

**U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Classification Appeal Decision
Under section 5112 of title 5, United States Code**

Appellant: [name]

Agency classification: Information Technology Specialist
(CUSTSPT)
GS-2210-13

Organization: Service Desk Branch
Customer Support and Monitoring Division
Office of Information Management Services
[agency]
[city and State]

OPM decision: Information Technology Specialist
GS-2210-13

OPM decision number: C-2210-13-02

//s// Robert D. Hendler
Robert D. Hendler
Classification and Pay Claims
Program Manager
Merit System Audit and Compliance

November 17, 2011
Date

As provided in section 511.612 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, this decision constitutes a certificate that is mandatory and binding on all administrative, certifying, payroll, disbursing, and accounting officials of the government. The agency is responsible for reviewing its classification decisions for identical, similar, or related positions to ensure consistency with this decision.

There is no right of further appeal. This decision is subject to discretionary review only under conditions and time limits specified in the *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards (Introduction)*, appendix 4, section G (address provided in appendix 4, section H).

Decision sent to:

[appellant]

[agency HR officer]

Introduction

On March 31, 2011, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) accepted a position classification appeal from [appellant], who occupies the position of Information Technology Specialist (CUSTSPT), GS-2210-13, in the Service Desk Branch of the Customer Support and Monitoring Division, Office of Information Management Services, at the [agency] in [city and State]. She requested her position be classified as Information Technology Specialist, GS-2210-14. We accepted and decided this appeal under the provisions of section 5112 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.)

Position information

The appellant serves as the Project Lead for the Enterprise Asset Management System (EAMS) problem and change tracking system, which is the software system used by the Service Desk to take and track customer calls and to keep track of IT hardware assets throughout the agency. She is in effect the liaison between the EAMS users (primarily the Service Desk and other support groups) and the EAMS system development leads (SDLs) who develop changes to the system, and is responsible for the integration and subsequent administration of new applications to interface with EAMS. In this capacity, she works with users to identify potential system enhancements and upgrades, with the SDLs to define requirements and configurations for the desired system changes, and with system test groups to ensure system testing and debugging is satisfactorily completed before production roll-out to ensure the system operates as planned. She troubleshoots and identifies software and hardware problems; analyzes problems for possible trends; serves as liaison to the customer community in following up on complaints and implementing changes; and coordinates with other IT specialties such as operations management, network, and database support on more complex issues. She is responsible for reviewing customer quality checks and for statistical reporting related to Service Desk operations.

The appellant is also responsible for monitoring the performance of the Service Desk's request fulfillment group by developing and implementing processes and procedures to provide the Service Desk with a structured methodology for ensuring user calls are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner. She holds process improvement meetings with Service Desk support personnel and oversees the implementation of Service Desk improvements to ensure adequate problem diagnosis, resolution, and documentation. She provides metric reporting to evaluate Service Desk effectiveness; reviews customer quality checks with unsatisfactory ratings; follows up on customer concerns regarding the level of support received at the Service Desk; oversees customer notifications on system outages or service degradations; and reviews all root cause analyses before major incident records are changed to a "resolved" status.

The above position information narrative is intended only as a brief summary rather than a comprehensive description of the appellant's duties and responsibilities. However, this evaluation is based on the entirety of the appellant's position as it is presented in the position description (PD) of record #P11740, appeal file, and all supplementary information provided by the appellant in writing and in the telephone audit, as subsequently confirmed by telephone interviews with her former and current first-line supervisors.

The appellant's PD identifies the appellant's time as being equally divided between the EAMS and service management duties described above, whereas the appellant indicated she spends from 85-90 percent of her time on EAMS and 10-15 percent on service management. Some of this discrepancy is due to a certain degree of overlap between these two sets of duties. However, the appellant's supervisor indicated these percentages may vary significantly depending on the projects ongoing at any given time. Therefore, it is not inappropriate that these two major functions be identified as constituting equal portions of time in the PD as representative of the proportional division of duties over a longer span of time.

The appellant disputes the accuracy of her PD and provided a list of the perceived inaccuracies with her appeal. After close review of this list, we found the duties the appellant believes were not included in her PD are either directly addressed in the PD, represent a greater degree of detail relative to the duties described, or are comparatively minor duties that comprise a small percentage of the appellant's time.

Guidance regarding PD adequacy is provided in the *Introduction* and *The Classifier's Handbook*. Basically, a PD should define clearly the major duties assigned and the nature and extent of responsibility for carrying out those duties. It should include enough information so that proper classification can be made when supplemented by other information about the organization's structure, mission, and procedures. Since position classification assigns a grade to the significant and substantive features of a position, it is generally necessary to describe only the major duties and other important aspects of the position that may affect the final classification, with major duties being those that occupy a significant portion of the employee's time. It is not necessary to describe in detail the specific steps needed to carry out a duty or minor duties that do not affect the classification of the position.

The appellant's major duties and responsibilities associated with EAMS and service management are fully represented in her PD of record, although the specific processes and peripheral activities involved in carrying out these duties are not described in detail. Therefore, the appellant's PD is considered accurate and adequate for classification purposes and we incorporate by reference into this decision.

Series and title determination

The appellant does not contest the series, title, or parenthetical title of her position, and it is properly classified as Information Technology Specialist (Customer Support) or (CUSTSPT), GS-2210.

Grade determination

Positions in the GS-2210 series are evaluated by use of the directly-applicable Job Family Standard (JFS) for Administrative Work in the Information Technology Group, 2200. This standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format, under which factor levels and accompanying point values are to be assigned for each of the following nine factors, with the total then being converted to a grade level by use of the grade conversion table provided in the standard. The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor

levels. For a position to warrant a given point value, it must be fully equivalent to the overall intent of the selected factor level description. If the position fails in any significant aspect to meet a particular factor level description, the point value for the next lower factor level must be assigned, unless the deficiency is balanced by an equally important aspect that meets a higher level.

Neither the appellant nor the agency disagrees with our below evaluation of Factors 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9. We therefore discuss those factors very briefly, while discussing Factors 2 and 5 more thoroughly.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

This factor measures the nature and extent of information an employee must understand in order to do the work, and the skills needed to apply that knowledge.

The agency assigned Level 1-8 under this factor. The knowledge required by the appellant's position closely matches this level under the "customer support" specialty in its requirement for mastery of IT problem management methods and practices and new and innovative customer support methods and technologies sufficient to:

- plan, implement, and manage problem management systems designed to effectively recognize, report, track, and resolve problems; and
- evaluate the feasibility of adapting new methods to enhance customer satisfaction.

This accurately characterizes the appellant's responsibility for planning, implementing, and managing the EAMS problem and change tracking system and for evaluating methods to enhance customer satisfaction through her ongoing monitoring of Service Desk processes and performance.

Level 1-9 does not provide separate criteria for the "customer support" specialty. However, this level requires mastery-level IT knowledge sufficient to develop new theories, concepts, principles, standards, and methods in the specialty area, advise other IT experts throughout the agency or in other agencies on these developments, and serve as senior expert and consultant to top agency in advising on integrating IT programs with other programs of equivalent scope and complexity. The appellant's position does not meet this level in that she is responsible for managing an existing system and overseeing the integration of primarily off-the-shelf applications into this system rather than for the type of original IT development work represented at this level.

Level 1-8 is credited (1550 points).

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

This factor covers the nature and extent of direct or indirect controls exercised by the supervisor, the employee's responsibility, and the review of completed work.

The agency assigned Level 2-4 under this factor. The appellant believes Level 2-5 should be credited.

At Level 2-4, the supervisor outlines overall objectives and available resources. The employee and supervisor, in consultation, discuss timeframes, scope of the assignment, and possible approaches. The employee determines the most appropriate principles, practices, and methods to apply, including the approach to be taken, degree of intensity, and depth of research in management advisories; frequently interprets regulations on his/her own initiative, applies new methods to resolve complex, controversial, or unprecedented issues and problems, and resolves most of the conflicts that arise; and keeps the supervisor informed of progress and potentially controversial matters. The supervisor reviews completed work for soundness of overall approach, effectiveness in meeting requirements or producing expected results, feasibility of recommendations, and adherence to requirements.

The appellant's level of responsibility is consistent with Level 2-4, which describes the level of the experienced IT specialist who works largely independently within the established parameters of the work.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 2-5. At this level, the supervisor provides administrative and policy direction in terms of broadly defined missions or functions of the agency. The employee is responsible for a significant agency or equivalent level IT program or function; defines objectives; interprets policies promulgated by authorities senior to the immediate supervisor and determines their effect on program needs; independently plans, designs, and carries out the work to be done; and is a technical authority. The supervisor reviews work for potential impact on broad agency policy objectives and program goals; normally accepts work as being technically authoritative; and normally accepts work without significant change.

Implicit in Level 2-5 is a degree of program management authority that is not delegated to the appellant's position. Specifically, the appellant is not responsible for a significant agency IT *program or function* such that her work by its breadth would be limited to the type of review expressed at Level 2-5. As the EAMS project manager, the appellant is responsible for the operation of the EAMS system, but system development and testing for EAMS is assigned to other components of in the organization. Similarly, she monitors the operations and performance of the Service Desk but is not the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative and thus does not have full responsibility for its administration. Overall responsibility for EAMS and the Service Desk is vested at the Branch Chief level, which in turn resides within the broader IT organization responsible for all aspects of customer support within the agency.

Although the appellant works with a considerable degree of technical independence typical of Level 2-4, her work does not lend itself to the "administrative and policy direction" expected at Level 2-5 to assess its potential "impact on broad agency policy objectives and program goals." The appellant's work represents a relatively narrow technical IT assignment in that it is limited to one established software system. Thus, her actions and recommendations relate exclusively to technical considerations and are reviewed for the soundness or feasibility of the *technical* decisions or proposals being made. The appellant is not responsible for oversight or

implementation of a broad program or function such that the review of her work would consist of an assessment of the *policy or programmatic* decisions being made. Similarly, she does not interpret policies to determine broad IT *program* needs, but rather works within the established parameters of the customer service function to determine and recommend individual *system needs* related to EAMS or the Service Desk. Further, the nature of her work is not such that it would have an impact on "broad agency policy objectives and program goals." It facilitates the resolution of IT problems reported by agency staff but does not impact the agency's line programs through, for example, the development of systems directly involved in the storage, manipulation, or transmission of mission-related data. Although the appellant may be considered a technical expert for the EAMS system, she is not a technical *authority* within the meaning of that term, i.e., she is not delegated responsibility to make unreviewed technical decisions for the system.

In short, the level of responsibility represented by Level 2-5 is predicated on the delegated authority for a broad program or function of such breadth that only policy and administrative direction could be reasonably applied. It represents not merely a high degree of technical independence but also a corresponding management role that is well beyond the scope of authority inherent in the appellant's position. It derives not only from an employee's expertise in a given field and the corresponding technical latitude afforded, but also from the employee's role in the organization and the authority delegated to define the basic content and operation of the program or function beyond just the technical aspects of individual project assignments.

Level 2-4 is credited (450 points).

Factor 3, Guidelines

This factor covers the nature of the guidelines used and the judgment needed to apply them.

The agency assigned Level 3-4 under this factor. This level describes guidelines that are very general or inapplicable and must be adapted to resolve specific issues or problems. This accurately characterizes the need for the appellant to develop new methods to improve Service Desk responsiveness and to identify those areas where EAMS could be enhanced or upgraded.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 3-5 which introduces, in addition to the technical guidelines addressed at Level 3-4, the requirement for the development of policy statements and guidelines. The level at which the appellant works does not allow her the opportunity or latitude to develop agency IT policy.

Level 3-4 is credited (450 points).

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor covers the nature, number, variety, and intricacy of the tasks or processes in the work performed, the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done, and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work.

The agency assigned Level 4-5 under this level. The appellant's position is a close match to an illustration provided in the standard of Level 4-5 complexity, which describes an assignment where work consists of serving as a client manager with responsibility for working directly with customer organizations to customize services to meet specific customer requirements and performing such duties as exploring ways to upgrade or enhance services, implementing changes in response to changes in customer requirements, and resolving issues related to the delivery of services.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 4-6 where work involves planning and leading efforts to address issues in areas where precedents do not exist and establishing new concepts and approaches, where the work is characterized by exceptional breadth and intensity of effort. In contrast, the appellant works within the parameters of an established system where upgrades consist of primarily off-the-shelf software.

Level 4-5 is credited (325 points).

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

This factor covers the relationship between the nature of the work, and the effect of the work products or services both within and outside the organization.

The agency assigned Level 5-4 under this factor. The appellant believes Level 5-5 should be credited.

At Level 5-4, work involves establishing criteria; formulating projects; assessing program effectiveness; and/or investigating/analyzing a variety of unusual conditions, problems, or issues. The work affects a wide range of agency activities or the activities of other organizations.

Correspondingly, the appellant's position fully meets this level in that she is responsible for developing and implementing processes and procedures to improve Service Desk operations; working with shareholders and business areas to identify recommended enhancements and future upgrades; providing metric reporting for the Service Desk to evaluate its effectiveness; and troubleshooting software problems in the implementation of system enhancements. Further, her work affects a wide range of agency activities through the quality of Service Desk response to user calls. The appellant's position is a close match to an illustration provided in the standard of Level 5-4 complexity, which describes an assignment where work involves "resolving the complete range of problems within the scope of the help desk and referring problems requiring highly specialized expertise to the appropriate IT specialty office," and "conducting trend analyses to identify areas where additional customer training and assistance is needed and initiating appropriate action, such as defining new training requirements," where the work enables users to effectively apply IT resources to accomplish mission requirements.

The appellant's position does not meet Level 5-5. At this level, work involves isolating and defining unprecedented conditions; resolving critical problems; and/or developing, testing, and implementing new technologies. The work affects the work of other technical experts or the development of major aspects of agencywide IT programs.

There is no indication that the appellant's work involves "isolating and defining unprecedented conditions" or "resolving critical problems." The appellant works within the parameters of an established software system. Any unprecedented or critical problems that occur are referred to staff in the appropriate IT specialty areas. The appellant is not engaged in systems development work, and the software applications introduced into the EAMS system consist primarily of off-the-shelf software rather than "new technologies." The appellant is responsible only for ensuring that newly deployed systems are working properly but is not responsible for actual testing of the product on the development server where any "critical problems" in the implementation of the software would be encountered. An illustration provided in the standard of Level 5-5 complexity describes an assignment where work involves "researching and evaluating new customer service management systems; recommending purchase of systems where it is determined that they would enhance the quality and effectiveness of the customer support program; overseeing the implementation of new systems and services; and developing training guides for customer support employees," where the work enhances the quality and responsiveness of customer support services contributing to the agency's ability to effectively apply information systems in meeting business and mission requirements. There is no indication the appellant is responsible for "researching and evaluating" and "recommending purchase" of new software systems for incorporation into EAMS. The appellant may provide input to this process in terms of what application software may best accomplish particular requirements and work with existing applications in EAMS, but actual evaluation and selection of the various software options is done by a separate component within the agency.

Level 5-4 is credited (225 points).

Factor 6, Personal Contacts
and
Factor 7, Purpose of Contacts

These factors include face-to-face and telephone contacts with persons not in the supervisory chain and the purposes of those contacts. The relationship between Factors 6 and 7 presumes that the same contacts will be evaluated under both factors.

The agency assigned Level 3C under these factors, where contacts are both internal and external to the agency and involve influencing others to accept and implement recommendations. Level 4 is not met as the appellant does not have contacts with high-ranking officials at national or international levels, and Level D is not met where the employee must justify, defend, negotiate, or settle such significant or controversial issues as recommendations changing the nature and scope of programs or dealing with substantial expenses.

Level 3C is credited (180 points).

Factor 8, Physical Demands

This factor covers the requirements and physical demands placed on the employee by the work situation.

The position matches Level 8-1, which covers sedentary work.

Level 8-1 is credited (5 points).

Factor 9, Work Environment

This factor considers the risks and discomforts in the employee's physical surroundings or the nature of the work assigned and the safety regulations required.

The position matches Level 9-1, which describes a typical office environment.

Level 9-1 is credited (5 points).

Summary

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Points</i>
1. Knowledge required by the position	1-8	1550
2. Supervisory controls	2-4	450
3. Guidelines	3-4	450
4. Complexity	4-5	325
5. Scope and effect	5-4	225
6/7. Personal Contacts/Purpose of Contacts	3C	180
8. Physical demands	8-1	5
9. Work environment	9-1	<u>5</u>
<i>Total</i>		3190

The total of 3190 points falls within the GS-13 point range (3155-3600) on the grade conversion table provided in the standard.

Decision

The appellant's position is properly classified as Information Technology Specialist (CUSTSPT), GS-2210-13.