This chapter will explore the different aspects of the support person’s work ethic that are conducive to a successful career in technical support. It will also give advice on the ideal principles and behaviors that make the support person’s interactions with colleagues, management, and customers productive and as free of friction as possible. The advice will be limited to professional topics within the technical support realm. Specifically, this first chapter includes material on creating a dynamic career in technical support, the concept of troubleshooting, initiative, specializing and what it takes to keep your job and much more.

Look around you for the ideal support person: the guy or gal who produces the best work and, despite all the inherent work pressures in technical support, still manages to walk around with a smile and a positive outlook. When we study ideal support people, we find the follow common characteristics:

- A true and deep commitment to the customer. This is not just lip service.
  Admireable support people often take a true interest in the situation and problems of the customer. This empathy goes beyond just providing the necessary help and arises from having a genuine concern for the customer on the other end of the line.

- A deep belief in the company. Great support people believe in what they do and who they work for. When technical support people believe in their company and in their roles, it shows in their interaction with the customer.

- A real sense of collaboration. Support people who excel in their work rarely do it alone. Success in technical support requires working with others, from the support colleagues to the development and sales team.

- A talent for solving problems. Technical support is about solving customer problems in the most efficient and fastest way possible. A natural or acquired skill for problem solving is absolutely required for success in technical support. Some people appear to have it naturally, others have to learn it, but all must possess this essential skill.

---

**Tip** After all is said and done and you’ve proven yourself right or wrong, the only thing you have to show is how well you adhered to your principles.
The Value of Technical Support Work

Do you ever wonder what it would be like if your job did not exist? What if the buyers and users of your product or technology were left alone after their purchase to fend for themselves? How far do you think they would get? No one knows who the first technical support person was or where the idea for technical support originated. Our field is obscure enough as it is so no one has documented the history of the technical support field and its pioneers in a decisive manner. The truth is that our field is not the most glamorous. After all, did you ever wish you would grow up to be a technical support person? I know that was not my dream as a kid for I really wanted to be truck driver... right after I wanted to be an astronaut, but before I wanted to be an attorney. Anyway, you get the idea.

Let’s face it. Most of us ended up in technical support by accident or by necessity. However, technical support is a very rewarding and important aspect of many industries. Technical support people are the ones who take care of customers and users after they purchase the product. As support people, we are often responsible for the success and adoption of products and technologies. If not for support people, the customer would be lost without a way to implement and solve the problems that arise during use.

Therefore, the first thing I want to address is how we look at our work and the value that we provide to our customers for the benefit of our company. Never think that support people are somehow less important than sales, development, or services personnel.

When you look at your job in technical support, think of it as the opportunity to act as a liaison between the customer and your company. The technical support position is very demanding and we often don’t fully appreciate the skills that we must master:

- Customer service
- Technical knowledge
- Troubleshooting skills
- Time and task management
- Quality Assurance (QA)
- Technical services
- Pre- and post-sales support
- Training development and delivery

Can you imagine the type of work you are capable of doing by having all those skills? If you really think about it, technical support people have it great. We are exposed to a lot of challenges, customers, and even cultures, and all of those things keep the work from being boring. The variety in this line of work is what makes support so interesting and rarely dull. Because of the nature of our work, technical support people are very flexible and adaptable, even under pressure from multiple issues and customers. We are capable of handling complex technical issues while dealing with customer service at the same time.

What can you do with your technical support skills if you decide to leave your technical support position? You can do just about anything. You can develop, test, sell, install, plan, and do many other things that require a good perspective on dealing with customers, technology, technical people and technology users in general. While you may remain in technical support for a long-term career, know that you have the skills necessary to make it in many other positions. If, like many of us, you want to stick to support know that there will be technical support work for decades to come, with position availability all over the world. So the next time you think about your prospects and future in technical support,