

CLASSIFICATION APPEAL DECISION

issued by:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Washington, D.C. 20240

APPELLANT:

[REDACTED]

POSITION:

Computer Specialist, GS-334-11

ORGANIZATION:

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Alaska State Office

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

DECISION:

Computer Specialist, GS-334-11

Carolyn Cohen

Carolyn Cohen
Director of Personnel Policy

JUL 28 1993

DATE

Copy of Decision Transmitted to:

[REDACTED]

Concetta Stewart
BLM Personnel Officer

Sandy Larson
Personnel Officer, Alaska State Office

INTRODUCTION

On May 9, 1998, [REDACTED] appealed the classification of his position to the Director of Personnel Policy, Department of the Interior. [REDACTED] is employed as a Computer Specialist, GS-334-11, in the Bureau of Land Management, Alaska State Office, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] position was downgraded from GS-12 to GS-11 on May 10, 1998, and he has appealed to have the grade restored to GS-12.

This is the final administrative decision within the Department of the Interior. The appellant may appeal the classification of his position to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in accordance with the procedures described in Appendix 4 of the Introduction to the Position Classification Standards. Information about submitting an appeal to OPM is included in the decision letter to the appellant.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In deciding this appeal, we considered information from the following sources:

1. The appellant's memorandum of appeal and attachments, including the 1991 evaluation of his position at the GS-12 level, a copy of the notice of reclassification of his position to GS-11, and copies of letters of appreciation and information about awards he has received. The appellant submitted additional work samples and related information on July 7.
2. The material submitted by the Branch of Human Resource Management in the BLM Alaska State Office in Anchorage, including the appellant's current position description, evaluation statement, SF-50's (Notifications of Personnel Action) for the appellant's detail and for the position change to a lower grade, most recent performance plans (FY 1994 and FY 1995), organization chart for the Division [REDACTED], functional statement for the Branch [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Section in which the appellant is employed, and the position description and evaluation statement for the position held by the appellant's supervisor. The material also includes a brief statement of the "set of duties" to which the appellant is detailed as Volunteer Coordinator/RAPS Coordinator and the performance plan for that position.
3. Telephone audit of the appellant's position on July 7, 1998, as well as telephone conversations with him on July 1 and 9; telephone interview with [REDACTED] Chief, Branch [REDACTED], who is the supervisor over the appellant's position, on July 7.
4. Telephone conversations on July 9 with [REDACTED] who was the appellant's supervisor briefly in approximately 1991, and on July 21 with [REDACTED] who was the appellant's supervisor in approximately 1992-1995.

POSITION INFORMATION

The appellant has been detailed from his Computer Specialist position to an unclassified "set of duties" since August 20, 1995. In the position to which he is detailed, the appellant coordinates the BLM Alaska Volunteer Program and assists in the coordination and management of the Resource Apprenticeship Program for Students. On May 10, 1998, following a position review, the Alaska State Office downgraded the appellant's official position of Computer Specialist from GS-12 to GS-11.

This appeal decision pertains only to the appellant's Computer Specialist duties and does not cover the duties that he performs on detail. The evaluation that supports this decision is based on the official position description and on the duties the appellant performed before his detail began. For convenience, the evaluation is written in the present tense.

The appellant provides personal computer (PC) support services in the Alaska State Office. His duties include the following:

- Evaluates user proposals for automation and explores options in formulating hardware and software configurations to accommodate various office functions.
- Evaluates delivery of PC services to users to determine the nature of problems with both hardware and software.
- Troubleshoots problems in converting to new versions of software on existing systems and problems associated with converting office procedures to automated systems.
- Develops alternatives and specifications for new strategies to accommodate new or different hardware.
- Isolates causes of problems between hardware, system software, and application programs and resolves compatibility problems.
- Prepares recommendations for purchase of new hardware and software when conflicts cannot be resolved by more economical methods.

Much of the appellant's work has involved Apple Macintosh computers rather than IBM-compatible personal computers. For convenience, this decision refers to both Macintosh computers and personal computers as PC's, except as otherwise noted.

SERIES AND TITLE DETERMINATION

The position is properly placed in the Computer Specialist Series, GS-334, which includes positions responsible for performing work necessary to plan, design, develop, acquire, document,

test, implement, integrate, maintain, or modify systems for solving problems or accomplishing work processes by using computers. The appellant performs work consistent with placement in the GS-334 series, in particular planning, testing, integrating, and maintaining PC systems. Positions, including the appellant's, are classified in the GS-334 series when the primary need is knowledge of information processing methodology/technology, computer capabilities, and processing techniques.

Computer Specialist is the title for all nonsupervisory positions in the GS-334 series and is therefore the correct title for the appellant's position.

GRADE DETERMINATION

The appellant's position is graded by application of the position-classification standard for the Computer Specialist Series, GS-334. The standard is written in the Factor Evaluation System (FES) format. Under the FES, positions are placed in grades on the basis of their duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required as evaluated in terms of nine factors common to nonsupervisory General Schedule positions.

A point value is assigned to each factor based on a comparison of the position's duties with the factor-level descriptions and/or the benchmarks. (The GS-334 standard does not contain benchmarks.) The factor point values mark the lower end of the ranges for the indicated factor levels. For a position factor 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 in the standard, the lower point value must be assigned.

The appellant disagrees with the levels assigned by his personnel office for factors 3, 4, 7, and 8.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

At Level 1-7, employees use knowledge of a wide range of computer techniques, requirements, methods, sources, and procedures. Specialists at this level accomplish a variety of assignments in the assigned application area or specialty area. They use skill in applying agency policies and data processing standards and knowledge of technical data to evaluate alternative approaches to problem solutions. They use knowledge and skill to modify and adapt precedent solutions to unique or specialized requirements.

These types of knowledge and skills are consistent with those required in the appellant's position. He must have knowledge of a wide range of PC hardware and software techniques, including user and system requirements, methods of automating work and achieving desired results from automated systems, and agency policies and requirements with regard to automated systems.

The appellant is responsible for several types of assignments that require knowledge and skills

typical of Level 1-7. At this level, employees may provide staff advisory, planning, user assistance/training, or evaluation services or functions within a specialty area. Another type of assignment found at this level is in maintaining existing systems, including troubleshooting, problem solving, upgrading, and debugging. Troubleshooting responsibilities include devising recovery plans for system failures. Such recovery plans include using utility programs to isolate causes of problems between hardware, system software, and applications programs; enhance the ability to detect damaged or lost files; or optimize disk management. The appellant provides advice, planning assistance, and other staff advisory services to PC users in serviced organizations. He is responsible for maintaining the systems used by his customers, helping them with hardware and software problems, advising them on upgrading their systems including compatibility considerations, and solving system failures through the use of utility programs and other means.

At Level 1-8, employees have mastery of a specialty area (such as applications system design or system software design) and function as authorities either in a specialty area or as general data processing experts covering a wide range of technology and applications. They use knowledge at this level in very difficult assignments such as planning advanced system projects or leading task forces for resolving critical problems in existing systems which require innovative solutions in many aspects of the project. Employees at this level may advise top ADP and user management on new developments and advanced techniques in the specialty area; plan, organize, and direct studies to develop long-range ADP forecasts and recommendations; evaluate overall plans for major ADP projects; or coordinate development of ADP standards, guidelines, or policy.

The appellant's position requires knowledge of a wide range of computer techniques, requirements, methods, and procedures, rather than mastery of a specialty area, such as applications system design. He is called upon to solve a wide variety of hardware and software problems and to provide advice and assistance to users in a number of areas related to PC use. However, his position does not involve advising top management (user or ADP) on new developments and advanced techniques in a specialty area, or in the other areas of advisory service cited at Level 1-8, such as planning, organizing, and directing long-range (five- to ten-year) ADP forecasts and recommendations. The appellant assists users in planning and upgrading computer systems, but this responsibility does not involve the high-level advice and long-range planning envisioned at Level 1-8.

In terms of planning and directing studies, the appellant's design, administration, and analysis of a PC user survey is consistent with the knowledge requirements at Level 1-7, which includes performing studies in which alternatives are set forth or devised, their costs and benefits weighed, and reports prepared in which the study methodology is outlined, alternatives are discussed, and recommendations made. This type of assignment and the appellant's other work do not exceed Level 1-7 and do not rise to the level of functioning as a technical authority in a specialty area or for a wide range of technology, or performing such assignments as directing

studies to develop long-range ADP recommendations. Therefore, Level 1-8 is not credited.

Level 1-7

1250 points

Factor 2. Supervisory Controls

At Level 2-4, the supervisor sets the overall objectives and, in consultation with the employee, determines time frames and possible shifts in staff and other resources required. The employee, having developed expertise in the assignment, independently plans and carries out projects and analyses of the organization's requirements; interprets policies, procedures, and regulations in conformance with established mission objectives; integrates and coordinates the work of others as necessary; and resolves most conflicts that arise. The employee informs the supervisor about progress, potentially controversial matters, or far-reaching implications. Completed work is reviewed from an overall standpoint in terms of feasibility, compatibility with other work, or effectiveness in meeting requirements or achieving expected results.

The appellant's supervisor assigns work in terms of overall objectives. The appellant plans and carries out work independently, resolves most conflicts that arise, and keeps his supervisor informed about the progress of his projects. His completed work is reviewed to determine whether objectives are met. This level of supervisory controls meets Level 2-4 in terms of how the work is assigned, the appellant's responsibility for carrying out the work, and how his work is reviewed.

At Level 2-5, the supervisor provides administrative direction with assignments in terms of broadly defined missions or functions. The employee plans, designs, and carries out studies or projects and makes extensive unreviewed technical judgments concerning the interpretation and implementation of data processing policy. The employee is regarded as the leading technical authority for the employing organization in a data processing specialization or over a wide range of interrelated computer systems. Results of the work at this level are considered technically authoritative. Review covers such aspects as fulfillment of program objectives, effect of advice on the overall projects, or contributions to the advancement of technology. Recommendations for new projects and alteration of objectives are usually evaluated for such considerations as availability of resources, broad goals, or national priorities.

The appellant does not receive assignments merely in terms of administrative guidance, nor does he make extensive unreviewed technical judgments concerning data processing policy. Although he functions with significant independence, he is not assigned responsibility for being the State Office's leading technical authority in an ADP specialty area or for a range of systems. Similarly, his work is not considered technically authoritative and receives a closer review than is the case at Level 2-5. Therefore, this level is not credited.

Level 2-4

450 points

Factor 3, Guidelines

The personnel office has assigned Level 3-3 for this factor, and the appellant contends that his position should be evaluated at Level 3-4.

At Level 3-3, handbooks, manuals, models, and plans are available but are not completely applicable, or gaps exist in significant areas, e.g., in the documentation of systems being analyzed. At Level 3-4, policies and precedents provide guidance which is general in nature with little specificity regarding the approach to be followed in accomplishing the work. Typically, the primary constraints are those imposed by the need for compatibility with existing systems or processes.

The guidelines available to the appellant are in the form of PC standards, vendors' technical literature, and trade journals. The appellant points out that he has dealt with conflicting information in networking different computer operating systems with local area networks (LAN's) and evaluating individual PC capabilities to meet LAN requirements. He says he has dealt with poorly documented network and software products and has consulted with vendors to correct software and hardware problems. The appellant also describes differences between Macintosh computers and PC's. In addition, he describes dealing with compatibility problems with different types of application software for desk top publishing that have RAM and processor requirements that are different from those of other software used in the State Office. He has also researched and installed new software.

The PC (including Macintosh) standards, vendors' technical literature, and trade journals that the appellant uses in his work are consistent with Level 3-3. While this level includes manuals, models, and plans that may be more specific than are the guides available to him, it also includes more general guides, such as procurement guides and the Federal Information Resources Management Regulations. The guidelines available for the types of situations cited by the appellant are consistent with Level 3-3, at which the standard specifically references gaps "in significant areas" and "in the documentation of existing systems being analyzed." Lack of adequate documentation is the main problem the appellant encounters in his analysis of systems and their problems, particularly in the case of the Macintosh computers, which are not as well documented as are PC's.

The appellant's guides do not meet Level 3-4. PC standards, vendors' literature, and trade journals are usually more specific than the very general policies and precedents described at this level. Poorly documented hardware and software products, such as those the appellant deals with, are consistent with Level 3-3 and do not exceed this level. The fact that the appellant has consulted with vendors to correct hardware and software problems does not support credit for guidelines at a higher level than 3-3. Therefore, the nature of the guidelines available to the appellant is credited at Level 3-3.

In terms of the judgment needed to apply the guidelines or to develop new guides, at Level 3-3

the employee is required to adapt guides and precedents for application to the assigned project or gather considerable information to supplement gaps of lack of specificity to particular problems. Judgment is required in relating precedent approaches to specific situations, such as in determining the kind and amount of data needed for testing a system modification. Established guidelines often must be interpreted, as in the case of advising contractor personnel on the application of agency policy and regulations. At Level 3-4, the work usually requires deviating from traditional methods or researching trends and patterns to develop improved methods or formulate criteria. The employee uses initiative and resourcefulness in researching and implementing state-of-the-art techniques and technologies in order to develop new and improved methods to cope with particular projects. At this level, employees demonstrate initiative and resourcefulness in assigned projects that encompass unprecedented design efforts, integrating the work of others as a team or project leader, or predicting future environments or the impact on future processing.

The appellant must use a high degree of judgment in assessing problems that affect PC performance and in developing alternatives and specifications for new strategies to accommodate new automated systems. He researches newly developed software and must resolve compatibility problems with hardware and software. These responsibilities and the examples he cites in support of his appeal are consistent with Level 3-3. He adapts the guides available, such as vendors' manuals and PC standards, to perform such duties as troubleshooting software implementation problems, diagnosing problems with hardware and system/application software, and developing alternatives to accommodate new hardware. All of these duties require him to apply precedent approaches, as is the case at Level 3-3, rather than unprecedented design efforts, as would be required at Level 3-4.

The appellant's assignments do not involve deviating from traditional methods or researching trends and patterns to develop improved methods or formulate criteria. He advises users regarding various aspects of their PC systems, but he is not responsible for such assignments as developing local implementing instructions or new methods of approach in solving problems. He points out that he is involved in troubleshooting and repairing Macintosh computers and PC's. Such work does not involve deviating from traditional methods. He cites his evaluation of the latest application software, such as Photo Shop, Page Maker, Illustrator, and Freehand for use in desk top publishing, and he refers to the requirement that he keep current in state-of-the-art technologies in the rapidly evolving PC equipment field. However, evaluating the latest software is consistent with the Level 3-3 criterion of relating precedent approaches to specific situations, and is not consistent with any of the Level 3-4 criteria, such as deviating from traditional methods or formulating criteria. Similarly, dealing with rapid changes in PC technology requires the appellant to adapt guides and precedents and to use considerable judgment in such projects as testing system modifications, as is the case at Level 3-3, but it does not require him to develop new and improved methods, as would be required at Level 3-4.

The judgment required of the appellant does not match any of the three project assignment criteria cited at this level: unprecedented design efforts, serving as a team or project leader, or

predicting environments or the impact on future processing. He does not deal with any unprecedented design considerations. In terms of the second criterion, he previously served as the chief of a help desk which responded to users' questions regarding PC problems, but this responsibility did not involve the development of improved methods and criteria described at Level 3-4. The third criterion, predicting environments and impacts on processing, is not descriptive of any of the appellant's work, as he is not responsible for researching trends or for developing new methods or instructions.

Level 3-3

275 points

Factor 4, Complexity

The personnel office has evaluated this factor at Level 4-4, and the appellant contends that his position should be evaluated at Level 4-5.

At Level 4-4, assignments consist of projects, studies, or evaluations characterized by the need for substantial problem analysis. Typically, concern is with (a) several of the stages in an automation project or (b) project assignments in a specialty area that require a variety of techniques and methods to evaluate alternatives.

At Level 4-5, assignments consist of various projects or studies characterized by the need for significant departures from established practice. They typically involve (a) a number of stages in an automation project to include studies preliminary to the decision to automate or (b) an unusual depth of analysis of system software, computer equipment, or a similar broad specialty area. Assignments with this depth of analysis typically involve such features as (a) responsibility for integrating facets of the work performed by others, (b) concern with fields of rapidly evolving technology, and (c) problems of a type that have been resistant to solutions in the past.

The appellant's assignments involve a wide variety of technical services to resolve problems involving or affecting PC systems. His project assignments include such responsibilities as evaluating user proposals for automation, advising on purchase of new hardware and software, or identifying and solving compatibility and other problems with hardware and systems/application software. Thus, his work involves PC project assignments requiring a variety of techniques and methods to evaluate alternatives, consistent with Level 4-4.

The appellant's assignments to evaluate user proposals for automation appear to be similar to the Level 4-5 criterion of conducting a number of stages in an automation project to include studies preliminary to the decision to automate. However, even though the appellant is involved in advising on proposals to automate, he is not responsible for assignments consistent with this level. His involvement is normally with decisions about which hardware or software to purchase and concerning compatibility issues that must be considered before making such purchases, rather than with studies regarding whether to automate.

In his appeal, he makes the point that his work has involved in-depth analysis of various software applications and different hardware components, evaluation of new system software to determine cost of conversion, and providing training to users so that they may become proficient in the use of PC's. He says that his duties require troubleshooting software problems that are associated with operating PC hardware. He has also dealt with complex issues associated with converting between different operating systems. He has developed alternatives and specifications for new strategies to accommodate new hardware peripheral components. He has projected increases in support of new PC hardware and software requirements and has laid out and repaired cabling and isolated problems between hardware and system software. He has resolved compatibility problems requiring the purchase of new software and hardware and prepared recommendations for the purchase of such items.

These types of assignments do not involve a significant departure from established practice, as would be the case at Level 4-5. Instead, they are consistent with the Level 4-4 criteria of responsibility for projects, studies, and evaluations which require substantial problem analysis and use of a variety of methods to evaluate alternatives. The appellant does not integrate the work of others (e.g., as a team leader), nor is he assigned problems that other specialists have been unable to solve. The steadily advancing nature of computer technology presents challenges to most computer specialists, but involvement with such technology does not necessarily involve the complexity of assignments described at Level 4-5, as such assignments must also involve such aspects as integrating the work of others and dealing with problems that have previously resisted solution. They appellant's assignments do not involve these types of complexities. Therefore, his assignments are consistent with Level 4-4 and do not meet Level 4-5.

For the second Complexity subfactor, the difficulty in identifying what needs to be done, Level 4-4 involves assessing situations complicated by conflicting or insufficient data which must be analyzed to determine the applicability of established methods. Different technical approaches often must be tested and projections made. Development of project controls normally is required to integrate various phases of the project. Consideration must be given to probable areas of future change in systems design, equipment layout, or comparable aspects that will facilitate subsequent modifications.

At Level 4-5, decisions regarding what needs to be done are complicated by the novel or obscure nature of the problems and/or special requirements for organization and coordination. Usually there are conflicting requirements, the problems are poorly defined, or they require projections based on variable data or technological developments. Developments in system software or equipment technology make project designs obsolete and require major reconsideration of many or all aspects of the project, and have an impact on related systems or project funding.

In assessing problems with PC hardware and software, recommending hardware and software purchases, and evaluating proposals for automation, the appellant must assess situations that involve insufficient data and try different technical approaches. He must also consider future changes in systems equipment layout and software changes. These aspects of his assignments are

consistent with Level 4-4 in that they involve the application of established methods. They do not involve the novel or obscure problems cited at Level 4-5, such as difficulty in projecting requirements and deciding on project design because of changes in system software and technological developments. The appellant must deal with changing computer technology, but the continuing changes in hardware and software that are described at Level 4-5 do not characterize his assignments. The standard cites an integrated payroll, personnel, and accounting system as an example of a system that may present special requirements for organization and coordination. The appellant is not responsible for such systems. Instead, he is concerned with more limited systems, such as the hardware and software needed for desk top publishing, that do not involve the unusual requirements for organization and coordination that are found at Level 4-5. Such systems are also more stable than those envisioned at 4-5. Therefore, Level 4-4 is credited for the second subfactor.

The third Complexity subfactor is the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work. At Level 4-4, the work requires consideration of considerable data, and the level of difficulty is typified by developing programming specifications for major modifications to existing systems, or new systems where precedents exist at the same general scale of operation as the new systems. Computer equipment or system software evaluation and modification at this level primarily concern items available from vendors already in use in other Government or private ADP operations.

At Level 4-5, technical difficulty is exceptional, such as (1) developing major items of system software (e.g., assemblers, compilers, multiprogramming routines, files management routines) for which numerous conditions, options, and machine characteristics must be considered, or (2) developing specifications for a major segment of a new application system for which the work typically is unprecedented in nature or scope.

The difficulty encountered by the appellant in performing the work is consistent with Level 4-4. His work involves developing proposals and specifications for major modifications to PC systems, such as substantial changes in hardware or software, or both. The equipment and systems software that he evaluates and recommends are available from vendors already supplying the Government. The appellant does not encounter the difficulty described at Level 4-5, that is, projects of exceptional technical difficulty for which precedents do not exist. He does not develop system or application software or develop specifications for major system segments which have unprecedented aspects, and he does not perform any other work requiring comparable difficulty and originality. None of his assignments exceeds in difficulty and originality the Level 4-4 criteria of developing specifications for major modifications to existing systems or for new systems. Therefore, the third subfactor is evaluated at Level 4-4.

Because the appellant's position meets Level 4-4 in all three subfactors, but fails to meet Level 4-5 in any of the subfactors, Level 4-4 is credited.

Level 4-4

225 points

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

At Level 5-3, the work involves resolving a variety of conventional problems, questions, or situations such as typically is the case where responsibility has been assigned for maintenance of a set or programs. Established practices and techniques are used. The work at Level 5-3 affects the adequacy of such activities as field investigations, internal operations, or research conclusions. This level includes responsibility for projects that, although affecting activities or individuals throughout the agency, are primarily to facilitate a local operation. For example, work at this level may involve developing or modifying an automated records-keeping system at an agency training center responsible for maintaining training records on agency employees located throughout the country.

The purpose of the appellant's work is to resolve a variety of problems and situations, particularly in such areas as troubleshooting PC hardware and software problems, developing plans to accommodate new hardware, and recommending purchase of hardware and application/system software. He uses established practices and techniques. His work affects the internal operations of the Alaska State Office. Work involving this purpose and effect is a close match for Level 5-3.

At Level 5-4, the work involves investigating and analyzing a variety of unusual problems, questions, or conditions associated with a particular application or specialty area; formulating projects or studies such as those substantially to alter major systems; or establishing criteria in an assigned application or specialty area, e.g., developing programming or procurement specifications. The work at this level affects a wide range of agency activities, activities of non-government organizations, or functions of other agencies. Assignments at this level typically are concerned with (a) the agency's single centralized ADP operation which is linked to terminals at numerous agency sites throughout the country, or (b) standard systems to be used subsequently on numerous equipment units or at numerous installation level ADP operations in the agency.

The appellant's work does not meet Level 5-4 in terms of either purpose or effect. While he does develop specifications for new PC hardware configurations, he does so in the context of resolving conventional problems, consistent with Level 5-3, rather than in analyzing unusual problems or establishing criteria in an ADP area, as would be the case at Level 5-4. Similarly, he is not responsible for substantially altering major systems. The effect of his work is primarily local; it does not extend to a wide range of BLM activities or to non-government organizations or other agencies. (He has provided PC assistance to others in his building, including the Anchorage office of U.S. Senator Murkowski and the local FAA office, but this work is not an official part of his position, accounts for a very small portion of his duties, and does not involve anything other than resolution of conventional problems.) None of his work has an effect on such wide-ranging operations as the agency's central ADP operation or agency systems in multiple locations.

Level 5-3

150 points

Factor 6/7, Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts

The personnel office has credited Level 3b for this factor, and the appellant contends that his position should be evaluated at Level 3c.

At Level 2, contacts include those with employees in the agency but outside the immediate organization, such as users or field personnel engaged in different, non-ADP work. At Level 3, contacts are with individuals outside the agency, such as vendor representatives, computer personnel of other agencies, or representatives of professional associations. Level 3 may also include contacts with the head of the employing agency or program officials several managerial levels above the employee when such contacts occur on an ad hoc or other irregular basis.

The appellant has contacts with managers, supervisors, and employees in the organizations which he services, and with computer specialists in other BLM offices. His agency contacts include managers one or two levels above his position. These contacts match Level 2.

The appellant also has contacts with vendor representatives from hardware and software companies. These contacts match Level 3. He does not have contacts that meet Level 4, such as those with high-ranking officials from outside the agency at national or international levels in highly unstructured settings.

At Level b, the purpose of contacts is to coordinate work efforts, solve problems, or to provide advice to managers on noncontroversial organization or program-related issues and concerns. At Level c, the purpose of contacts is (a) to influence others to utilize particular technical methods and procedures, or (b) to persuade others to cooperate in meeting objectives when, in either case, there are problems in securing cooperation.

The purpose of the appellant's contacts with operating officials and employees is to identify user problems and to provide support services, as well as to advise on how to care for automated equipment and to recommend software and hardware for automation of office procedures. His contacts with other computer specialists are primarily to exchange information related to PC repair and to discuss changes in software and hardware. His contacts with hardware and software vendors are to discuss the feasibility of new product upgrades, discuss approaches in implementation of new systems, and resolve PC compatibility problems. All of these contacts match Level b, as their purpose is to coordinate work efforts, solve problems, and provide advice. The appellant maintains that his contacts with vendors for such purposes as discussing bugs and incompatibilities between software programs meet Level c. However, such contacts are for the purpose of solving problems, not to influence or persuade uncooperative individuals to agree to take certain actions.

Some of the appellant's contacts with supervisors and managers are for the purpose of providing advice on the purchase of additional hardware or software. He sometimes is called upon to explain to users, supervisors, and managers why particular software they have requested is not

suitable and why they should purchase other software. Such contacts sometimes require him to motivate or influence users, supervisors, and managers to accept his recommendations, but these contacts are consistent with Level b because they are for the purpose of providing advice to managers. For contacts to meet Level c, they must be for the purpose of influencing and motivating others who are not cooperative. Any contacts the appellant may have that involve motivation of uncooperative managers and supervisors are not regular and recurring. In addition, his personal contacts credited with Level 3 are with vendor representatives, and he is not called upon to deal with them in a manner consistent with Level c, that is, to influence or motivate uncooperative individuals. Instead, he deals with them to solve problems.

Level 6/7-3b

110 points

Factor 8, Physical Demands

The personnel office has credited Level 8-1, and the appellant contends that this factor should be evaluated at a higher level.

At Level 8-1, the work is sedentary, and no special physical demands are required to perform the work. The appellant's work is mainly sedentary, although he is required to move PC's to check connections and to perform diagnostic tests on software and hardware. He points out that on occasion he is required to lift monitors to install them, remove them for repair, or assist in office moves.

Level 8-1 is the highest level described in the GS-334 standard. Reference is made to the Primary Standard and to other appropriate, comparable standards to determine whether a higher level is creditable. According to the Primary Standard, at Level 8-2 the work requires some physical exertion, including recurring long periods of standing or recurring bending, crouching, stooping, stretching, reaching, or similar activities. Work at this level may also involve recurring lifting of moderately heavy items such as typewriters and record boxes. The work may require specific, but common, physical characteristics and abilities such as above-average agility and dexterity. Occupational standards with benchmarks that credit Level 8-2 for lifting moderately heavy items usually also describe work involving other types of exertion. For example, the standard for Industrial Hygiene, GS-690, credits Level 8-2 for benchmark 9-1. It describes frequent inspections that require the employee to carry moderately heavy equipment and involve a good deal of standing, walking, and bending.

The appellant's work involves some infrequent lifting or moving of moderately heavy computer monitors, but the work requiring such exertion is not regular and recurring, and the work does not require other physical exertion on a regular and recurring basis or specific physical characteristics such as above-average agility and dexterity. Therefore, Level 8-2 is not met.

Level 8-1

5 points

Factor 9, Work Environment

The appellant works in an office setting and travels occasionally. This environment matches Level 9-1, at which the work is performed in a typical office setting, and special safety precautions are not required.

Level 9-1 5 points

EVALUATION SUMMARY

<u>Factor</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>Points</u>
1 Knowledge Required by the Position	1-7	1250
2 Supervisory Controls	2-4	450
3 Guidelines	3-3	275
4 Complexity	4-4	225
5 Scope and Effect	5-3	150
6/7 Personal Contacts/Purpose of Contacts	6/7-3b	110
8 Physical Demands	8-1	5
9 Work Environment	9-1	5
	Total	2470 points

The total number of points credited, 2470, converts to a grade of GS-11 (2355-2750) according to the grade conversion table in the standard.

DECISION

For the reasons given above, the authorized classification of the appealed position is Computer Specialist, GS-334-11.