

Resource Pack

IF YOU LIKE THE IDEA OF KEEPING CUSTOMERS HAPPY AND HELPING THEM WITH THEIR ENQUIRIES, THEN YOU SHOULD CONSIDER A CAREER IN CUSTOMER SERVICE.

In association with:



Customer service jobs might involve answering queries, helping with purchases or providing the little extras that make customers come back for more. It's about delivering customers and members of the public the best experience possible; so they stay loyal to your brand – and hopefully recommend it to others!

Most businesses employ customer service professionals as a first point of contact for consumers and other companies, so there is a wide selection of employers to choose from.

As the face of an organisation, customer service professionals ensure consumers have a positive experience, whether that's in person, over the phone or online. Often there is an element of sales, so it helps if you have strong powers of persuasion, as well as diplomacy and tact.

Customer service can sometimes be a nine-to-five job, but many companies employ staff around the clock - so shift and part-time work is common.

The skills you'll build from a customer service job involve using particular systems or computer programs, as well as handling sometimes lengthy or complex queries whilst remaining friendly and professional. Your employer will give you the training that you need.



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WHAT JOBS CAN I DO IN CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Regardless of the exact nature of the job, customer service is all about making sure the customer is happy and that their needs have been addressed by the time their conversation with you comes to an end. This is true for all jobs across the sector, and for all types of industry – whether you're working in a call centre for a telecommunications company, a fashion giant, a high street bank, or something else entirely.

Sectors that heavily rely on their customer service staff include:

-  **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**
-  **RETAIL**
-  **BANKING**
-  **FAST MOVING CONSUMER GOODS (FMCG)**
-  **FOOD & DRINK**
-  **TRAVEL & TOURISM**
-  **SPORTS & RECREATION**

Some larger companies will have entire customer service departments which will regularly take on new staff. You can start your career at a very basic level, before moving into roles in customer relations or customer complaints. Eventually, as your career progresses, you are likely to have the opportunity to move into roles as a team leader or a manager.

Examples of roles within customer service include:

-  **CUSTOMER ADVISOR (AVAILABLE THROUGH EE'S APPRENTICESHIP SCHEMES)**
-  **CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSISTANT**
-  **TEAM LEADER**
-  **CUSTOMER SERVICE SUPERVISOR**
-  **COMPLAINTS MANAGER**
-  **CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER**
-  **SALES ADVISOR (AVAILABLE THROUGH EE'S APPRENTICESHIP SCHEMES)**

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YOUR ROUTE INTO THE CUSTOMER SERVICE INDUSTRY

Most jobs in customer service don't require you to have studied particular subjects, with your personality and communication skills being the main things that employers will initially look at. It might be helpful to take on a professional qualification, for example a certificate, diploma or NVQ in customer service, as your next step after school or sixth form. This will give you the practical skills you need for a career in this sector.

Whatever job you go to and whatever part of the customer service industry you start your career in, there is one thing that will help you beyond measure – work experience.

Many people who currently work in customer service didn't know they wanted to work in the industry until they experienced it. Many companies provide work experience while you are at school – you can approach companies directly to see if you can come in to shadow a member of staff. This should give you an insight into whether a career in this highly rewarding area is for you.



APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are potentially the best route into the customer service industry, because they use soft skills that you will have picked up through school and extra-curricular activities.

As an apprentice, you will study and work for a company at the same time. You will work alongside experienced staff and will have one day off per week to study, usually at a local technical college or equivalent. This can be a great route for those who know what they want to do early, and don't want to burden themselves with the time and debt of university.

EE is the largest digital communications company in the UK. It has been named a top employer for school leavers, and offers a number of different apprenticeships across its large and vibrant business. Its contact centre apprenticeship offers talented school leavers the chance to join a huge company, with a career progression path and the opportunity to build skills that will lead on to a successful career.

Here are some of the other benefits you could receive as an apprentice at EE:

-  **A full apprentice salary**
-  **A Level 2 qualification in contact centre operations**
-  **Flexibility to stay within the business and shape your own career**

You can find out more about apprenticeships at EE from the case study found later in this Resource Pack.

Case Study

In association with:



Conor Rossiter

CONTACT CENTRE TEAM LEADER

HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO WORK IN CUSTOMER SERVICE?

I hadn't thought about it previously. I was in sixth form and didn't really fancy continuing on in education; I just wanted to start earning money really. I thought an apprenticeship would be the way forward, so I went to look at a few Apprentice roles and the one open for EE was local – just a 10 minute drive.

I did engineering at school so I was looking around for those type of jobs too, but I was just generally interested in technology and how things work. I've always loved phones, so I thought I'd just give it a go and see what it was like. And I liked it from the first minute!

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

When I started, we went through the training to see how everything works. After that had finished, I was put straight on the job – learning and speaking to customers on the go, adapting to see how they like to be spoken too. It's a 'learn by doing' approach, and my daily business as usual is fixing tech issues: walking people step by step through the solutions and so on.



Case Study

HOW DID YOU GET YOUR JOB?

We had a career services at school, which were always promoting EE's jobs, so I thought I'd have a look. When it came to the interview I felt fine, they made me feel comfortable. The interview process, from what I remember, involved answering a few questions, but they also asked me to give a presentation on something I was passionate about. So I picked rugby! I'm pretty confident anyway, so I felt calm about presenting this, and it went really well and I got through. They tend to interview you more on your potential, over what you can do now.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT FROM WORKING AT EE?

For me personally, I've learned better people skills. Learning how to speak to people in different ways, adapting your listening skills to the person - there's a difference for when you're speaking to someone my age, which is 21, or someone who's 50 or 60 - you've got to slow yourself down, and remember how people would like to be spoken to. There's a difference for example if they're more Welsh speaking, as the Welsh tend to talk very quickly!

I've learnt a lot about EE's tech too, like the network and its infrastructure. Definitely about how the frequencies work, i.e. how you send a text and receive a call - you spend so long talking about it, that you remember how it works - and that makes you quicker at helping the customer next time.

WHAT IS THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT LIKE AT EE?

Being an Apprentice is quite a big thing at EE, and they looked after me very well. They had a lot of Apprentices already there - I was in Apprentice team 7 - so a lot of people had been through the process before; they were very welcoming, enthusiastic and excited. Everyone really tried to help me and didn't shy away. Most people who start are 16/17, so you'd naturally be nervous entering a new place of work, but you can walk in and see people playing music and chatting and celebrating their recent successes.

Everyone gets a pat on the back when they do well, which is great, and you can make friends here that could go on to be friends forever. It's great because you spend most of your time at work, so you may as well enjoy it!

Case Study

WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

I'd say it's the people I've met along the way. I've met people who will be friends for life, not just work orientated - but those who you can hang out and have a laugh with, in both a personal and professional aspect.

WHAT NEW SKILLS HAVE YOU LEARNT IN YOUR JOB?

Being proactive – doing things before you're asked. Spotting things before they arise is another one. I'm a fan of change, and in this type of business there's always change going on – someone will come to me and say something doesn't work, so we look at that process and then change it for the better. For example, we had a repair tool that wasn't working very well – so it took around half an hour for an issue to get to the repair centre, but then we came up with a solution where some orders could be cancelled and it saved around half that time!

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5 YEARS?

Obviously, I'd like to be at EE. But with BT now a possibility, the doors are open to so many different paths. There's a lot of opportunities available at the moment so I don't know where I'm going to end up – but I'd be pretty confident at the moment in either EE or BT.

I'm a Team Leader now, and I've thought about being an Operations Manager... and it could be something I'd still like to do. I love trying new things, and though it would be fun to upgrade from Team Leader and see what comes of that... and I think I would like to take on a Design/Delivery type role... like designing products and making tools and portals in the tech. Also the products and services like Apple Music that we have to offer in design and delivery, you can help deliver this to the business and decide how it is advertised and works for our customers; that would be fun to be involved with and roll that stuff out. I'm a big fan of that stuff.



Case Study

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE BENEFITS OF WORKING IN A CONTACT CENTRE ENVIRONMENT OVER OTHER INDUSTRIES? E.G. CAREER SKILLS IT COULD GIVE YOU OVER OTHER INDUSTRIES?

The way I see it, by being in a contact centre you're involved from day one. It's a really nice place to work – and with other work I might have done instead, such as labour intensive stuff where you'd have to be outside all the time, it's much better being in a call centre. I would really consider it because it's amazing once you get here, the environment is the best; two of my friends have joined other call centres and they tell me it's the exact same thing over there.

Progression is really quick. I started three and a half years ago and I'm already Team Leader. For a 21 year old being in a well-paid job; it's fantastic. If you're passionate then they will look after you here and help you every step of the way.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE LOOKING TO GET A JOB LIKE YOURS?

I'd say to just go for it. To be honest when I started, it was difficult to learn everything, but you pick it up quick and it's so great to learn about people skills. And you're making money as you learn, so you can always progress yourself and make yourself better. Apprentices are the best way to get started and just earn the money whilst learning things. Imagine giving a 16 or 17 year old £12,000 a year - it's a lot!



Find out more about apprenticeships at EE

[HTTP://JOBS.EE.CO.UK/CONTACT-CENTRE-APPRENTICES](http://jobs.ee.co.uk/contact-centre-apprentices)



More useful resource

NEED MORE HELP WITH YOUR CAREER CHOICES?

You can find a wealth of information and lots of opportunities at the following places...



EE

Find out more about apprenticeships at EE
<http://jobs.ee.co.uk/apprentices>



THEBIGCHOICE.COM

Quality advice and job opportunities, via our youth careers portal



SCHOOL LEAVERS GUIDE

This online guide, found on TheBigChoice.com, brings together expert advice, guidance on career steps, and opportunities from the UK's top employers.



NATIONAL CAREERS SERVICE

The official hub for careers advice from the UK government



NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SERVICE

Everything you could possibly need to know about apprenticeships