

AP Counterproposal

December 15, 2023

The Associated Press:

Teresita Seeberger
Teresita Seeberger (Dec 23, 2023 22:50 EST)

Dec 23, 2023

News Media Guild:

Kevin Keane
Kevin Keane (Dec 23, 2023 22:52 EST)

Dec 23, 2023

Training Side Letter

The goal for technology staff is to be in tune with current and emerging technology standards, and the company's commitment to helping employees adapt to advancements in our operating model and benefit from new knowledge and skills, through cross-training and mentoring.

The Employer will merge the work of its technical support teams so that they can more effectively handle both internal and external (customer) support. Following cross-training as described herein, current Technicians, Senior Technicians, and Tier-1 Product Support Specialists will work then as one team under a new job title, Technical Support Specialist [TSS], that will require new skills and competencies. Current employees shall not be transferred to the new job title until after the one-year training period, which shall begin upon ratification of the collective bargaining agreement.

The training specified below will be needed to accomplish this goal, one that requires specific new skills and knowledge in several phases that will be aligned not only with business objectives but also with the company's commitment to the growth, development and success of current staff.

The one-year training will be incremental, supportive, pragmatic and ongoing, recognizing that new skills may be acquired by team members at different speeds dependent on prior knowledge and experience. Team members will always have the ability to have direct contact with a named mentor (who may be a manager, or a named colleague identified by the support manager) to support their learning.

The Employer will provide employees with reasonable and sufficient opportunities to acquire and demonstrate the skills and qualifications necessary to perform TSS work, including the skills needed to properly operate equipment and effectively utilize the methods of operation in such work. This shall include, but not be limited to reasonable orientation, instruction, supervision, oversight, access to resources and equipment, and prompt feedback regarding the work performed during the training period. No discipline shall be assessed for the employee's training progress as a TSS during the one-year training period.

Training will be delivered during working hours by means and methods determined by the Employer, including but not limited to Zoom meetings, Practice sessions covering main topics, Documentation, Peers assigned by the manager to ensure continuous learning and development, and 3rd Party training. Training will be mandatory and employees will be relieved of regular work duties to allow the full benefit of the training. During the one-year training period, the Employer may perform an employee's job duties for the limited period they are relieved of duty for such training, without prejudice to Article 1, Coverage or the Union's work jurisdiction.

The expectation is for staff to acquire core competencies by the end of the one-year training cycle, that include but are not limited to the abilities and willingness to:

- Troubleshoot and resolve the issue, or know who to escalate it to;
- Provide technical assistance via chat, email, or phone;
- Provide support for all systems and applications they were trained for;
- Participate in the development of the support documentation and assist with peer training;
- Actively listen and clearly communicate both verbally and in writing;
- Multitask and be comfortable juggling multiple projects and priorities; and
- Learn new systems and applications.

External support is a high priority, and the Employer will concentrate on bringing the GHD team up to speed on the subjects they have not been trained on yet while training both teams on the systems and applications that had been recently added and require support. The Employer will also provide clear and prompt feedback regarding the employee’s progress in acquiring needed skills. The Employer shall provide prompt notice to the Guild in the event that an employee fails to meet training expectations.

Systems training will include all the systems listed in the tables below. Training will be provided regularly, per outlined sample schedule (table below). Peers will be assigned by the managers to provide hands-on training and assist with questions when dealing with an issue.

Training channels will be available where questions can be asked on any subject previously covered during past training sessions. Training sessions will be recorded and posted in training channels for reference. Note that training schedules, topics and priorities may change based on business needs.

Training	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Month 1	The Employer will conduct a training sessions for one team or another or both. Training agenda will be compiled based on the topics outlined in the plan and/or business priorities.	Practice weeks will follow, giving everyone an opportunity to practice new skills.	Practice week.	Practice week
Month 2	Team being trained: CS & GHD	Practice week	Practice week	Practice week

Month 3	Same training plan will be followed each week, agenda TBD based on business priorities and ongoing projects.	Practice week	Practice week	At the end of each quarter, the Employer will provide written feedback to individual staffers and evaluate if any of the sessions will need to be repeated.
----------------	--	---------------	---------------	---

The training cycle will continue through 4 quarters of training in total.

Systems and Training Overview – GHD team

Tool/System	Function	Used by
Salesforce	Case management for external customers.	Clients
Chat and WhatsApp	Answering external customers on Chats.	Clients
Knowledge base	Review access and searching Knowledge base	AP Staff
eAP General overview	General walk-through of eAP access	AP Staff
Portals support (Newsroom, Video Hub)	Train on up-to-date support and escalation process for all AP portals and single systems used by AP clients. (Includes necessary eAP related training)	Clients
E-Commerce, Transactional Customers	Support for non-subscription customers requesting photos and videos. (Includes necessary eAP related training)	Clients
Media API including json and xml	Train on latest functions and features of API (Includes necessary eAP related training)	Clients
Live Choice	Customers book live video events. (Includes necessary eAP related training)	Clients
Elections Services (ELAPI, Newsroom visuals, widgets), including XML	Training on support and escalation of all Election services. (Includes necessary eAP related training)	Clients
Entitlements	How to check entitlements and escalate	AP Staff
Money and Markets	Training in Market Services, basic troubleshooting, and escalation.	Clients
AP Planner	Customer facing planning tool - basic troubleshooting and escalations.	Clients
Stylebook	Stylebook sold to customers - familiarize with service and escalation procedures.	Clients

Audio and Video training, as needed	Provide working knowledge of video and audio technology	AP Staff
3rd Party Training		
Customer Service Representative	Multipurpose program that teaches soft skills that can help with communication and innovative troubleshooting solutions. Helps develop both listening and speaking skills.	AP Staff / Clients

Systems and Training Overview – CS team

Tool/System	Function	Used by
Azure, Intune, MECM	User Account management	AP Staff
Windows 11, MAC OS Deployment (Modern Deployment and, Casper with Mac OS training if needed.	Modern deployment method, troubleshooting and resolving issues	AP Staff
AWS, Video editing tools, AP Transfer tool	Video	AP Staff
Mobile devices deployment steps	Steps for deploying new phones	AP Staff
Software management	Elevation steps, adding users to software packages	AP Staff
Elections / Vote entry operator setup	Overview of the Elections tools and setup steps	AP Staff
Amazon workspaces	Create and reset workspace	AP Staff
Media API including Json and XML	Assist with installation and issue troubleshooting	AP Staff
Office 365 Applications	MS Cloud applications, Authentication, resolving issues with Outlook, Excel, and OneDrive	AP Staff
Defender and Malware bytes	Resolving issues with viruses / infections	AP Staff
EasyVista	Handling and escalating tickets in EV	AP Staff
Customer Service Representative	Multipurpose program that teaches soft skills that can help with communication and innovative troubleshooting solutions. Helps develop listening and speaking skills.	Clients / Staff
VOIP phone systems	Fuze, Cisco	AP Staff
Internal systems used by main offices	MVP player, Photo Mechanic, ePix	AP Staff
Audio and Video training, as needed	Provide working knowledge of video and audio technology	AP Staff

Evaluation/Feedback Approach

Staff will be given quarterly written feedback based on AP's established performance appraisal model. Quarterly feedback will continue for one year after ratification. Performance management related to the core competencies of a merged global help desk may begin thereafter on areas where training has been deemed completed by management. Throughout this process, management will continue to work with staff to find ways to address their needs individually. .