What Data Center Managers, MIS Directors, and CIOs Do

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This final article in my job description series looks at IT management. As I've said, there are no standard job descriptions in the IT field, but many job duties are consistent from company to company.

Data Center Managers

This position has been referred to as operations manager, MIS manager, data processing manager, or technical services manager. As AS/400 installations have evolved to support multiple processors and platforms, this position's name and associated responsibilities have shifted. In large IBM mainframe environments, data center manager or MIS manager is the typical title. This position usually reports to the MIS director. Salaries for AS/400 data center managers range from $70,000 to $90,000 and include the following responsibilities:

- Analyze and formulate budgets
- Hire, train, and review operations staff, including computer operators, operations supervisors, communications technicians, help desk support, LAN administrators, and data control staff
- Plan system upgrades and supervise PTF upgrades
- Develop and maintain a disaster recovery plan
- Establish and maintain hardware and systems software service contracts
- Plan communications systems for the company, including remote sites (often includes phone system)
- Implement a security program, including firewalls

MIS/IT Director

For years, the head of the computer department was called the data processing manager. Today, a DP manager is typically an operations supervisor who doesn't do programming and has a staff of only one or two computer operators. In most organizations, the MIS (or IT) director is the top information systems position. This position often reports to the president or CEO. Salaries for MIS directors vary by staff size. In major metropolitan areas, typical salaries are $84,000 to $96,000 for a staff of three to eight, $93,000 to $110,000 for a staff of nine to 25, and $105,000 to $150,000 for a staff of 25 to 70. This position may also be eligible for a management bonus or stock options. Responsibilities include the following:

- Create IT strategies to meet corporate needs
- Develop the necessary infrastructure to accomplish corporate goals
- Approve and manage the IT budget for hardware, software, and personnel
- Manage the day-to-day functions of the applications development group and computer operations support group
- Plan the installation and maintenance of the information systems support
- Analyze budget costs and provide cost/benefit justifications for projects
- Understand the value of current and future technologies

CIO/VP MIS

A Chief Information Officer (CIO) is a high-level management executive who is more a business strategist than a technologist. This relatively new position is the result of CEOs realizing that their businesses depend on information systems and wanting to ensure that they have a technologically competent top-tier executive with the foresight and authority to keep the company running in any contingency.

The CIO is responsible for all IT planning and implementation as well as the day-to-day operation of an IT department. This title is usually found in large corporate, government, and educational entities. CIOs can also be MIS or IT directors, but in very large organizations, the IT or MIS director reports to them. Salaries for CIOs in medium-to-large AS/400 installations range from $110,000 to $170,000. This position may also be eligible for a management bonus or stock options. Responsibilities are the same as for an MIS/IT director, but a CIO is responsible for the company's ability to meet current and future business challenges, such as Year 2000, disaster recovery, and contingency planning.

A Degree of Difference

For those aspiring to management in medium-to-large IT departments, a degree is a must. Today, many middle managers get advanced degrees—especially MBAs—to give them the advantage over their peers. Programmer/analysts have the luxury of a severe shortage of skilled talent and many openings, making a degree not as relevant, but there are few management and director jobs, and competition is stiff. An advanced degree is often

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a major qualifier to even get a resume presented to a company.

Although responsibilities vary among companies, these basic job descriptions provide a starting point and can assist you in formalizing structure in your IT department. The salaries mentioned are typical of large metropolitan areas and may be higher than those in rural or sub-urban areas.

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