)

• Tips for when customer is not knowledgeable (cont’d.)
  – Give customer opportunity to ask questions
  – Compliment customer
    • To help build customer confidence
  – If customer cannot help
    • Tactfully request for user with more experience
Dealing with Difficult Customers (cont’d.)

• Tips for when customer is overly confident
  – Compliment the customer’s knowledge, experience, insight when possible
  – Slow the conversation down
  – Do not back off from using problem-solving skills
  – Be careful not to accuse customer of making a mistake
  – Stick to policy of not using jargon
    • Unless certain user understands
Dealing with Difficult Customers (cont’d.)

• Suggestions for when the customer complains
  – Be an active listener
    • Let customers know they are not being ignored
  – Give customer time to vent
    • Apologize when possible
  – Do not be defensive
  – Know how to handle verbal abuse
  – Let customer complain about another company’s product
Dealing with Difficult Customers (cont’d.)

- Suggestions for when the customer complains (cont’d.)
  - If the complaint against you or your product
    - Identify and report underlying problem
  - Sometimes simply making progress, reducing problem to a manageable state reduces anxiety
  - Point out ways communication could be improved
The Customer Decides When the Work Is Done

• Remote support
  – Customer ends call or chat session

• On-site work
  – Technician performs several steps
    • Reboot system if necessary
    • Verify equipment working
    • Restore backed up data
    • Review service call with customer
    • Explain preventive maintenance
Sometimes You Must Escalate a Problem

- Escalate problem only after all options have been exhausted
- Guidelines for escalation
  - Include use of proper organizational channels
The Job Isn’t Finished Until the Paperwork Is Done

• Customer expects paper report of work completed
• Use the electronic tracking system dynamically during support phone call
• Compile a paper trail if no electronic tracking system
Working with Coworkers

• Learn not to be offended
• Practice good organizational skills
• Know your limitations
  – Be willing to admit when you cannot do something
• Learn how to handle conflict at work
Summary

• Five key job roles of a PC support technician
  – PC support technician, PC service technician, retail sales associate, bench technician, and help-desk technician

• CompTIA A+ Certification
  – Most significant and most recognized certification for PC repair technicians
Summary (cont’d.)

• Staying abreast of new technology
  – Attend trade shows, read trade magazines, research the Internet, subscribe to email newsletters, attend seminars and workshops

• Customers want more than just technical know-how
  – Positive and helpful attitude, respect, good communication, ownership of their problem, dependability, credibility, and professionalism