

Careers in Customer Service

By Carter Hammett

Studies have shown that dissatisfied customers will tell at least ten other people about bad service they have received from companies.

This, of course, is bad advertising for the company! With access to the Internet, you can easily multiply that figure by thousands. Whole newsgroups abound on the Net, where consumers can freely swap customer service horror stories. This is a fact that companies should take into consideration, especially since more choice is available to consumers than ever before, and a company's best advertising is its reputation based on word of mouth.

Since Ontario's economy is service-based, more and more companies are putting an emphasis on developing standards to meet the growing demands for customer satisfaction.

"Customer Service" is really an umbrella term that extends itself to multiple service sectors, from banking, to tourism to retail. Customer Service can be provided in person, on the web or over the phone, and it is this last method that seems to be growing in leaps and bounds. Canadian telephone banking grew by over 50% between 1994-96, and this number will grow even further in coming years.

Call Centres provide a low cost way to foster customer loyalty. They save consumers time, money, and create convenience for the client. Toronto is also an excellent place for call centre location because of a relatively low Canadian dollar, a large toll-free calling area, lowered telephone rates, advanced telecommunications technology and a large, educated, multilingual workforce. The time is ripe to consider a career in customer service or in a call centre.

Call centres are fast paced, stressful environments where Customer Service Representatives (CSR's) can be expected to take up to 100 calls per day, in some cases. Workers need conflict resolution skills, an ability to multitask, strong computer knowledge and a respect for confidentiality. A second language is helpful, and often

rewarded with commensurate pay. As well, workers are often monitored for quality control purposes and performance measurement. Salaries typically start around \$9 per hour, to an average salary of around \$30K, although high-end ranges can go up to the mid-forties. Opportunities exist with help desks, but also in technical support where consumer needs are more complex.

There are a wide range of industries where call centres are flourishing, and these include: finance, market research, retail, tourism and reservations, manufacturing, government, telecommunications and computer hardware. Many recruiters also hire CSR's on behalf of other companies.

An important consideration when entering a career in Customer service is that it is not only attracting the commitment of new customers that contributes to a flourishing enterprise, but retaining the commitment of old customers as well! Maintaining a good rapport with your clientele creates "value-added" service, and will certainly be an advantage to the CSR entering the field.

Good luck!

WEB SITES OF INTEREST

Customer Service Review <http://www.cvi.tm/>

Help Desk Institute <http://www.helpdesktoronto.org/>

*** Call Careers www.callcareers.com**

*** Support Services in Canada <http://home.eol.ca/~ssimpson/job.html>**

**Call Centre Management Association
www.ccmacanada.com/positions.htm**

International Customer Service Association www.icsa.com

*** Call Centre Jobs:
www.jobsearchcanada.about.com/careers/jobsearchcanada/msubjobcallcentres.htm**

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Job Bus: www.jobbus.com

Canadian Retail: www.canadianretail.com

Customer Service Jobs: www.customerservicejobs.com

Tele Plaza: www.teleplaza.com

WWWork: www.wwwork.com

Call Centre Jobs: www.callcentrejobs.com

Bilingual Link: www.bilinguallink.com

Food Service Careers: www.foodservicecareers.ca

Hotel Jobs www.hcareers.ca

Menu Palace: www.menupalace.com

Travel and Tourism Jobs: www.travelandtourismjobs.com

Resort Jobs: www.resortjobs.com

*** Sites including job banks**

Further Reading:

Finch, Lloyd, *Success as a CSR*, Crisp Publications, Menlo Park, CA, 1998

Martin, William B. *Quality Customer Service: A Positive Guide to Superior Service*, Third Edition, Crisp Publications, Menlo Park, CA, USA, 1993

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