

Customer Care Job Interview Questions with Answers

1. “Why do you want to work here?”

To answer this question, you must have researched the company. Reply with the company’s attributes as you see them and how your qualities match them.

2. “Tell me about yourself.”

This is not an invitation to ramble on. If the context isn’t clear, you need to know more about the question before giving an answer.

Whichever direction your answer ultimately takes, be sure that it has some relevance to your professional endeavours. You should also refer to one or more of your key personal qualities, such as honesty, integrity, being a team player, or determination.

3. “What is the biggest challenge you have faced in work in the past 12 months?”

This is often an opening question, as it allows you to use one of your strongest examples and may help you relax. For the interviewer, it is also an indication of where your natural focus or achievements may be – people development, process, cost reduction, change etc.

4. “What do you know about the centre/company/role?”

You are not required to be an expert on the organisation or role, but a genuine interest and basic understanding is expected. If you are working with a recruitment consultant, then they should be able to provide you with extra details and assist with preparation.

In addition, look for and use press releases, corporate and social websites. Ring the call centre to see how they handle your call: do they offer ‘up-sell’, ‘cross-sell’, how was the service? Read the job description to prepare for this question, a few key facts or some knowledge show a genuine interest and commercial awareness.

5. “Why do you want this job?”



Whilst more money, shorter hours or less of a commute are all

potential factors for your next role, they are unlikely to make you the ‘stand out’ candidate of the day.

Know what the company are looking for and the potential job available, and align this with your career to date. Highlight your relevant experience, goals and aspirations in line with the role, to showcase why you are the best person for the job.

6. “How would your team/manager describe you?”

Try to think about how you would describe yourself if someone asked you for your strengths, then relate these to what people say about you; peers, agents, managers and stakeholders. Have three or four at the ready, ideally in line with the role you are being interviewed for. Have examples or situations ready, in case your interviewer wants to drill down as to why you think or believe these are your key strengths.

7. “What is your biggest achievement?”

If possible, think work related. There will hopefully be a number of things you are most proud of in your career to date. Think about your key achievements; were they commercial, people or process orientated? What was the cause and effect? How were you involved, what was improved, saved or developed?

If you are short on career-based examples, use personal achievements which demonstrate the commercial skills required for the role, such as team work, commitment, empathy, determination, attention to detail, etc.

8. “Can you give me an example of...?”

These questions will more often than not be based around the role competencies. Preparation and rehearsal are key to answering these effectively.

You will need two or three instances of how you may have: delivered change, managed conflict, improved performance, reduced absence, increased customer satisfaction, etc. You also need to be able to clearly and concisely communicate the problem, solution and outcome.

9. “What have you done to promote great customer service?”

Firstly, know what you think great customer service looks like. Look for situations and examples when you had an idea, a client, or customer call, where you personally went that extra mile.

Did you change a process or procedure? Or perhaps a staff member you mentored, coached or advised delivered a great customer service win or result for your team, brand or business.

10. “What are the key factors which make a successful call centre?”

Fundamentally, if you look under the skin of the best teams and call centres, they do have certain things in common: clear communication, consistency, fun, performance management, leadership, engagement, incentives, etc.

Think what made up the best team or company you have been a part of or have seen. Have examples to back up any statements for how you would play a part in, or create, this team or environment yourself.

11. “How do you manage change?”

Change is an essential part of life in any call centre environment, as the industry strives to achieve best practice for their customers and stakeholders. Have some examples on how you personally managed, or were affected by, some change. What was your focus, what were you aiming to achieve and how did you deliver the outcome? Know what the problems encountered were and what was learned through and following the transformation.

12. “What was your reason for leaving?”

Wherever possible be positive, even if your role was short term or didn't quite work out as expected, as it will have added extra experience or skills to your career history.

Although you are now looking to move on, acknowledge what you learned and what was on offer at the time. Demonstrate good reasons for the decisions you made and show that you understood what was to be gained, or acknowledge what you have learned from your past employer.

13. “Give me an example of how you have dealt with an under-performing team member in the past.”

This question is a typical example of competency-based interviewing (CBI) in practice. It is the most popular interview approach, based on the premise that future performance can be predicted by past behaviour.

The best way to prepare for CBI questions is to revisit the job description and person specification before your interview. You should then ensure that you have covered all bases and can comfortably provide examples for each competency. You must also be able to describe the particular scenario, the actions you took and the impact it had on the business.

Approach this particular question by outlining the processes you followed to investigate and resolve this issue. It is also important to explain the outcome. For example, you may have set an agenda of required actions following on from the meeting you held with the particular team member – can you describe what that was? If you created a performance plan that included clear training and development objectives make sure you say so.

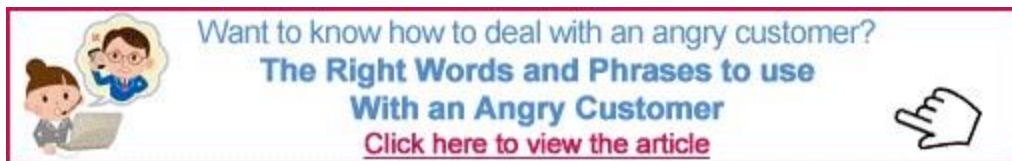
Always finish by explaining how the action you took impacted the business. For example, the team member started to meet all targets and bring in more revenue.

14. Within the interview process you may be required to perform a role-play. A popular example of this is being asked to role-play an escalated call with an unhappy customer.



It is vital to have clear objectives before initiating conversation with the customer; what is your end goal? Ensure you are aware of the parameters, rules and regulations within the company. For example, if the issue is over money, can you refund it? What else can you offer to pacify the customer?

It is important to remain calm, confident, be clear and always remember to ask questions. The interviewer is looking for a patient and composed response. If you are still unsure about how best to approach role-plays contact your local recruitment consultant who should be able to offer you thorough advice.



15. “Can you give me an example of a time when you had to motivate and develop a team in a challenging work environment?”

During interviews, difficult or awkward questions could come your way. The intention is not to catch you out, but to test how you operate under pressure.

This question is (again) in the format of competency-based interviewing, so remember to outline the specific actions you took to motivate your team, as interviewers want to see evidence of hands-on experience.

Make sure to describe all processes undertaken. For example: Did you use incentives to motivate the team? Did you implement training programmes? Did you improve internal communications to help engage staff? Did you implement or revisit career development plans to make the team feel valued? Did you take the time to understand each individual’s motivations?

Be clear and precise and be sure to convey any previous first-hand experience you have – they will want to feel confident that you can handle similar issues within the new role.

16. “What are your strengths and weaknesses?”

Many interviewers will ask you to name your strengths and weaknesses. Typically, people find it easier to express their strengths, but struggle when it comes to identifying even one weakness. Part of the reason for this may be that they do not want to disclose a particular weakness, as this may result in them failing to be successful in getting the job.

A good initial answer (bearing in mind you are applying for a telephone position) to the ‘strengths’ part would be “I have been told that I am an excellent communicator, especially on the telephone, but I feel I have good interpersonal skills generally and find it easy to get along with all sorts of people”.

For weaknesses you need to think of something which is really a strength but put it across as a weakness. It is also important to make it clear what you are doing to address that ‘weakness’.

A good example would be “I am a very conscientious worker and I get irritated by colleagues who don’t share this value and take any opportunity to take time off work or do the minimum required when they are there. I am learning, however, that these people generally get found out and I leave it to my supervisor to recognise these problems and address them”.

An answer such as this would probably make the interviewer think “well that’s not such a bad thing, actually”.

17. Give an example of this behaviour

Having given your strengths and weaknesses, you are then likely to be asked to give examples of when you have displayed this behaviour. Your credibility will plummet if you cannot give an example of the strengths you have stated. With the strengths listed above, a good response would be: “In my present job, I am often asked to handle difficult customer situations because my supervisor knows that I will handle them politely, efficiently and diplomatically and therefore only a few cases would ever get referred to her. Also, because of my strong interpersonal skills, I have often been asked to buddy-up with new team members, to make them comfortable in their new role at the earliest stage possible”.

When asked to give examples on the weaknesses, you need to think very carefully, and plan in advance what your response will be, as many people dig a very deep hole here. A good response to the weakness quoted would be: “I had a situation once where I knew that a more experienced colleague was regularly absent from work following nights out drinking, but she would say that she had a migraine. When this happened my workload increased significantly. I undertook this willingly but I must admit I was annoyed that this person was taking advantage of me and the company. However, I decided to let the supervisor do their job and just get on with mine. In quite a short space of time, the issue was addressed and the problem was resolved”.

18. “Can you give me an example of a particularly difficult customer you had to deal with and how you used your skills to successfully overcome the problem they had?”

Many interviewees freeze at this question, simply because they cannot think of an example, rather than the fact that they have never dealt with one. So have an answer prepared and make sure it is one where you resolved the issue, not one where you had to refer the customer to a higher authority (it’s amazing how many people do this). What the interviewer is looking for are the skills you possess in handling difficult customers, not the intricate detail of the particular issue the customer had.

In your pre-prepared answer you should include the following:

1. I listened carefully to what the customer had to say.
2. I apologised and empathised with their situation.
3. I confirmed my understanding of their concern.
4. I took responsibility to resolve the issue.
5. I offered a solution (plus alternatives if possible).
6. I confirmed the customer was happy with this.
7. I thanked the customer for raising the issue with me.
8. I took immediate action following the call to resolve the situation.
9. I remained calm throughout the whole process.
10. (If appropriate) the customer wrote in to my supervisor congratulating me on my efficiency.

This may seem like a very long answer. But by explaining the situation, without going into the minutia of the product or the complaint, your response need be no more than one minute or so. You will also impress your prospective employer by demonstrating that you already have the skills necessary to handle the most difficult calls.

19. “Describe how you have brought about business change through use of technology and process re-engineering, describing what particular techniques you have employed, e.g. 6 sigma, lean management, etc.”

What you need to show here is primarily an understanding of the particular project management methodology. For example, 6 sigma or lean management.

You should do this by giving an example of a project that went well, and show some of the challenges that you had to overcome along the way.

In particular, it would be useful to show examples of how you managed to get the team on your side and sharing the same vision for success.

If you have no experience of these types of methodologies, you should just give an example of a project that you worked on that went well.

20. "Tell me about a difficult obstacle you had to overcome recently at work? How did you overcome this?"

Here your interviewer wants proof that you will tackle problems head on and not just bury your head in the sand.

A strong answer will clearly demonstrate a problem, an action and a solution.

For example:

Problem: When I was first promoted to team leader, I consistently struggled to ensure that my team achieved their sales targets on a Friday.

Action: I sought the advice of more experienced team leaders to find out how they motivated their teams through the Friday slog.

Solution: Acting on the advice of the other team leaders, I implemented a combination of incentives over the next few weeks and successfully boosted my team's sales figures.

21. - 24. "Please tell me about a situation where someone was performing badly in your team."

"What was the situation?"

"How did you deal with it?"

"What was the outcome?"

A model answer to the above 4 questions could look something like this:

As part of my regular team monitoring, I assess all advisors call quality in order to measure them against the relevant KPIs. When reviewing calls for one advisor, I noticed a trend where the advisor was quite abrupt with callers. I scheduled a meeting in private with that advisor, which I prepared for by reviewing supporting information (including their performance statistics for the month).

I adopted a supportive style as I raised my concerns with the individual regarding their approach with customers, and confirmed their awareness of the business expectations regarding excellent customer service. I sensitively discussed with them any reasons they felt they were unable to deliver this, and emphasised the balance which needed to be maintained between quality and quantity. I adopted a coaching style to enable the advisor to work through any barriers and identify solutions, agreed reasonable and tangible expectations for improvement, arranged appropriate support and scheduled weekly meetings to review their performance against these expectations. As a result, the advisor improved their performance and now consistently achieves all targets.

25. "How do you plan daily and weekly activities?"

Here your potential employer is looking to see that you are capable of planning your time effectively.

They want to hear things like how you hold team meetings to discuss the week ahead and allocate time slots and deadlines for various projects.

26. "Please tell me about an occasion when you had to analyse a large amount of complex information which led to you identifying an improvement in service delivery or cost."

Here your interviewer is testing your ability to analyse data. An ideal answer will clearly outline the problem you were faced with, the information you extracted from the data and the changes you subsequently made to improve.

For example:

Problem: The appliance-delivery company I work for was getting consistently low ratings on its delivery service.

Action: I looked at all of the online feedback forms and personally phoned customers who had rated our service 0.

Findings: I found that the majority of our unhappy customers hated waiting in all day for their items to be delivered.

Solution: I piloted a new system where the delivery driver phoned the customer an hour before their item was due to be delivered. This stopped our customers from having to hang around the house all day waiting for their delivery.

Outcome: During the trial period, we saw a marked increase in our customer satisfaction ratings and the new system soon became standard practice.

27. "Please outline and describe your current targets and KPIs - How do you ensure you achieve these?"

Here your interviewer is checking that you are capable of working consistently towards your targets.

In an ideal answer you will outline what your current targets are, then follow this up with a discussion about how you break these targets down into weekly objectives to ensure that you are consistently working towards your annual goals.

28. "How do you ensure that your department's goals are in line with the overall company goals?"

This question helps your interviewer to gauge whether you understand your role in your current job, and how your efforts contribute to the goals of the organisation.

For example:

The company I currently work for publishes an annual report of KPIs relating to the goals they hope to achieve that year. I extract the company goals that are relevant to my department and break them down into weekly objectives. I then use these objectives to ensure that my team is constantly contributing to the overall goals of the organisation.

29. "Describe a situation in which you inspired trust and respect in your team."

It's important to think of and talk about a situation that's relevant for the position you're interviewing for. Ideally this will have had a positive outcome. By doing this you will help the interviewers to understand why you are a great fit for their team.

30. "How did you recognise the level of trust or respect your team held for you and how did you ensure this continued?"

Only you will know if your team really trusts and respects you. Respectful employees will usually make you coffee, hold a door open for you, properly carry out tasks assigned to them and rarely undermine your judgement.

To maintain this level of respect, you should make time to recognise your employees' efforts, occasionally explain how you reached a solution to a problem (this can help with buy-in for larger changes or projects) and do your best to be consistently level-headed and successful in your judgement – as it only takes one slip-up to undermine your credibility.

31. "Discuss your current role and your reasons for applying to the organisation."

Before your interview, you should have researched the company and seen a full job description. This information will be key to how you answer this question and show that you have made a considered application.

You need to try and align the experience gained from your current role to some of the challenges or responsibilities of the role you are applying for. Keep it to a few clear bullet points where you can.

Also think about where you are at your happiest or best. The role you are applying for may be in a new field or industry, but you may already have many of the transferable skills required.

You then need to be able to concisely explain what you can bring to the role and demonstrate how some of the skills you have (making passing reference to some of the experience you have just mentioned) would make you a good fit for this role.

32. "What is your greatest success and achievement to date?"

Here your interviewer wants to see that you will bring something to their company and not just fade into the background.

Whilst this question does open the floor for you to recite how you once doubled your team's sales figures, employers are equally interested in hearing about how you have developed and maintained a strong professional network, or how you pride yourself on your reputation for being reliable and hard working.

Whatever you end up talking about, try to keep it short. You don't want your ego to get in the way of you being offered the job.

33. "How would you measure the success of you and your team over a 3, 6 and 12 month period?"

This question requires you to understand the benefits of setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) objectives and developing action plans.

For example:

In line with the over-arching goals of the company, I would set personal goals for myself and my team which I would subsequently break down into weekly SMART objectives. I would monitor these closely through general in-office communication and a series of team meetings, as well as through scheduling individual appraisal meetings at 3, 6 and 12 month intervals.

34. "If successful in joining the organisation, what do you envisage your biggest challenge will be in joining it as a sales team leader?"

The answer to this really depends on the job/company you're interviewing for. However, it's a good idea to discuss your understanding of the company, processes, products, clients and the marketplace. As a sales team leader, you'll also be expected to deliver strong results against your personal sales and team targets.

With thanks to Capita's Internal Recruitment Team

35. "How would you manage your time and objectives in your role?"

This is your opportunity to assure your potential employer that you are capable of working in line with your objectives and getting the job done on time.

For example:

In my current role, I break down my objectives into daily targets and outline periods of the day when I am going to focus on achieving them. I find this system works well for me and I expect to carry it into my next job.

36. "How do you keep yourself motivated?"

This is your opportunity to tell your potential employer what keeps you focused. Possible answers include:

- Breaking your workload up into daily or hourly targets to ensure that the next small success is never too far away.
- Living a healthy life-style. Eating the right foods and drinking lots of water in the office can have a big impact on your concentration levels.
- Motivating others and promoting a positive atmosphere in the office.

37. "What key factors drive you?"

Tread carefully with this question. Whilst the truth may be that you only get out of bed every morning in order to pay your rent, this is not what your potential employer wants to hear.

This question gives you an opportunity to discuss what has attracted you to this line of work and what inspires you to persevere through the tough times. In a sales role, this could be the adrenaline rush of meeting daily targets, whilst in a customer-service role, this could be the personal satisfaction you gain through helping people.

38. "What attracts you to the position?"

This is an opportunity for you to show off your research on the role and company.

Talk about the benefits the company has to offer and how they suit you at this point in your career. For example, if you are joining the company as a graduate, discuss how you plan to utilise their highly-structured training scheme.

Also comment on the company's reputation and try to make reference to a recent success you have seen on their website.

39. "How often do you challenge the way your current company does things or challenge something that you feel needs to change?"

This is a bit of a tricky question to answer, as how you answer can determine whether your interviewer thinks you are too strong-minded or, worse, too sheep-like in your approach to work. An ideal answer will show a degree of balance.

For example:

Throughout my term of employment, I keep a constant note of any areas that I feel can be improved. But I only present these concerns to my boss when I have developed in-depth and realistic solutions.

The frequency of these meetings is determined by how stable the company is. If the company implements several changes throughout the course of the year, I am more inclined to provide regular feedback to my boss.

40. "How creative are you in comparison to your colleagues, i.e. in managing, developing, encouraging and motivating your team?"

This question is asked to determine whether or not you are going to bring something to the team.

In an ideal answer you will confirm that you are creative in your job role, and markedly so compared to some of your colleagues. You should then proceed to give examples which demonstrate this.

This question gives you the opportunity to tell the interviewer about how you developed a Monday-morning prize-giving incentive to get your team fired up for the week. Or how you introduced daily staff meetings to keep your team engaged with the goals of the organisation. Or implemented a buddy-up training programme to help your new recruits settle in faster.

41. "How do you measure the success of your incentives?"

An ideal answer to this question will demonstrate that you are capable of monitoring a situation as it evolves.

For example:

Whilst working in a call centre as a supervisor, I introduced 'Sugar Fridays' – giving my team sweets and treats to get them through the Friday slog.

Prior to introducing the incentive, I compiled a backlog of sales figures from previous Fridays. I then introduced the incentive on a trial period, continued collecting data and cross-compared the results. There was an obvious peak in sales figures and so the incentive became permanent.

42. "How have you utilised customer feedback to ensure business excellence?"

This question is set to test your ability to identify and analyse customer insight, trends and data, and drive continuous improvement, by identifying and understanding the root cause.

The interviewer will be looking for an example of where you have taken this insight and subsequently developed, implemented and improved your sales process. This could be through the introduction of training, post-sale procedures, a change in marketing communications, or other process improvements, to ensure that the cause of any future complaint is eradicated.

With thanks to Michelle Ansell, Douglas Jackson

43. "How have you utilised customer complaint feedback to improve how your team are selling?"

This question is especially important if you are applying for a management position.

An ideal answer will demonstrate that you are capable of assessing a situation and implementing improvements.

For example:

I started to notice that a lot of customers were complaining about feeling patronised by my agents. In response to this, I listened to the calls these complaints stemmed from and realised that words such as 'wonderful' were being over used.

I then had a meeting with the worst offenders in my team and suggested changes that they could make to correct this behaviour. After this meeting, customer complaints reduced and sales increased.

44. "What is your experience of the whole end-to-end feedback process (talk through this process) and how do you ensure this feedback improves the service to customers?"

The answer to this will depend on the job you're interviewing for and your experience.

I would recommend thinking about a specific instance and then discussing this in detail. Outline the process stage by stage and, if there are areas that need improvement, focus your answers on the solutions instead of the problems.

45. "How have you educated your front-line agents to ensure excellent customer feedback?"

As a leader or manager charged with delivering excellent customer feedback, you will know how important it is that customer feedback and insight are monitored, measured and acted upon, whenever appropriate or necessary.

But how about your agents? This question is very much aligned to your engagement, coaching and development skills. You need to think about the culture, communication and interactions you have with your agents.

Discuss how you impart your knowledge and experience to your agents and how you ensure that they can continue to develop the confidence, skills, knowledge and habits that will drive excellent customer feedback with every interaction.

46. "Give an example of when you have been really stretched for a deadline, and how you made sure you completed your work on time."

In asking this question, your potential employer is looking to see that you are prepared to go above and beyond the call of duty when the company needs you.

But you have to be careful when answering, as it is easy to fall into the trap of slagging off your current employer or seeming disorganised. Your interviewer does not want to hear how your current boss failed to provide you with resources or that you once pulled an all-nighter to meet a university deadline.

An ideal answer will centre round the busiest time of your company's year (i.e. the Christmas rush in retail). In your example you should outline the reason for your stretched deadline and say what you did to ensure that you met it.

For example:

Whilst working in retail over the Christmas period, there was dramatic increase in stock which needed processing. To ensure that I continued to complete my daily tasks over this time period, I frequently started work at 5am rather than 7am.

47. “How do you manage time and priorities?”

Here your potential employer wants to know that you are capable of organising yourself properly and ensuring that nothing gets forgotten.

Do you keep a diary? Use Google Calender? Write daily to-do lists? Use wall planners to keep track of out-of-office appointments? Whatever you do, now is your opportunity to tell them!

48. “Give an example of an occasion where you have given constructive criticism to a member of your peer group.”

No matter what level we operate at, we are all able to lend our experience of success to our peers – we just have to be careful not to patronise or undermine them in the process.

When answering this question, make sure that you give an example that is truly constructive and had a positive outcome. This will show your interviewer that you understand how to help improve your colleagues’ performance without hurting their feelings.

49. “Give an example of a time when things happened in work to dampen your enthusiasm. How did you motivate yourself and your team?”

This question is a test of character and is especially important if you are being interviewed for a management role.

An ideal answer will demonstrate that you are able to support your team, even when things don’t go according to plan.

For example:

Whilst I was working in a fast-food restaurant, an unexpected coachload of football supporters came through the door. What followed was a hectic half-hour as the few staff we had on struggled to serve the high influx of customers.

To motivate my team, I came out of the back office and signed onto a till in the middle of the counter. From that position, I could support my team either side of me with phrases like ‘you’re doing well, Kelly’ whilst helping to offset the work load.

When the rush was over, I congratulated everyone on their efforts and brought chocolates in for my team the next day.

50. “How do you deal with work issues? Would anyone know you were having a bad day or would you keep it to yourself?”

Morale is infectious – whether positive or negative – and, when working in a team-orientated environment like a call centre, it’s important that there is always an air of positivity around.

It's therefore vitally important to ensure that if you're having a bad day, you contain this and don't let it influence the morale levels of the team, and in turn the productivity and efficiency of the overall operation.