

The Customer Service Workplace

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Customer Service Job Description

Simply put, the customer service worker (CSW) answers questions and solves problems. This requires solid listening and communication skills, and the ability to connect with customers through many different forms of media.

The first and foremost job of the customer service worker is to interact with customers, clients, constituents, and so forth on behalf of a company or organization. They might provide information about products and services. They might also collect detail on a customer's complaints and help resolve them. And they may also take orders and handle returns or refunds.

There are more than 2-million customer service jobs in the United States alone. Here are some different types of customer service jobs:

- Receptionist/Front Desk
- Salesperson
- Insurance Agent
- Data Entry/Order Clerk
- Repair Service Technicians
- Telemarketing Specialist
- Call Center Representative
- Counter & Rental Clerk
- Food Service
- Travel Professional
- Child Care Provider
- Security Guard

A typical job description for a customer service worker may include these specific duties:

- Listen and respond to customers' needs and concerns;
- provide information about products and services;
- take orders, determine charges, and oversee billing or payments;
- review or make changes to customer accounts;
- handle returns or complaints;
- record details of customer contacts and actions taken;
- research answers or solutions as needed;
- refer customers to supervisors, managers, or others who can help.

Customer service workers may work in a customer contact center using telephone, email and live chat connections; or they may be stationed at service desk providing face-to-face service to customers on site. The customer service workers may work from a manual that provides solutions and answers for most questions and problems. If a worker is unable to resolve the problem, she or he may turn to a team member or supervisor for assistance.

Some customer service workers may specialize in a single mode of communication such as telephone, email, or chat; or they may be assigned to communicate across several modes of communicating with customers. So workers need to have solid communication skills, as well as technical skills working with various communication technologies and software programs.

Most every type of business and service agency provides customer service or support, and workers may need to develop specialized knowledge in a particular field such as banking, public utilities, consumer electronics, computer software, etc. Customer service workers in a retail store often may help customers learn how to use a product, or handle a return for defective or unsatisfactory purchases.

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Customer service workers in a contact center may be placed at a workstation, outfitted with a telephone, headset, and computer. These call centers may be very busy, noisy, with non-stop stressful work. Workers in a retail store may be equally busy, dealing with a long line of customers. Whether in person, on the phone, or over the computer, the customers are frequently frustrated and upset, and often angry and challenging.

Supervisors will closely assess the performance of the customer service workers, to ensure they are working efficiently and accurately. The supervisors may listen in on telephone calls, monitor online communications, and review records of customer interactions.

Most customer service workers hold fulltime jobs, and must be prepared to work a variety of shifts as more companies provide 24-hour support service. It's common to be expected to work weekends, holidays, and rotating day/evening shifts. In retail stores, weekends and holidays may be the most demanding time for customer services.

Qualifications and Preparation

Most customer service workers have a high school diploma. They must also have good communication and interpersonal abilities, and fundamental computer and telephone skills. They typically receive some on-the-job training before they assume their duties.

The customer service workplace training may last from 2 weeks, to several months if there is specialized knowledge about an industry or product the worker must learn. The training will may include background about the company and its services or products, the typical issues and questions a customer may present, the communication systems that may be used, and other matters that may be specific to a given position.

The workers may be paid during their training, which may take place in a classroom setting, watching another customer service worker on the job, and actual hands-on practice while being coached by another worker or supervisor. Since products and services are constantly changing, additional training may well be an on-going process.

Since some products and services are more complicated to learn such as banking and highly regulated industries, some customer service workers may be expected to have some college education or a degree. Customer service workers who work with insurance or financial companies may be required to pass written exams and hold special licenses. Preparatory training for this is often provided by employers.

Important Skillsets

This course aims to help develop the skills necessary to become an effective and successful customer service worker. Quite often these abilities need to be bundled into a set of skills to meet the demands of employers, customers, and the situation at hand. We will be further addressing these skillsets in the materials ahead:

Communication skillsets. A customer service worker must apply sensitive listening and speaking skills to accurately assess and respond to a customer's questions and needs. The worker needs to be comfortable with communication media including telephone calls, email, and live chat; and be able to communicate clearly and accurately, with proper use of written and spoken styles.

Problem-solving skillsets. To help resolve customer issues, the customer service worker needs to be able to analyze problems, research answers, and help a customer implement solutions. These problem-solving skillsets may be considerably expanded for positions such as computer support specialists, bank tellers, financial advisors, and other positions requiring special studies and certifications

Customer service skillsets. A customer service worker needs to handle questions and problems with a friendly and professional approach. Customers may come from many different backgrounds, be frustrated and confused, be angry and difficult—so the customer service worker needs to be patient, understanding, sympathetic, polite, and create a positive relationship to help resolve the problem at hand, and represent the company well to help ensure good ongoing business standing.

Summary:

- The job of the customer service worker is to answer questions, resolve issues, and provide customer satisfaction.
- Customer service workers provide a number of functions in most every industry, sometimes working face-to-face, other times through service centers using telephone and computer technologies.
- The typical customer service job is fulltime, and frequently doesn't require more than a high school diploma.
- Most customer service positions will require some in-house training, and possible licensure depending upon the nature of the job.
- Important skillsets to develop in this course include communication, problem solving, and specific customer service tactics.