

# Top Skills of a Successful System Administrator

## What is the role of a system administrator?

A system administrator is the person who is responsible for building and maintaining the data center infrastructure of a business. Their role can vary from one organization to the next, but they are usually responsible for installing, supporting, and maintaining the various systems in the office. With so many system administrators out there competing for work, what's going to make you stand out from the rest?

### 1. Proven ability to assess problems and research solutions

While a system administrator has the experience and knowledge to prevent or resolve IT problems on their own, end users are much less likely to be able to do so. When problems arise for users, it is the sole responsibility of the system administrator to drop everything and focus on getting the user back up and running. Often the larger the company, the more likely issues are bound to pop up. Some of these issues can debilitate users from getting any work done, which directly impacts business. That is why it is imperative for the system administrator to come to the rescue by assessing the problem and finding a suitable solution in a timely fashion.

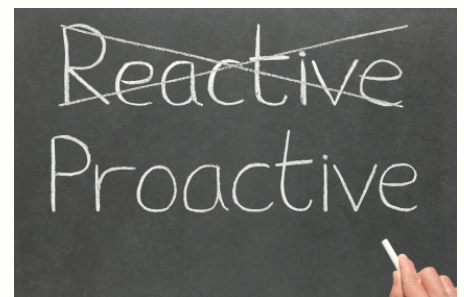


### 2. Strong interpersonal and communication skills

Regardless of what department you work in, communication within an office is key to success. In the case of computer technology, it is critical that end users and system administrators have open lines of communication by being comfortable with talking, listening, and presenting to one another. When there is a technical problem, users usually do not hesitate to go to the system administrator and address the issue. However, there are times when users try to work around an issue, especially if they are working on a deadline. The system administrator should always encourage users to report a problem immediately. In turn, the system administrator should be encouraged to communicate any known issues within the network to all end users. When everyone in the office is aware and understands the breadth of an issue, the first step to prevention has been taken.

### 3. Prevent future problems by automating processes

A system administrator must be as proactive as possible when it comes to problem solving. It is safe to assume that when one end user has a problem, eventually other users will encounter a similar issue. Not only does the system administrator have the responsibility of finding the solution, but also of creating a system that can either eliminate the problem or automate the process of finding the solution. In order to test different solutions, the successful system administrator has an already-built test environment with users on board and ready to test. This not only saves time but, in the end, also saves money, which is sure to impress your supervisor.



### 4. Greater knowledge of the business side of IT

Learning how the latest technology can and will affect your role is imperative. The growth of cloud computing has spawned more job opportunities in the IT field and though specific job requirements vary by position, all will require greater knowledge and awareness of the business side of IT. To stand out from other candidates, be prepared by taking college courses in a business-related field. Knowing how people in your business are utilizing networks and applications is very advantageous. For those who have been in the IT field for several years, this could help broaden skills and boost your credibility.

## 5. Keen awareness of system vulnerability

The goal of any system administrator is to make sure the network infrastructure is secure, stable and prepared to fight off any attack, paving the way for uninterrupted business. Stay connected to appropriate security bulletins with updates from vendors, user groups, and other trusted sources. Keep machines physically secure by protecting the system console and encouraging users to log off when they are not in use. Minimizing any unused applications will not only allow for better performance, but will also alleviate system vulnerability. Passwords should be protected and changed often. Restrict users from certain administrative settings so if their computer is attacked, it cannot affect other users or the entire network. By monitoring systems frequently and randomly, unauthorized modifications to the system are easier to detect. Despite preventative measures the system administrator has taken, reliable backup and disaster recovery procedures are necessary for unpredictable circumstances. In addition, educating end users on proper security precautions will not only make their lives easier, but it also is a time saver for the system administrator.

## 6. Productive management of time

The typical day of a system administrator usually involves being at the beckoned call of his/her end users. Time to focus on other responsibilities is limited, and whenever there is available time, system administrators must take advantage to get their other tasks completed. This takes not only focus, but also the ability to manage what little time they have for the rest of their job duties. Just as important as troubleshooting is the need to:

- analyze system logs
- introduce and integrate new technologies
- perform routine audits of systems and software
- perform backups
- install and configure new hardware and software
- add/remove/update user account information
- responsible for security
- document the configuration of the system
- fine-tune system performance
- ensure network infrastructure is up and running

To work efficiently, you may find it helpful to create a realistic schedule of responsibilities to help set priorities and track completed tasks. If you're struggling to find time, take an honest look at how many coffee or cigarette breaks you take and hold yourself accountable by limiting these extraneous and time consuming additions. This will keep you organized and ready to communicate with the management team at a moment's notice.



Expectations are always high when it comes to the performance of the system administrator. Possessing these skills can help turn an average system administrator into an extraordinary network hero.

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About triCerat

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