The State of Splunk Careers Report

Splunk And Your Career:
A Global Survey Reveals Greater Job Security and Higher Salaries for Specific Data Skills

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Executive Summary: Splunk Skills = Potential for Greater Job Security and Higher Salaries

Splunk Practitioners Flourish in the Face of Uncertain Times

To revise an old adage, knowledge isn’t power; it’s better pay, increased job satisfaction, enhanced confidence, and greater career opportunities.

That’s because IT teams are under increasing pressure to embrace a wide array of digital technologies and product solutions. Artificial intelligence, interconnected devices, cyberthreat detection tools, and cloud computing are all driving digital transformation across industries. But not all solutions are created equal. In fact, many organizations place a premium on technologies that promise to improve IT operations, protect against cybersecurity threats, accelerate application delivery, and make the most of data.

To explore the impact of specialized IT knowledge on career variables such as salary, promotability, and marketability, ESG, in partnership with Splunk Inc., conducted a research survey of 245 Splunk practitioners. The findings are clear: IT administrators with Splunk knowledge earned 42% more than general IT administrators of similar seniority based on secondary data sources, whereas Splunk-trained cybersecurity practitioners earned 16% more based on ESG’s secondary research. Other advantages include greater job security, marketability, confidence, and career advancement.

Clearly, it can pay to be proficient in Splunk. What impact can expertise with this Data-to-Everything™ solution have on a leader’s career trajectory, especially in these challenging times? And how might organizations benefit from Splunk-savvy workers?

Key Findings

Leaders and organizations that take the time to discover Splunk’s advantages are poised to reap potentially significant rewards, especially in the face of a tough economy, slackening labor market, and mounting uncertainty. Here’s how:

- **Splunk practitioners earn more than their peers.**
  - Based on ESG’s secondary research, Splunk practitioners in an IT administrative role earn 42% more than non-Splunk practitioners; Splunk-trained cybersecurity practitioners earn 16% more than their traditional counterparts.
  - Splunk experts with more than 5 years of experience earn 61% more than Splunk practitioners with just 2 years of experience, regardless of an individual’s age.
  - The majority of Splunk practitioners credit their specialized knowledge for increased earnings.

- **Splunk experts report a high degree of job security.**
  - More than 4 out of 5 Splunk practitioners believe they are valued by their employer.
  - The most frequently cited benefit of learning Splunk is increased job security and portable skills.
  - 80% of respondents are confident in their ability to quickly find a new job with comparable pay and responsibilities, if needed.

- **Splunk expertise can open the door to career opportunities.**
• 63% of Splunk practitioners say learning Splunk has allowed them to refocus their career in a more interesting direction.

• 84% of respondents have been given the opportunity to work on strategic stretch assignments in the past 24 months.

• 82% of respondents feel it is important that any future/prospective employer also uses Splunk.

• Splunk expertise is valuable for both employers and employees.

  • Most organizations have identified multiple use cases for Splunk, and most of those identify a secondary use case within days of their initial deployment.

  • 87% of organizations are in a better competitive position today as a result of their usage of Splunk.
From Job Satisfaction to Salary Gains: Splunk Practitioners Report Being Happier and Earning More

In today's highly competitive labor market, money talks. In fact, 61% of survey respondents believe salary has the biggest impact on job satisfaction, second only to work-life balance, cited by 66% of respondents (see Figure 1). More than simply a paycheck, salary is a powerful yardstick for evaluating an employee's performance and contribution to a company. A competitive salary can also enhance an organization’s ability to attract and retain the best talent—a key competitive differentiator as IT employment in the US reached an estimated 12.1 million workers in 2019, according to Cyberstates 2020.

Figure 1. Drivers of Job Satisfaction

Which of the following factors do you believe most affect your job satisfaction? (Percent of respondents, N=245, five responses accepted)

- Work-life balance: 66%
- Salary: 61%
- Work that fully utilizes your skills and abilities: 48%
- Relationship with your manager: 43%
- Meaningfulness of work: 43%
- Having the right tools and technologies to do your job: 39%
- Job security: 39%
- Fit with company culture: 32%
- Benefits: 32%
- Opportunity for career advancement: 29%
- Equity in the workplace (appropriately distributed work and recognition): 17%
- Well-defined responsibilities: 14%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group
It Pays to Know Splunk

To better understand how salaries compare among IT leaders, ESG asked all survey participants their total annual compensation, and compared this data against secondary data sources, such as Salary.com and Glassdoor.com. To ensure a fair comparison, ESG isolated US-based respondent data, and then divided it into two categories by role: IT administrators (N=46) and cybersecurity managers/architects (N=32).

The result: When comparing salary data from both Salary.com and Glassdoor.com with survey data for senior systems administrators with 15+ years of experience, ESG found that Splunk IT administrators earn 42% more in salary, compensation, and bonuses than the broader general market (see Figure 2).

One survey respondent reported: “Splunk has allowed me to escape a career dead-end. I’ve nearly tripled my salary in three years. I’m now positioned to learn useful, growing technologies.”

Similarly, salary data from both Salary.com and Glassdoor.com for cybersecurity managers and cybersecurity engineers with 15+ years of experience revealed that Splunk security professionals earn 16% more than their peers (see Figure 2).

In other words, by better understanding how Splunk technology can accelerate digitization, ensure business resilience, and analyze data, IT leaders may significantly boost their earning potential—and value to employers.

Figure 2. The Splunk Compensation Advantage

What is your current total annual compensation inclusive of base pay (salary or regular hourly compensation), variable compensation (overtime, commission, etc.), and bonuses ($US)? (Mean)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Base Pay</th>
<th>Variable Compensation</th>
<th>Total Compensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior systems administrator (15+ yrs experience)</td>
<td>$95,795</td>
<td>$38,654</td>
<td>$134,449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splunk user, IT administrator title (N=46)</td>
<td>$136,500</td>
<td>$19,859</td>
<td>$156,359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybersecurity manager/engineer (15+ yrs experience)</td>
<td>$133,984</td>
<td>$11,375</td>
<td>$145,359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splunk user, cybersecurity management/architect title (N=32)</td>
<td>$155,359</td>
<td>$10,024</td>
<td>$165,383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experience, Not Age, Drives Higher Earnings

Experience plays a large part in the variances in pay among Splunk practitioners. Survey findings show that IT leaders who have been using Splunk for more than 5 years earn 61% more than those with less than 2 years’ experience (see Figure 3).

Yet age is not a factor when calculating Splunk’s impact on an IT leader’s earning potential. For instance, among respondents 35 years and younger, those with more experience earn 66% more than IT leaders with less experience ($129k
versus $78k). Similarly, among respondents ages 36-45, experienced Splunk practitioners earn 40% more than their more novice counterparts. Those over the age of 45 with Splunk expertise earn 52% more than those with less experience.

**Figure 3. Earnings Vary with Experience**

![Bar chart showing earnings by experience level.](chart)

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**Skills that Appreciate Over Time**

In some instances, technology expertise can deliver immediate career advantages like increased annual earnings. However, the real value is in developing skills that will appreciate over time. To calculate the long-term benefits of Splunk expertise, ESG asked respondents if they had received a performance-based raise in the last 12 months. More than half (57%) answered in the affirmative. On average, Splunk practitioners received raises of 7.78%. Said one respondent: “If I hadn’t been certified as a Splunk Architect (version 6.x), I would not have received the 57% raise I did when changing positions.”

Again, proficiency plays a part in dictating an IT leader’s financial windfall. For example, self-professed Splunk experts earned a hike in pay 29% higher than those with adequate or lower skill sets.
Immediate Returns, Long-term Gains: Careers with Splunk Reportedly Drive Promotion and Salary Increases

Financial compensation is only one component of a long and fulfilling career. While our survey findings indicate Splunk expertise has a positive impact on an IT leader’s potential earnings, we delved further into the data to explore the wider implications of developing these skills. ESG asked respondents how, if at all, learning Splunk had an influence on their careers for the better. Among the many benefits reported, the majority (53%) said learning Splunk had increased their earnings, and more than a third credited their Splunk knowledge with a promotion. Moreover, the more years spent honing Splunk skills, the more likely an IT leader is to attribute these career advances to this particular technology (see Figure 5).

**Figure 4. How Splunk Proficiency Relates to the Size of a Raise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Users of adequate skill or lower (N=24)</th>
<th>Proficient users (N=39)</th>
<th>Very proficient users (N=76)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.38%</td>
<td>7.77%</td>
<td>8.23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5. Role of Splunk in Higher Earnings or a Promotion**

How has your knowledge of Splunk technologies changed your career for the better? (Percent of respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 years or less (N=44)</th>
<th>3 to 5 years (N=97)</th>
<th>More than 5 years (N=101)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earned a promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased earnings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group
Job Security in a Rapidly Changing Labor Market

Covid-19 ushered in an era of uncertainty as organizations struggled to support remote workforces, maintain overburdened networks, and combat mounting cybersecurity risks. The good news is, among Splunk practitioners, job security ranks as one of the top benefits. In fact, as recruiting initiatives stall in response to today’s global pandemic economy, IT leaders can increasingly count on in-demand, highly portable skills in technologies such as Splunk to serve as an invaluable currency.

Figure 6. Achieved Career Outcomes

How has your knowledge of Splunk technologies changed your career for the better? (Percent of respondents, N=245, multiple responses accepted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased job security/portable skills</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed me to be more effective at my job</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed focus area to something more interesting to me</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased respect/influence among colleagues</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allowed me to be more efficient at my job</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased earnings</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned a promotion</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

Even more telling is the fact that this survey data was collected over the period from March 31 to July 10, at the peak of Covid-19 when mandatory lockdown regulations and long-term social distancing policies significantly dampened people’s career prospects, particularly in customer-facing industries such as hospitality and travel.

Yet Splunk practitioners remain bullish with regard to employment opportunities. Case in point: When asked if they were to leave their current job (voluntarily or involuntarily), how confident they are in their ability to find a new job with
comparable/better responsibilities and compensation within a 3-month period, four out of five (80%) said they were confident or very confident in a positive outcome (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Practitioners’ Confidence in Finding a New Job, If Needed**

If you were to leave your current job (voluntarily or involuntarily) today, how confident are you in your ability to find a new job with comparable/better responsibilities and compensation within a 3-month period? (Percent of respondents, N=245)

Very confident, 49%
Confident, 31%
Somewhat confident, 15%
Not very confident, 5%
Not at all confident, 1%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

Contributing to this confidence is a strong sense of the value employers place on well-developed Splunk expertise. Indeed, when asked if respondents agree or disagree with the statement, “I feel my employer values my skills and capabilities,” 81% answered affirmatively. It naturally follows then that Splunk practitioners believe that prospective employers would hold Splunk proficiency in the same high regard.

**Figure 8. Practitioners’ Belief That They Are Valued by Their Current Employers**

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: I feel my employer values my skills and capabilities. (Percent of respondents, N=245)

Strongly agree, 39%
Mostly agree, 42%
Neutral, 14%
Mostly disagree, 4%
Strongly disagree, 1%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group
Splunk Practitioners Drive Transformation for Themselves and Their Organizations

The tactical gains of possessing Splunk expertise are evident: an increase in financial compensation and greater job security. But the survey findings also underscore less-tangible advantages, including the third most-frequently cited benefit of Splunk expertise: the ability to change one’s focus area to something more interesting, cited by 63% of respondents (see Figure 6).

“Honestly, I was about ready to 'quit IT'. Then I was moved to a new role where I set up and managed our Splunk instance. It completely reignited my passion for work.”

These days, IT leaders are looking to do more than simply keep the lights on. Rather, many are keen to find new and innovative ways to organize and extract real-time insights from massive amounts of machine data from virtually any source. By becoming data experts through their mastery of Splunk, many IT professionals can free themselves from mundane IT management tasks. The result is a seat at the executive table that allows IT workers to help shape business strategy, optimize processes, and drive disruption through thoughtful data analysis.

In fact, Splunk expertise makes IT leaders ideal candidates for strategic projects and special assignments. Indeed, 84% of respondents report having been asked to work on a stretch assignment, join a special task force, or work on a strategic project outside of their normal job responsibilities in the past 24 months. According to one survey respondent: “Honestly, I was about ready to ‘quit IT’. Then I was moved to a new role where I set up and managed our Splunk instance. It completely reignited my passion for work.”

One possible explanation for this common scenario is that senior-level executives are more likely to view Splunk experts as highly competent and capable of taking on greater responsibility. Further proof is the fact that 60% of Splunk practitioners report that their specialized knowledge has earned them greater respect and influence among colleagues.
Given the considerable career advantages of Splunk expertise, and the time it takes to master any technology solution, it’s no surprise that 82% of survey respondents feel it is important that Splunk is a part of any future or prospective employer’s IT environment. So too do IT leaders consider Splunk a continuing area of focus. Case in point: 79% of survey respondents cite Splunk as one of the top-three most important technologies they must continue to learn and master to advance in their careers (see Figure 10).

**Figure 9. Practitioners’ Tendency to Be Tapped for Special Projects**

In the past 24 months, have you been asked to work on any stretch assignments, been added to an internal task force or “tiger team,” or been asked to work on a strategic project? (Percent of respondents, N=245)

- Yes, 84%
- No, 16%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

**Figure 10. Importance of Splunk Relative to Other Technologies**

Where do you rank Splunk in importance to your career relative to other technologies you must continue to learn and master? (Percent of respondents, N=245)

- Splunk is the most important technology: 44%
- Splunk is among the top three most important technologies: 35%
- Splunk is among the top five most important technologies: 13%
- Splunk is among the top ten most important technologies: 6%
- Splunk is not among the top ten most important technologies: 2%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group
When Practitioners Win, Their Organizations Win

In today’s challenging economy, organizations must carefully scrutinize every dollar spent, including employee compensation. Fortunately, Splunk solutions justify greater financial investment in employees by producing impressive bottom-line results. Indeed, the research findings indicate Splunk delivers enormous value in a number of ways:

- **Application across a variety of use cases:** As a multifaceted tool, Splunk can be leveraged to improve IT operations, cybersecurity, business analytics, and even application development. In fact, the majority (53%) of survey respondents reported identifying a second use case for Splunk within days of deploying the innovative platform.

- **Operational advantages:** 68% of respondents report that Splunk helps reduce downtime, and 63% of respondents cite a reduced number of events and faster resolution times. Another 77% of IT leaders believe Splunk is helping improve threat detection through data correlation. And organizations layering Splunk into development processes report increasing visibility into the development lifecycle (62%) and improvements in code quality (61%).

Regardless of application, survey respondents overwhelmingly credit Splunk for enabling their companies to compete and thrive in uncertain times: Nearly 9 out of 10 respondents believe their company is in a stronger competitive position today than it would be without Splunk (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11. Splunk as a Competitive Differentiator for Organizations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, definitely</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, probably</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, not really</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, definitely not</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you believe your company is in a stronger competitive position today than it would be without Splunk? (Percent of respondents, N=245)  

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group
The Bigger Truth

Some technologies deliver benefits beyond an organization’s infrastructure, security, and application development. Splunk is one such solution. By deepening their knowledge of the Splunk platform, leaders can learn how to accelerate digital transformation, optimize cybersecurity, and improve data utilization. In doing so, they stand to substantially increase their earning potential and build a career trajectory that is not only financially rewarding but also professionally challenging and fulfilling.
Research Methodology

To gather data for this report, ESG conducted a comprehensive survey of IT and business decision makers employed at midmarket organizations and enterprise organizations in North America, Europe, Asia Pacific, Latin America, and the Middle East between March 31st and July 10th, 2020. Respondents were solicited primarily through promotions on Splunk community web properties and from direct communication to Splunk Community program members. Key industries represented include technology, financial, education, and business services, among others. All respondents were provided an incentive to complete the survey in the form of cash awards and/or cash equivalents.

In order to qualify for inclusion in this report, respondents had to self-report as: currently employed in some capacity, currently a user of Splunk products, and currently having some responsibility for the usage of Splunk in their company. After filtering out unqualified respondents, removing duplicate responses, and screening the remaining completed responses (on several criteria) for data integrity, a final sample of 245 respondents remained. The figures that follow detail the demographics of the respondent base discussed in this report.

Note: Totals in figures and tables throughout this report may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Figure 12. Respondents’ Age

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group
Figure 13. Respondents’ Location

Respondents by region. (Percent of respondents, N=245)

- North America, 63%
- Europe, 19%
- Asia Pacific, 13%
- Latin America, 2%
- Middle East, 2%
- Middle East, 2%

North America, 63%
Europe, 19%
Asia Pacific, 13%
Latin America, 2%
Middle East, 2%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

Figure 14. Respondents’ Education Level

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received? (Percent of respondents, N=245)

- Bachelor’s degree in college (4-year), 52%
- Associate’s degree in college (2-year), 12%
- Some college but no degree, 13%
- Master’s degree, 18%
- Doctoral degree, 1%
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED), 3%
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED), 3%
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED), 3%
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED), 3%
- High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED), 3%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group
**Figure 15. Respondents’ Job Function**

Which of the following best describes your current job function? (Percent of respondents, N=245)

- Cybersecurity/security operations, 40%
- IT operations, 34%
- Application development/delivery, 7%
- Business analysis, 3%
- Other, 16%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group

**Figure 16. Company Size**

How many total employees does your company have worldwide? (Percent of respondents, N=233)

- Fewer than 100: 14%
- 100 to 249: 4%
- 250 to 499: 3%
- 500 to 999: 7%
- 1,000 to 2,499: 6%
- 2,500 to 4,999: 10%
- 5,000 to 7,499: 7%
- 7,500 to 14,999: 10%
- 15,000 to 29,999: 9%
- 30,000 or more: 27%
- Don’t know: 4%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group
Figure 17. Company’s Primary Industry

What is your company’s primary industry? (Percent of respondents, N=233)

- Technology, 30%
- Financial, 21%
- Education, 10%
- Other, 15%
- Retail/Wholesale, 2%
- Manufacturing, 3%
- Health Care, 6%
- Communications & Media, 8%
- Government, 8%
- Business Services, 8%
- Manufacturing, 3%

Source: Enterprise Strategy Group