Getting the Best Support

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NeXT's Support group can help you solve your NEXTSTEP problems. To make the most of your call to Support, you should have the relevant information right at hand. It also helps to understand how the group works and what its members do to answer your questions.

Welcome to Support

Almost everyone who uses computers realizes the importance of technical support. Although great software tries to make it as easy as possible for you to do your work, a helping hand always enables you to do more.

The NeXT Support group provides you with this kind of assistance. Whether you're building a mission-critical custom application or converting your business to the client/server networking model, we're here to help you tackle your technical challenges.

What We Do and What We Offer

The Support group at NeXT helps people find specific solutions to problems they come across after purchasing NEXTSTEP. The questions we handle are like these:

- "How can I get my copy of NEXTSTEP installed on my Intel computer?"

- "How do I change the IP address of my Netinfo server?"

- "How can I improve the performance of graphics operations in my custom app?"

- "How can I best manage the use of distributed objects across my company network?"

Our support is delivered to you through several products. Our most accessible product comes to you at no charge: It's the NeXTanswers™ information retrieval service. Through various automated meansÐe-mail, anonymous **ftp**, and phoneÐNeXTanswers gives you direct access to well-documented technical information 24 hours a day.

If the information you need isn't documented in NeXTanswers, you can still get an answer from other support offerings. If you want to pay as you go, you can use our Pay-per-Call program. If you want to get unlimited support through our 800 number for a year, you can purchase a Hotline contract. And if you need occasional on-site support and a designated engineer who works directly with you, you can purchase our Premium Support service.

Regardless of which support product you choose, though, you are assured of getting high-quality, informed technical support. Moreover, our team constantly monitors many sources of information, including NeXT's software engineering, quality and testing, and marketing and sales departments; external publications such as *NeXTWORLD*®; the Internet; and you, the support customer. We use all of this information to address the problems and questions that you present us.

To find out more about our support products, please see the NEXTSTEP Support & Education Catalog. To find out how to use NeXTanswers, see ªHow to Talk to NeXTº in the FYI department.

Before You Call

To make the most of your call to NeXT Support, there are few things you can do before you call. First, check the NEXTSTEP documentation and NeXTanswers. We've tried to cover all the questions most people have. It's to your advantage to use these resources, because they're the fastest way to get current information and they're free.

If you can't find the answer to your question in NeXTanswers, the next step is to call us.

Information to have in front of you

But wait! Before you make that phone call, please make sure you have the necessary information on hand, so we can answer your question as quickly as possible:

1 List the hardware and software configuration of the computer that's having problems. Which information we need depends on the type of problem you're having. ªWhat to Know

Before You Call⁰ lists things we need to know for common problems.

2 Know the complete history of the problem. Be prepared to answer questions like these:

   ªWhat happened between when it was working and when it stopped working?⁰
   ªHave you been able to re-create the problem more than once?⁰
   ªWhat messages appear in the Console?⁰
   ªIf you're using a PC, is your setup listed on the *Hardware Compatibility Guide*?⁰

If you're calling Support to help someone else, make sure you get this information from that person before you call us.

3 Have access to the computer that's causing your problems. If you can't be physically in front of the computer, make sure to have access through a **telnet** or remote login session.

Taking these steps will ensure that you receive the most timely, informative help.

Making the call

There are a couple of ways you can request support. One is to use e-mail, sending your request to **ask_next@next.com**. You can provide more detailed information to our engineers through e-mail than you can over the phone. The other way to request support is to call 1-800-848-NeXT and choose the option for Support. (Outside the United States, call your nearest NeXT representative.)

For urgent problems that involve a lot of detail, it's best to send e-mail first and follow up with a phone call. That will help us to understand the severity of your problem.

When You Call

Unless you have a Premium Support contract, all of your requests for support are channeled through the Frontline support team. When you call Support, you're greeted by an engineer who handles frequently asked questions and solves problems that can be addressed quickly.

The first thing the engineer does is determine what your problem is and document everything you say. After the engineer has an idea of what your problem is, he or she verifies whether you have a support contract or takes a credit card number. After documenting your problem,

the engineer tries to solve it quickly.

If that engineer can't solve your problem immediately, the engineer handling your call puts a log of the problem into our call database and arranges for another engineer to call you back. The follow-up engineer can then spend time researching and solving the problem.

Once your call log is in our system, you're assured a response time consistent with the severity of your problem. We have three severity levels in Support:

- **Severity 3:** General query or problem.

- **Severity 2:** Problem that hinders you but doesn't prevent you from getting work done.

- **Severity 1:** System down in a production environment.

Before your initial call ends, the Frontline engineer discusses with you the severity of your problem and gives you a log number that you can reference on return calls. Keep a record of this information until your problem is resolved.

Getting Back to You

Because our engineers work on a call-back basis, they may have occasional problems catching you by phone. To prevent possible ªphone tag,º leave as many different ways to contact you as possibleÐfax numbers, pager numbers, home phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and so on. That way, we can reach you by whatever means is quickest.

We don't like leaving messages any more than you do, so if you think it's becoming a problem, please let us know.

Whatever your problem, we'll do as much as we can to help you solve it. Generally we won't walk you through a documented procedure, but we'll help you with any specific problems you have. Note that if your problem is caused by your using unsupported hardware, you'll be charged for all of the time spent solving your problem. (The *Hardware Compatibility Guide* lists all of the systems we currently support.)

The Hardware Compatibility Guide is available on NeXTanswers.   Request document #1002.

Here to Help You

Whenever you get in a bind, don't know where to start, or get stuck in a dead end, that's when you can call on NeXT Support. RememberÐwe're here to help!

If you'd like to discuss our procedures and policies, or suggest how we could change them to match your business style better, please contact me. We're always looking for ways to meet our customers' needs!

Allen Denison is the Frontline Supervisor in NeXT's Support Department. You can reach him by e-mail at **Allen_Denison@next.com***.*

What to Know Before You Call

By providing the following information about your problem or question, you can help us help you resolve it more quickly.   For example, if you tell us the type of interface your Database Kit, application uses to get to your database, we can resolve your programming issues faster. Similarly, if you're having a problem installing our software on an Intel machine, we're able to be more helpful if we know your hardware configuration.

Intel hardware configuration
- Software version
- Computer (including CPU speed)
- Memory
- Disk type and size
- SCSI adaptor
- DOS partition (Yes/No)
- CD-ROM drive
- Graphics adaptor, including video RAM
- Other devices installed or connected (Note: You might also need to tell us the BIOS versions for some devices.)

Here's an example of the information you should provide when you call:

- Software version: *NEXTSTEP 3.2 for Intel processors (User and Developer)*
- Computer: *DEC MTE d2 (a i486 running at 66 MHz)*
- Memory: *32 MB RAM*
- Disk type and size: *SCSI/450 MB*
- SCSI adaptor: *Adaptec 1542CF*
- DOS partition: *Yes*
- CD-ROM drive: *NEC CDR-74*
- Graphics adaptor, including video RAM: *On board/4 MB VRAM*
- Other devices installed or connected: *Intel EtherExpress 16 (Coax)/Archive Viper 150 Tape Backup*

NeXT hardware
- Software version
- Computer (including CPU speed and whether it has an ADB or non-ADB keyboard)
- Memory
- Disk size
- CD-ROM drive

Here's an example:
- Software version: *NEXTSTEP 3.2 for Motorola Processors*
- Computer: *NeXTstation Turbo Color with an ADB keyboard*
- Memory: *32 MB RAM*
- Disk size: *400 MB, 1.2 GB external*
- CD-ROM drive: *NeXT CD-ROM Drive*
- Other devices installed or connected: *NeXT Laser Printer, connected by twisted-pair cable to a network, fax modem (using NXFax from Black & White Software)*

Database Kit
- NEXTSTEP software version
- Adaptor (SYBASE, ORACLE, Interbase)
- Version of server

Here's an example:
- NEXTSTEP software version: *NEXTSTEP 3.2 for Intel Processors (User and Developer)*
- Adaptor (SYBASE, ORACLE, Interbase): *Oracle Adaptor for NeXT Database Kit*
- Version of server: *ORACLE V6*

Printers

- NEXTSTEP software version
- Manufacturer and model name
- Supports PostScript (Yes/No, level supported)
- How accessed (connected locally or accessible on a network)
- Attached to NEXTSTEP machine (Yes/No)
- How administered (through **printcap** or NetInfo)

Here's an example:

- NEXTSTEP software version: *NEXTSTEP 3.2 for Intel processors (User)*
- Manufacturer and model name: *Hewlett Packard LaserJet 4*
- Supports PostScript: *Yes, Level 2*
- How accessed: *Network*
- Attached to NEXTSTEP machine: *No*
- How administered: *Through* **printcap**

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        http://www.next.com/HotNews/Journal/InFocus/Winter1994/ContentsWinter1994.html