



# Talking to AIX Support Line

by Georgia A. Gibson

IBM continues to look for ways to improve its business relationship with you. It takes a concentrated team effort to quickly handle your questions and problems. This article describes the role of AIX support personnel and provides some hints to help you receive the most efficient and qualified answers to your system problems.

Customer satisfaction is at the forefront of AIX Service and Support personnel goals. IBM regularly asks customers questions that measure their satisfaction with our service/support. These results are carefully studied and plans are put into place to provide solutions to customer concerns. Although customers have reported a more than 90% satisfaction rate, we want that number to be 100%.

## Customer Concerns

Despite our efforts, some of you have three major areas of concern:

- ◆ Hold time or wait time is too long
- ◆ Callbacks from the support center are not as expected
- ◆ Skill level in the support center is not as expected

We have plans to address specific instances, but by understanding the roles and responsibilities of the support center staff, you will then realize what information they routinely need from you to expedite your call. In some cases, you may just need to know how to raise the flag when your call needs higher attention than it is receiving.



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Two programs in the Support Center address skill level: the Technical Vitality program and the AIX certification program. The Technical Vitality program helps new members of the Support Center to gain the skills they need. The AIX certification program, administered by an independent firm, provides certification of AIX skills. Over 90% of the AIX Support Center staff has taken and passed the certification test.<sup>1</sup>

## The People Behind the Phones

Some of these concerns can best be addressed by helping you understand who you are talking to when you call, and their primary roles and responsibilities.

**Response Coordinator.** When you call in, the first person you speak to is a Response Coordinator (RC), a Level 1 support person who directs your call to the appropriate Technical Specialist. The RC listens to the description of the problem you are experiencing; then using keywords from your description, searches an online database that pinpoints the routing of your call. The RC needs enough information to identify the pertinent criteria to create the initial problem report. The RC then transfers your call to the Technical Specialist.

**Technical Specialist.** This is a Level 2 person skilled in the technical aspects of your specific problem. This person will be able to help you identify an acceptable solution in over 90% of the problems. When the problem is resolved to your satisfaction, simply tell the Technical Specialist and the problem is closed.

**Duty Manager.** Customer satisfaction is the Duty Manager's main focus—this is your

<sup>1</sup>To participate in this program, call Sylvan Prometric at 1-800-959-3926 to register for one of the tests.

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customer advocate. The Duty Manager also assists in resolving customer complaints. The primary role is to provide an escalation/notification contact for customer-related services. The Duty Manager listens to your concerns, facilitates transfers of your call to the appropriate person, and documents the stalled or broken process or implementation that caused you to be dissatisfied with the service. This helps IBM understand what and when the processes fail, and provides the opportunity to change processes when appropriate.

**Level 3.** If your problem is unusually difficult to diagnose or to find a solution, it will be referred to a Level 3 person. You will work directly with a developer at a very detailed level to describe, re-create, diagnose, and find an acceptable solution. Sometimes the resolution may be opening a defect against the product. Their objective is to find or create an acceptable workaround to alleviate the problem.

## Hints and Tips

Here are some hints and tips for you that will help us to provide better service when you call. Having certain types of information available when you call will expedite your call and help to get to the heart of the problem faster.

### Level 1 Hints

Response Coordinators need the following information when you call:

- ◆ The operating system version; for example, AIX 4.1.4
- ◆ Your customer number (also be sure you are on the contact list)
- ◆ Machine and model type
- ◆ A realistic severity assessment

Severity assessments range from the following:

**Severity 1:** You cannot use your program or system, which has a critical impact on your work. This condition requires immediate solution.

**Severity 2:** You can use your program or system, but your operations are severely restricted by the problem.

**Severity 3:** You can use your program or system with some restrictions on the functions you can use. These restrictions, however, do not have a critical impact on your operations.

**Severity 4:** The problem you are experiencing has little or no impact to your operations, or a way has been found to circumvent the problem.

Describe briefly to the RC what you were doing when the problem occurred, such as installing the operating system or installing an LPP on the operating system.

Since RCs handle an average of over 20,000 calls per month, they are most anxious to process your calls efficiently. Their responsibility is two-fold. First, the AIX Support Line is a contract service, so their first priority is to make sure that if you have a contract, you receive the time that you have purchased. Second, they need enough information about your problem so they can route your call to the appropriate Technical Specialist.

Eighteen different specialty queues are used to route the calls. The description of the problem must include enough information to determine which of these queues is appropriate for your call.

These queues include the following:

- ◆ Commands
- ◆ Backup
- ◆ Install
- ◆ Graphics
- ◆ 24x7 (24-hour coverage)
- ◆ TCP/IP Communications
- ◆ Communications
- ◆ System Configuration
- ◆ Performance
- ◆ Async Printer
- ◆ SP2 (Parallel Processor)
- ◆ Kernel
- ◆ System Network Architecture (SNA)
- ◆ Distributed System Storage Products (DSSP)
- ◆ NetView/6000
- ◆ Database
- ◆ Languages
- ◆ High Availability Cluster Multiprocessing (HACMP) for AIX

Finally, if you are calling about a problem with a new product that is not listed on your contract, your call will be referred to marketing for registration.

**From System Configuration**

- ◆ Know your fix level.
- ◆ Know your machine and model number; for example, 7012 (machine type) and 390 (model number).
- ◆ Know the devices that are installed in your system and how they are connected. (You can List All Devices from SMIT.)
- ◆ Get the LED number sequence if your system crashes with an 888. To do this, press the Reset button and write down the number(s) until you cycle back to 888.

**From Commands**

- ◆ Verify the ownership and permissions of files.
- ◆ One of the most frequently asked questions is how to install manpages or InfoExplorer. The answer is to call 1-800-IBM-4FAX and ask for document #2443 (for AIX 3.2x) and #4619 (for AIX 4.1).

**Figure 1. Specific hints from Technical Specialists**

**Level 2 Hints**

Here are some general hints from Technical Specialists:

- ◆ Describe the exact command syntax and error message, including the 7-digit number, if available. Having the System Management Interface Tool (SMIT) error log available could be helpful.
- ◆ Have the system available when you call so you can easily run commands or check errors with the Technical Specialist.

- ◆ Try re-creating the problem.
- ◆ Be prepared to go through the error report during the call.

Figure 1 shows some specific hints from Technical Specialists.

**Hints from a Team Lead and Duty Manager**

If you are not satisfied with the results from the RC or Technical Specialist, a Team Lead or Duty Manager is always available.

The Team Lead ensures that your technical issues are being addressed appropriately. This is the first level of escalation if your call is not being handled to your satisfaction. If you are not satisfied by the Team Lead, your next option is to speak to the Duty Manager.

The Duty Manager specifically ensures that you are satisfied with the service. This is the next point of escalation if the problem is not being handled appropriately.


**Level 3 Hints**

If you can provide the information that is discussed above, we are ready to delve into the problem.



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