



# Consultants Network

## Frequently Asked Questions about Members of the Apple Consultants Network

Members of the Apple Consultants Network are professional, independent consultants who can help you tackle technical and creative challenges smoothly and efficiently. There are approximately 1,000 members throughout the U.S., Canada and Latin America, offering a wide variety of services—from setting up your home office to implementing complex storage array networks.

To help you better understand how these members can help, here's a list of the most frequently asked questions raised by both business professionals and home users.

### Member Qualifications – Certifications, Training, and Experience

#### **How does someone become a member of the Apple Consultants Network?**

Members of the Apple Consultants Network must complete an application, pass a background check, and pay an annual fee. In addition, they must hold at least one exam-based technical certification from Apple and complete a comprehensive profile detailing their technical expertise. As a result, you can feel confident that members of the Apple Consultants Network are highly qualified to meet your needs. You can view certifications and technical expertise by looking up a specific member within the search directory at <http://consultants.apple.com/consultant/>.

#### **What type of certifications must consultants hold in order to be part of the Apple Consultants Network?**

Members are required to hold at least one of the following certifications in Mac OS X:

- Apple Certified Help Desk Specialist (ACHDS) – A consultant holding this certification has a verified foundation in Mac OS X client software.
- Apple Certified Technical Coordinator (ACTC) – A consultant holding this certification has a verified foundation in Mac OS X and Mac OS X Server.
- Apple Certified System Administrator (ACSA) – A consultant holding this certification is a full-time professional administrator and/or engineer who manages medium-to-large networks, utilizing Mac OS X server in a demanding and complex multiplatform environment.

Many members hold additional Apple as well as third-party certifications.

#### **How do members stay up-to-speed on the latest products and technology?**

Members of the Apple Consultants Network understand that knowledge and experience are their most valuable assets, and that to succeed in a very competitive market, they have to stay current on the latest products and technology. In addition to receiving specialized training from Apple, members of the Apple Consultants Network have access to private technical resources that help them stay on the cutting edge of industry trends. They're also required to keep their Apple certifications current in order to be included in the program's referral directory.

## Member Services – How to Choose the Right Consultant

### **Who hires members of the Apple Consultants Network?**

Individuals and Companies of all sizes and types hire consultants. Home users frequently hire consultants to design home networks, select and install hardware and software and provide specific product training. Small companies often hire consultants as their virtual IT department. Larger companies who are looking to implement new technologies or need to handle staff or skills shortages will frequently hire consultants to augment their IT staff.

### **If I want help on my computer at home, can I hire a member to make a house call?**

Many members of the Apple Consultants Network focus on home users, so they have a solid understanding of the types of services that are needed from consumers who may want to setup a wireless network for their living room or create a comprehensive library of family videos. Regardless of what you may want to accomplish, there are consultants available to provide personalized service right in your own home.

### **What types of services do members offer?**

Consultants offer a wide variety of services, from setting up an automated workflow to providing a solution for cross-platform integration. Though many specialize in particular solutions, a general list of services include:

- Business Management
- Creative Development
- Database Creation and Management
- Hardware and Software Maintenance and Service
- Networking & System Administration
- Storage & Server Solutions
- Web Development
- Training

### **Can I hire a consultant long-term or on a per project basis?**

Most consultants can be hired for single projects, while many also offer long-term service contracts. Establishing a successful working relationship with a consultant can be a valuable, long-term investment for your business, and many companies continue working with the same consultant for an extended period of time. Before hiring a consultant, be sure to request information about their terms of service and areas of expertise, and ask for examples of successful customer implementations.

### **How can I find a consultant in my area?**

You can locate consultants using the Apple Consultants Network searchable directory at <http://consultants.apple.com/consultant/>. Even if the members you locate in the directory aren't near you, don't hesitate to contact one or more of them to see if they're willing to travel. In the event that they can't help you, ask if they can refer you to another consultant who might meet your requirements. Remember consultants vary in their range of skills, services offered and availability. Proximity alone should not be used as a selection criterion.

## Member Solutions – How to get the Best Results

### **What's the best way to manage the relationship with a consultant?**

A consultant's primary task is to understand your technical needs and translate them into solutions that work for you. It's important to have specific objectives and milestones to keep a project on track. Ask the consultant to estimate when the project will be completed and request progress reports on a regular basis. The consultant should keep you informed of their progress and of the costs being incurred.

**Can you provide examples of the types of solutions that members have implemented for customers?**

Members of the Apple Consultants Network are primarily technical consultants. Collectively they have delivered a wide range of solutions to their clients. Some typical examples include:

- Automated workflows for a wide range of business and creative processes
- Secure back-up systems and recovery plans
- Storage array systems
- Cost-effective audio and video production tools
- Cross-platform collaboration and networking
- Database creation and maintenance
- Switching from Mac to Windows
- Home wireless networking

For examples of solutions provided by members of the Apple Consultants Network, please refer to: <http://consultants.apple.com/profiles/>

**What kind of results can be achieved by hiring a member of the Apple Consultants Network?**

When a member of the Apple Consultants Network is involved in a project, the results will likely include any or all of the following:

- Cost savings due to a decrease in production overhead, lower licensing fees, and fewer administrative costs
- Enhanced collaboration through easier access to shared information
- Multiplatform functionality by enabling systems to run on different operating systems
- Improved security through protected file transfer and easily-restricted access and authentication
- Improved utilization of storage capacity and full-proof backup and disaster recovery
- Enhanced workflow through automation, improved efficiency, and easier access to network resources

**Is there a standard billing rate for members of the Apple Consultants Network?**

As independent consultants, members of the Apple Consultants Network set their own rates, which can vary considerably from market to market. Discuss different pricing options with the consultant you've chosen, keeping in mind that the services and solutions they provide will typically deliver a long-term return on investment. To research your cost options, ask the consultant for references of clients who've hired them for similar services. Also keep in mind that some consulting services are billed per hour, and others are per project. This usually depends on the types of services offered. If a member is creating a custom application, the best approach might be to establish a fee for the entire project. On the other hand, ongoing services such as IT support are usually covered under service contracts or billed on an hourly or per-call basis. Ask the consultant what type of billing structure they recommend for your project.

**How do you differentiate the services offered at the Genius Bar located within an Apple Retail Store versus those provided by members of the Apple Consultants Network?**

The Genius Bar at an Apple Retail Store offers Apple product specific support, tips, and troubleshooting. In addition, all service offered by the Genius Bar is provided onsite at the Apple Retail Store. Members of Apple Consultants Network work in collaboration with the Genius Bar to offer additional services including non-Apple product integration, solution design and implementation and support, typically at the client's location.