

Interview questions for hiring great customer service reps



Providing great customer service sets you apart from your competition. But to make that happen, you need to staff your team with people who have the skills and temperament to effectively solve your customer's issues and positively represent your company for every interaction, day after day.

For many organizations, certain people and communication skills are more important than expertise in the product or industry. The latter can often be taught, but the patience and empathy required to effectively help customers is much, much harder to learn on the job.

One thing to look for is a passion for helping others. A good indicator for this trait is passion for other

things in their lives: a sport, a hobby, their family. During the interview, get the candidate talking about their interests and note the level of enthusiasm they bring to the conversation.

Once you get the icebreaker questions out of the way, where should you take the interview next? To get you started, we've compiled these interview questions that can help you understand if the person you're talking to has the skill set and temperament to be an effective customer service rep.

Why this job?

These questions give candidates a chance to respond openly about their interest in the position, their goals, and what they can bring to your team.

- What first drew you to work in customer service?
- Why should we choose you over someone else?
- What is your approach to customer service?
- Do you have any long-term aspirations beyond this position?

It's important to have passion for customer service and hearing why someone chose this path can reveal that. Articulating their customer service philosophy and hearing about their career goals can tell you a lot about their fit for the position and potential for engagement.

Managing customer emotions

Customer service is not easy. Your reps are often dealing with a customer's unhappy emotions and how they respond in those situations is critical. Patience and understanding go a long way in managing the customer relationship.

- Have you encountered a scenario where you dealt with a really upset customer, or were even blamed for something that wasn't your fault? How did you handle this situation?
- Describe an experience where you received positive (or negative) feedback from a customer and how that experience has made you a better rep.
- Share a story about time when you encountered a problem and you did not immediately know the solution. Describe how you resolved the issue and how you communicated with the customer. Be as detailed as possible.

Empathy and customer effort reduction

Both empathizing with customers and making their service experience simpler and less time consuming are what sets great customer service teams apart from the also-rans. Here are some questions that will help you assess a candidate's experience with and capacity for both.

- Describe an experience you had that required you to really empathize with a customer's situation for you to truly understand their issue and how to solve it?
- Support doesn't always fix the issues, but does take ownership of the solution for issues. Tell me about a time you took ownership of something for a customer and reduced the effort they need to make to get help. What was the result?
- How have you advocated for your customers when it was apparent that their issues could be prevented by improving how a product was designed, how a process could be streamlined, or how communication could have been made easier?

On the job

Job-related scenarios provide insight into a candidate's future success. Have candidates put on their problem-solving caps using examples from your world? The goal is not for them to solve critical problems during an interview, but to determine whether they will be effective working with you, your customers, and other team members.

- If you had to become a Subject Matter Expert on a part of our business, how would you go about doing that?
- Customer service reps need to be inherent problem solvers; give your candidate a problem to solve (real or fake) and see how they respond. For example: “My _____ stopped working this morning... how would you help me fix it?”
- Sometimes customers will ask to speak with another rep, or a manager. If you're the only rep...what do you tell them?

These interview questions should help you get at the relevant details and give the job candidate the opportunity to tell their customer service story.

You can find more advice about hiring and onboarding customer service reps in the [Recruit, hire, and onboard customer service representatives leadership guide](#).

If you're reading this article because you're preparing for a customer service job interview yourself, you'll find this article useful as well: [The interview isn't over until you've written 'thank you'](#).