

What Systems Analysts, Project Leaders, and Project Managers Do

Bob Langieri



Last month in this column, I began to define common IT job titles and job descriptions. I continue that process this month. As I previously mentioned, there are no standard job descriptions in the IT field, but many job duties are consistent from company to company.

Systems Analyst/Business Systems Analyst
A systems analyst designs, develops, and implements automated business systems. This process often involves meeting with users to determine how to solve moderately difficult business problems or segments of more complex problems. (Sometimes though, organizations employ a non-technical person with in-depth knowledge of the company's business to be the liaison between the users and the programmers.) The systems analyst then formulates procedures to implement these solutions, either modifying or enhancing existing systems or designing new systems. Someone in this position has typically been a programmer/analyst and has 10 or more years of experience in application development. This position usually reports to a project manager or applications programming manager. Salaries may run from \$65,000 to \$80,000, and the position requires the ability to perform the following duties:

- Understand the RPG language and the AS/400 system architecture
- Understand and analyze business functions logically
- Develop system flow charts
- Develop system specifications for programming staff
- Handle system testing and sign-off before putting program changes into production

Project Leader

A project leader manages projects from start to finish and supervises other staff programmers. This position is usually the next step up for a senior programmer/analyst. Someone with this title typically has at least eight years of experience

in programming business applications and has in-depth experience in the application area that he would be responsible for. Project leaders report to the project manager, the applications development manager, or the IT director. Salaries may run from \$74,000 to \$86,000. This position requires the ability to perform the following duties:

- Understand business principles and objectives
- Understand programming, analysis, and system design and provide technical leadership to the group
- Create and maintain project plans for all projects assigned to the group
- Assign projects, problem resolution, and recurring tasks to available resources
- Ensure that procedural documentation is created and maintained so that processes are repeatable
- Ensure the quality of work produced by the group through thorough testing
- Monitor and report project status, ensuring that target dates are met
- Make presentations to users and management

Note: In smaller IT departments, the senior programmer/analyst may be responsible for the duties of the systems analyst and project leader.

Project Manager

Project managers are typically used in large IT environments. This is often the next step up for a project leader or senior IT person. Often, IT managers from smaller shops become project managers in large IT environments. People in this capacity have usually had a series of increasingly responsible positions. They have 10 or more years of experience in application development and have successfully managed all aspects of projects, including managing programming and/or project teams. Project managers usually report to an application development manager or the IT director. Salaries may run from \$78,000 to \$98,000. This position requires the ability to perform the duties of project leader along with the following:

- Identify business functions and processes requiring change or improvement through automation
- Define system functions and how they will support business functions
- Identify to management the scope of the project, including technologies to be used and interfaces to existing systems
- Generate technology options, develop implementation strategies, and prepare an implementation plan
- Obtain approvals from the steering committee in accordance with the project plan

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- Select and develop the project team
- Provide vision to project team, identifying and prioritizing tasks

Responsibilities at any particular company vary, but this outline is a good starting point for developing formalized job descriptions and structure in your IT department. The salaries mentioned are typical of large metropolitan areas across the United States but may be high for less-populated areas.

Follow this column in upcoming months as I review other positions in the IT industry.



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