

**WANTED**  
TECHNICIAN with three years experience for assignment in Asia or Europe. No college necessary. Salary: \$12,000 to \$19,000 per year, tax-free. Challenging work, with opportunity to move into management or engineering. Paid transportation. Privileges of U.S. Air Force Captain, including PX and Officers Club.

# CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE TECH REP

BY ALLAN C. STOVER

If you read an ad like the above in the classified section of your newspaper, you might think it was too good to be true. However, it accurately describes many technical representative and field engineering opportunities available in the electronics field. On the whole, a tech rep job pays well, offers excellent opportunities for travel, and encompasses a number of duties.

A tech rep is hired by an electronics company which, in turn, sells his services where needed. The U.S. Government, private industry, and local and foreign governments sometimes need electronics technicians for special projects. So, they often sign a contract for enough tech reps to get the job done. The contract might call for the tech reps to do anything from teaching a Job Corps class in New Jersey to manning a lonely tropospheric scatter site in Thailand.

On the job, a tech rep's work varies from assignment to assignment. On one assignment, he might be an advisor, telling a crew of workers what to do. On his next assignment, his job might be to teach a group of students or working technicians the theory and operation of new avionics equipment. Then again, he might operate and maintain a communications system. Most tech reps are called upon to do a bit of everything. In a typical month, he might spend a few days each at teaching a class in electronics theory and practices, helping out on installing or

renovating electronics gear, and repairing a radio or radar system.

Tech reps have been known to operate, maintain, and repair computers, avionics equipment, radar gear, communications systems, test equipment, navigational aids, and just about everything else that uses electronic circuitry. One tech rep might specialize, his duties confined to repairing a single complex transceiver model, while another might be called upon to repair a dozen or so different models and types of equipment. Some tech reps specialize in teaching.

An assignment might put a tech rep in the heart of downtown Manila, right in the midst of civilization. On the other hand, assignment locations can be lonely and far from the amenities of civilization, such as in the heart of a jungle or atop a mountain. Assignments can be almost permanent or highly mobile, depending on the contract. Some tech reps stay in the same location for years, while others must pack up and move to a new location every few months.

Most tech reps enjoy their assignments, but few find "paradise." The Manager of International Recruiting for Page Communications Engineers says, "One word of caution to those who are tempted to cast all aside and dash off to unknown places: To the neophyte who expects to find all the creature comforts he is accustomed to, my advice is to look before he leaps. Instead of some pleasurable

off-duty relaxation in exotic Bangkok, he might find himself repairing a radio (transmitter) on an isolated mountaintop in Iran."

Electronics companies employ thousands of tech reps, stationing them in every corner of the world. You can find tech reps in almost every state of the Union, Germany, on the island of Crete, in Taiwan, Ethiopia, and Iran, Vietnam and Korea, Spain, Turkey, the Philippines, New Guinea, Jamaica, the Arctic, and on some Pacific islands, and aboard ships and submarines.

*RCA Service Co. Technical Services representative works on radar unit.*



**What and Where.** ITT's Federal Electric Corporation ships their tech reps all over the world. Sometimes they include tech rep services as part of a contract for new equipment. In December 1973, Federal Electric signed \$56-million worth of new contracts and renewals, which gives an idea of the size of the corporation's operations. Here are a few of the hundreds of jobs the Federal Electric tech reps have handled:

They have installed a microwave communications system in South Vietnam. (The South Vietnam government issued a stamp in their honor.) In Italy, Germany, France, Belgium, England, and the Netherlands, they installed a tropospheric scatter system. For years, they have operated and maintained DEWLine (Distant Early Warning Line) sites ranging from Iceland and Greenland to northern Alaska in some of the bleakest and frostiest locations inhabited by man. The Federal Electric Corporation has held this contract since 1956—almost two decades.

Federal Electric tech reps per-

formed operational and maintenance services as the prime contractor on the Air Force's Western Test Range, where they manned range tracking ships and stations, among other things. They installed a computerized reservations system in the British Overseas Airways Corporation's offices in New York.

Tech reps from RCA Service Company have tackled hundreds of different jobs in as many different places all over the world.

A satellite ground station was installed in the People's Republic of China. They operated and maintained a tracking site in the Arctic, and they operated and maintained missile tracking stations on islands in the Atlantic Ocean for the Air Force's Eastern Test Range.

The RCA tech reps gave technical assistance and training to the Philippine, South Korean, Ethiopian, and Spanish air forces.

**Salaries and Extras.** Most companies pay their tech reps well. Base pay usually is on an average with a

good technician, but "extras" can push the total-package up to more than what the average electronics engineer earns, from \$10,500 to \$19,000 per year. Overtime can run these figures even higher. The extras depend on the company the tech rep works for and the assignment on which he is sent. Examples of extras include:

**Per Diem:** A daily allowance that is designed to repay the tech rep for most of his extra expenses. It covers hotels, meals, cleaning bills, tips, and other expenses. Per diem is usually a flat rate; so, if a tech rep cuts corners, he can pocket the money he saves. The per diem rate runs from a few dollars up to and beyond \$25 per day. Some companies pay per diem for as long as the tech rep remains on the assignment, while others pay it for three to six months only. Still other companies pay per diem only when the tech rep travels on business away from his regular assignment. A few companies pay the tech rep's actual expenses instead of per diem.

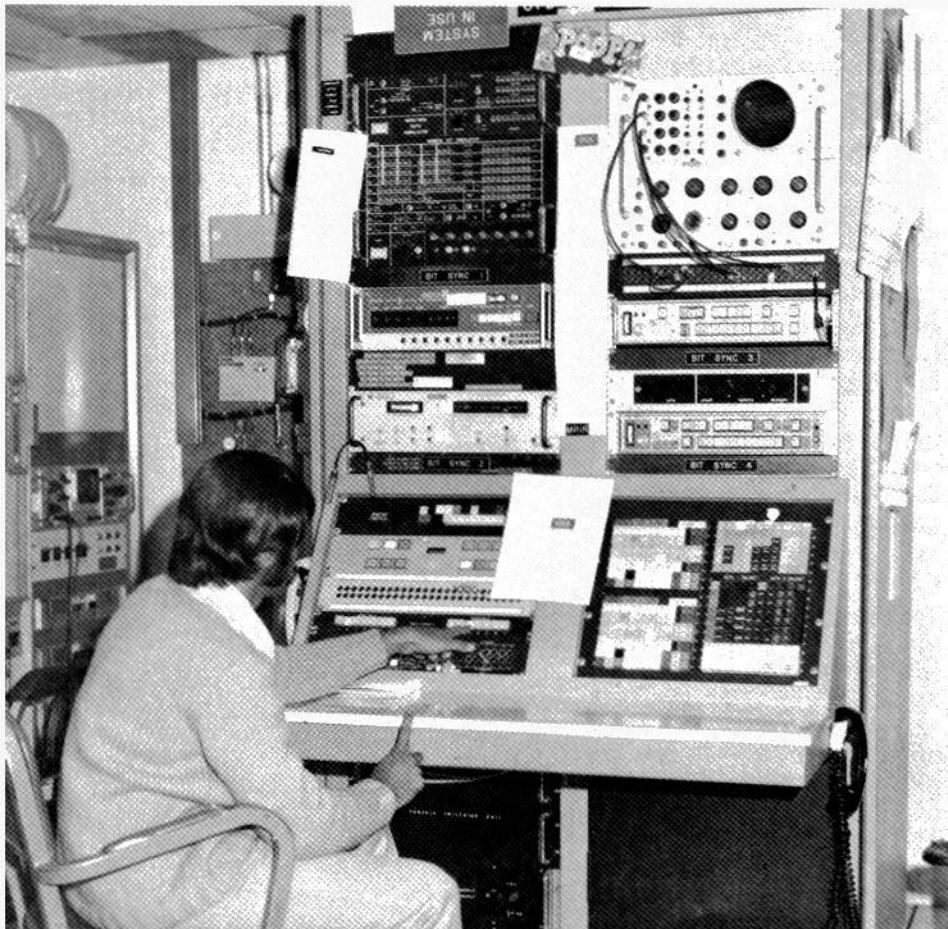
**Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA):** A few companies pay COLA to cover the difference in living costs between a U.S. city and an overseas location. The COLA in Tokyo, the world's most expensive city in which to live, can run hundreds of dollars a month. One company gives a flat 30 percent of base pay no matter where they assign a tech rep. Some U.S. Air Force contracts direct the local military disbursement officer to pay a COLA to each rep. COLA can start at \$7 per day on some contracts.

**Bonuses:** Some companies pay a flat bonus for overseas service. It can be 10 percent of base pay or \$125 per month, depending on the company for which the tech rep works. Some companies pay a bonus that depends on the location of the assignment; a tech rep who lives in a soggy tent in South Vietnam gets a bigger bonus than one who works in downtown Brussels.

This patchwork of pay and allowances makes it difficult to predict a tech rep's pay package. But the average paycheck for tech reps, all extras considered, runs from \$12,000 to \$16,000 per year, with some reps receiving salaries above and other below these figures.

The tech rep who works overseas has an opportunity to take advantage of one of the juiciest Internal Revenue tax laws ever written. If he spends 510 days (about 17 months) out of 18 months outside the U.S., up to \$20,000

*RCA Service Co. Government Services Technician works on Meteorological Data Handling System Center's computer control console at the Goddard Space Flight Center.*





of his yearly income during that period is tax-free! If his company withholds any taxes, the tech rep claims a refund.

Other privileges sweeten the picture even more. Most military contracts with overseas assignments grant the tech rep most of the privileges of a captain. This means that he can live in the Bachelor Officers Quarters, eat and drink in the Officers Club, and shop in the PX and commissary.

The company handles the tech rep's transportation to his assignments. In return for paying per diem while the man is en route to his assignments, the company requires him to spend at least a year on assignment. Should the tech rep decide to terminate his employment before the year is up, he must pay back all the company spent on getting him to his assignment.

**Becoming a Tech Rep.** The qualifications for becoming a tech rep are surprisingly light. Only a handful of positions call for an engineering degree. Most require only technician-level electronics training and three to five years of specialized practical experience. If you worked on a new system in the armed forces, no matter what your rank, you stand an excellent chance of landing a tech rep job. Many companies train some tech reps, but most prefer to hire the man who already has the knowledge and practical experience to go right to work.

If you live near an electronics company that hires men for tech rep positions, apply in person. Alternatively, you can type up a resume and mail it to the companies that hire tech reps and field engineers. (Consult the want ads in your newspaper for addresses.) If your background fits in with a company's needs, you will receive a job application form in the mail or be hired on the spot. (When making up your resume, keep it down to two pages. Just give the facts about education and experience and some personal data.)

The personal data in your resume should include full name, age and date of birth, marital status, state of health, and dates of military service, if any. Under education, list all schools you attended in which you received training for the type of work you are applying for. Include resident, home-study, and military courses taken, detailing the titles of the courses and types of equipment you studied.

When giving details of your work

experience, start with your present position and work back in time. List job titles, the dates you held the positions, and short descriptions of your work duties. List the names and model numbers of all the equipment with which you are familiar. Also, mention any achievements and awards you have received or earned.

**Who Needs Tech Reps?** Scores of large and small companies need qualified men to serve as tech reps. As a rule of thumb, try the large companies first. If you think you can qualify for

the work, you might try the following three companies first:

Federal Electric Corp., 621 Industrial Ave., Paramus, NJ 07652. (Address correspondence to the attention of Mr. Ridings, Director, Field Services.)

Page Communications Engineers, Inc., Vienna, VA 22180. (Attn.: Manager, International Recruiting)

RCA Service Co., Camden, NJ 08101.

If these companies do not need your talents, try Bendix, Philco-Ford, and Kentron. ♦

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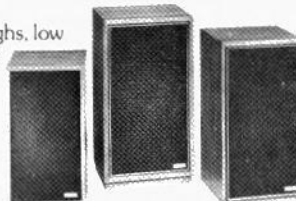
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