

How to ace your interview: Great customer service examples

Customer service can make or break a company – word travels fast when a business offers incredible service from attentive and knowledgeable staff. Given how important reputation is to a company, it's worth showing a potential employer how amazing an ambassador you can be.

As a [customer service](#) representative, you play an important role in the public perception of the company and in building them a loyal customer base. Knowing exactly what skills to showcase to a hiring manager can help you ace your customer service interview. Read our tips and be the stand-out applicant.

What is good customer service?

When a company is hiring for a customer service role, they want to make sure their new employee knows what an amazing customer experience is and how to provide one. In an interview, you're likely going to be asked 'What do you think makes a great customer service experience?,' regardless of the industry.

Good customer service can be defined as taking the time and effort to understand your customers' needs, and doing what you can to create a positive and helpful experience. This applies to every type of customer service, whether it's face to face, over the phone or via email or chat.

Types of customer service

There are many types of customer service, depending on the company and the technology they use. The main types of customer service are:

- In-person customer service
- Phone support
- Live chat support
- Email support
- Self-service support
- Social media support

You may be required to do one or more of these types of customer service in your role, so it's important to brush up on how to use different customer service skills in different ways (such as online support from home or assisting in a store).

Key customer service skills

So what is good customer service? Typically it's a positive exchange where you assist customers with a purchase in some way – this could include providing accurate information before a sale or dealing with refunds or complaints after a sale.

If you're going to be working with customers in any capacity, developing your customer service skills is crucial. Working on your [communication](#), problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills will help you succeed in a customer-service role.

Communication skills

Being able to [communicate effectively](#) is one of the most important skills you can have in any role. If you're actively trying to [improve your communication](#) skills, take note of your [active listening](#) abilities, empathy, clarity, the tone you use and the body language and signals of the people you're serving. This can help you stay on top of the situation and provide intuitive service.

Problem-solving skills

Problem solving is a major aspect of most customer service jobs. In a single day you could be faced with a customer complaint, stock shortages, technical hitches and myriad other issues. [Problem-solving skills](#) include knowing how to stay calm and use [critical thinking](#) to address the issue and find a suitable solution to meet the customer's needs.

Empathy and patience

Empathy allows you to put yourself in the shoes of your customers and better understand their emotions and concerns. Employing empathy can help de-escalate situations, giving you the ability to provide genuine care and find a satisfactory outcome. Using empathy and patience also helps the customer feel heard, and facilitates a calm conversation where you can get all the information you need to provide a solution.

Time management skills

Working in customer service means there may be times when calls and emails are queueing up or you have a line of people in front of you. Mastering [time management skills](#) will help you prioritise tasks and work through them efficiently, resulting in a good customer experience. Solid time management skills also help to reduce your stress and meet the performance requirements of your job.

Conflict resolution skills

Part of working in customer service is handling disgruntled customers. You'll need conflict resolution skills to de-escalate situations and maintain customer satisfaction – both are essential to customer retention and loyalty.

Examples of good customer service

You should be able to provide excellent customer service examples in any job interview for a customer-facing role. There are a number of things you can talk about, from providing personalised service to handling difficult customers. If you're not sure of what to say, the following examples may help you come up with a good answer – just personalise your responses for the job and company you're interviewing for.

Personalised service

Providing personalised service to customers can elevate their experience from good to truly memorable. Some personalised customer service experience examples include remembering customer's names, their preferences or their past purchases. Saying 'Hello again!' when greeting repeat customers is another example of personalised service. For someone who works with customers over phone or email, it may include

recalling interactions or information from past engagements to make that customer feel valued.

Prompt response to customer enquiries

Ideally, you will be able to show that you can resolve customer enquiries quickly. Learning good time-management, problem-solving and [critical-thinking skills](#) can help you provide prompt responses to enquiries and provide exceptional customer service. Many businesses will set key performance indicators (KPIs) based on how quickly you answer and complete calls, respond to emails and resolve face-to-face interactions.

For example: you manage a customer service inbox, live chat and phone line. You need to respond to emails within two hours, answer calls within three rings and reply to live chat enquiries within two minutes. To provide the best customer service examples, give your interviewer specific KPIs you have met or exceeded.

Going above and beyond for customers

Consistently going 'above and beyond' in a customer service role will make you stand out and help progress your career. Above and beyond usually implies something more than remembering a customer's name or resolving a complaint. Some of the best customer service examples that show going above and beyond entail going outside the scope of your role to reach a solution.

For example: you work in a [concierge role](#) at a hotel and learn it's the anniversary of two guests, so you send a complimentary bottle of wine to their room and extend their check-out time. In an office-based [customer support](#) role, you may take the time to follow up on a customer complaint that was forwarded to a different department. Going the extra mile encourages people to write positive online reviews and leave good customer service comments, which helps build your company's reputation.

Handling difficult customers with grace

Handling difficult customers is an inevitable part of working in customer service. It's important to learn techniques on how to handle them, so you can effectively de-escalate the situation and provide a positive outcome for them and your company.

At the core of an angry or upset customer is someone who feels unfairly treated. Using empathy to understand their point of view, critical thinking to find a good solution, and

communication skills to negotiate a good outcome lets the customer know they are valued and can trust the company with future purchases.

Some examples of good customer service situations involving difficult customers include providing technical support to someone with low computer literacy or responding to a person who has left negative comments on social media. Other situations may include those where your company was in the wrong and you found a way to compensate the customer to keep them happy.

Resolving customer complaints effectively

When not properly handled, complaints can blow out into escalations, angry customers, negative reviews, bad press and even reports to consumer watchdogs. But with the right customer service skills, you can resolve customer complaints with minimal stress.

The business you work for likely has a script and established processes for handling customer complaints. These should address frequent customer concerns and clearly outline what the company can do to help. Effective strategies for handling customer complaints effectively often involve giving the person options so they can choose their preferred outcome.

If you need an exceptional customer service example to show you handle complaints well, think about your past roles. Demonstrate how you kept a customer happy by fixing a problem or how you were able to placate someone who was upset.

5 example questions and answers on customer service

You're at [your job interview](#) and you're asked about how you handle unhappy customers or a time you went above and beyond – and you go blank. It's normal to be nervous in a job interview, which is why [practice is so important](#). Feel free to use the examples below as a starting point for your answers.

1. Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond for a customer

The hiring manager asks this question because they want to see what you consider outstanding customer service. This demonstrates the standards you hold for yourself and what they can expect from you when you're working with customers.

For example: *There was a time a customer came in looking for a specific dress for an event they had that evening, but it was unfortunately sold out at our store. I took the customer's details and called our other branches to see if they had it. I was eventually able to find the dress in her size in a store across town, and had it express delivered that day.*

2. How do you handle difficult customers?

Disgruntled customers can cost a business their reputation – but they also offer an opportunity for your customer service skills to shine. Asking this question can help hiring managers learn how you resolve challenging situations and keep customers happy. Ideally, you can share a specific time you handled a difficult customer in a past role. When replying to this question, don't forget to demonstrate your process.

For example: *I recently served an upset customer who wanted to return a purchase a few days after the return period had expired. I calmly assured them that I would be able to help them, then listened to their story. They had been out of the country for two weeks and couldn't return the item in time. Since it was still boxed, we accepted the return and offered them store credit or a refund and they chose store credit. It always helps to show compassion when dealing with an unhappy customer, letting them know you understand why they are upset.*

Customer service skills are [transferable skills](#) – they show the hiring manager how you could apply your approach to handling any kind of difficult customer in any setting.

3. Can you give an example of a time when you resolved a customer complaint?

Knowing how you handle complaints is important for any goods or service provider. This question is asking you to demonstrate how you use communication, negotiation and other customer service skills effectively to keep customers onside. When responding to a question about how you handle complaints, give a specific example of how you handled a situation.

For example: *There was one time I had a customer who had not received a \$5,000 order, and tracking showed the parcel hadn't left our warehouse. I apologised for the delay and let them know we would send the shipment express at no extra cost, and offered them a 20% discount on their next order after getting approval from my manager.*

4. How do you prioritise your tasks when dealing with multiple customer inquiries?

Most businesses will experience busy periods, whether that's the holiday season, during seasonal sales or after a marketing campaign. Showing you can juggle multiple priorities and detailing how you handle an influx of enquiries during these periods is important in showing your competence. Share a situation where you had to deal with multiple customer enquiries and describe your process and how you prioritise.

For example: *I start the day by following up unresolved emails from the previous day, then I address new enquiries. Or Every shift, I write a list of my most urgent enquiries, then check items off as I complete them so I don't forget anything.*

The interviewer ultimately wants to know your approach to meeting deadlines and staying organised under pressure.

5. How do you ensure that customers feel valued and appreciated?

When hiring [customer service representatives](#), companies want to know their customers are being looked after so they can build a loyal customer base. This is why they may ask how you personally make customers feel valued and appreciated. What the interviewer wants to know is how you create positive customer experiences consistently. For this question, highlight specific techniques you use to create a pleasant experience.

For example: *I end all my calls with a personalised thank you, letting the customer know that our team is always available to help. I never end the call before the customer has confirmed that they are happy with the outcome.*

Tips for answering customer service interview questions

Being prepared for how you'll answer potential questions will help you appear and [feel confident in an interview](#). Keep these tips handy for when you need help with your responses.

- **Be specific and provide examples.** Support your answers with concrete examples. This helps show how you handled different real-world situations and demonstrates the skills you have developed.
- **Use the STAR method to structure your answers: Situation, Task, Action and Result.** Outline a specific situation, the task you faced, the action you took and the result. Using the STAR method ensures you are answering the question completely (and helps you remember everything you wanted to say).
- **Highlight your problem-solving skills.** Showcase your ability to identify and resolve customer issues with examples of how you've done so.
- **Demonstrate your ability to work under pressure.** Share experiences where you remained calm and effective in a high-pressure environment. For example, discuss how you juggled customer enquiries and complaints during a peak period.
- **Show your willingness to always learn and improve.** Demonstrating a growth mindset shows professionalism and ambition, which are desirable qualities in any employee.

Common mistakes to avoid in customer service

There are some things you should avoid doing if you want to be effective in a customer service role. Some of the most common mistakes to avoid in customer service include:

- **Being defensive or argumentative.** It's imperative to remain calm in order to quickly find a solution. If you need to take a break, request to put the customer on hold or excuse yourself for a moment while you find information for them.
- **Failing to listen to the customer's concerns.** One of the main reasons customers become angry is because they feel unheard. Make sure you understand the customer's point of view and sympathise with them in their frustration. Assure them you're here to help.
- **Making promises that cannot be kept.** Be clear with customers on the next steps and potential outcomes, but do not make any promises if you're not 100% certain you can deliver on them. Always ensure the customer can understand the solutions you're providing so there are no miscommunications.
- **Blaming others for mistakes.** There is no use in placing blame. Just focus your energy and attention on finding the solution.

- **Being unprofessional or rude.** There may be times when your patience is tested. But staying professional and calm helps you and the customer keep a positive mindset. If you want to be able to put more examples of good customer service situations on your resumé, remember to always be polite and respectful.

As a [customer service assistant](#) or manager, it helps to remember that both you and the customer want a positive outcome, and that staying calm and in control is the best way to produce one quickly.

Good customer service skills are important whenever you're working with people. Being able to demonstrate these skills will help you in interviews and in progressing your career. In an interview, be sure to use examples to showcase your top skills, backing them up with specific details and results you can help the company achieve.

Remember: an interview is your opportunity to showcase your people skills. Bring a positive energy, back up your claims with an example of good customer service for each situation, and provide insights into your customer service approaches to show adaptability and flexibility.

FAQs

What are some common customer service interview questions?

Interview questions are designed to let the hiring manager know what your customer service skills and approaches are. Some of the most common customer service interview questions are:

- How do you handle challenging or angry customers?
- How do you prioritise your tasks when dealing with multiple customer inquiries?
- What do you think excellent customer service means?

How can I prepare for a customer service interview?

To prepare for a customer service interview, you should first review the job ad closely and identify the key skills they're looking for. Also research the company, their values and what goods and services they provide. You should also [practise answers](#) to common customer service interview questions, dress professionally and bring a positive and upbeat energy.

What are some examples of good customer service?

Examples of good customer service include:

- providing prompt, personalised responses to each customer
- providing clear, accurate information
- being respectful and
- utilising problem-solving and critical-thinking skills to find a solution.

If you can, tell the interviewer about a time you went 'above and beyond' to assist a customer.

How can I improve my customer service skills?

To enhance your customer service skills, focus on your abilities in active listening, showing empathy, problem-solving and providing timely responses. Continuously seek feedback, adapt to customer needs and maintain a positive attitude. Ongoing training and practice will help you provide exceptional customer service, build customer loyalty and help grow your career.

What are some common mistakes to avoid during a customer service interview?

During a customer service interview, you should avoid common mistakes like being unprepared, using [negative language](#), using jargon, having closed-off body language and not having adequate examples of good customer service memorised. Instead, be well-prepared, use positive and customer-centric language, keep communication clear, maintain good posture and provide specific, relevant examples that showcase your skills.