

JOB PROFILE: CUSTOMER SERVICES MANAGER

THE WORK

Customer services managers make sure that their organisation satisfies its customers' needs. They could be responsible for developing customer service standards for a large company, or they may manage a customer service team and deal with enquiries in person.

As a customer services manager your duties could include:

- managing a team of customer service assistants
- handling difficult enquiries or complaints
- training staff to give a high standard of service
- making sure that staff understand company procedures and consumer and data protection laws
- developing customer service policies
- setting up customer feedback or complaints procedures
- reporting on levels of customer service and looking for ways to improve standards
- recruiting and appraising staff
- helping and advising customers by telephone, e-mail or face-to-face
- issuing refunds or compensation if necessary.

You may also have other duties such as marketing, depending on your employer.

HOURS AND ENVIRONMENT

You would work 35 to 40 hours a week in a full-time job. Shift work including

evenings and weekends is common in the retail, leisure and contact centre industries. Part-time work and job sharing may be available.

You could work from an office or a customer services desk. The working environment can be very busy and pressurised.

You may need to wear a uniform in some jobs, particularly if you deal with customers face-to-face.

SKILLS AND INTEREST

You will need:

- a genuine interest in helping customers
- excellent communication skills
- good organisational and planning skills
- the ability to lead and motivate a team
- problem-solving and decision-making ability
- a polite, tactful and assertive attitude
- patience and calmness under pressure
- the ability to handle complaints and difficult situations
- computer and administrative skills.

ENTRY

There are two main routes into customer services management. You could start as a customer service assistant and work your way up to supervisor or team leader then to manager, or you could join a company's management training scheme directly.

You do not need particular qualifications to start as a customer service assistant, but you will find it useful to have experience of dealing with people in person or over the phone.

Some employers may ask for qualifications in English and maths,

others may consider your 'people skills' and work experience to be more important than academic qualifications. You may help your chances of promotion by gaining NVQ levels 2 and 3 in Customer Service whilst you are working as a customer service assistant.

Many larger employers recruit managers directly through management training schemes. Entry requirements can vary – you may need a degree for some, while others may accept you with A levels or similar qualifications. You may have an advantage with a degree in business, management or marketing, or in a subject related to the employer's industry, such as hospitality or retail.

You will find it useful to have previous customer service experience when applying for training schemes.

TRAINING

You will usually be trained on the job by your employer. Larger organisations often have their own structured in-house management training programmes.

Your training may include in-house assessment for NVQ levels 3 and 4 in Customer Service, or Institute of Customer Service (ICS) Professional Awards in Communication, Solutions and Innovations (if your employer is a member of ICS).

You could also choose to work towards general management qualifications from the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) or the Chartered Management Institute (CMI).

OPPORTUNITIES

You could work in a wide range of industries, including retail, banking and insurance, leisure and tourism, IT, telecommunications, manufacturing, transport, local government and other public sector organisations.

Jobs may be advertised in local newspapers, Jobcentre Plus, recruitment agencies and by employers on their own websites or in-store.

With experience, you could progress into senior management, or change employers to gain more responsibility and a higher salary. In some industries, you could move into sales or account handling. Good customer service skills are in demand in all industries, so you could also use your skills to move into other careers.

ANNUAL INCOME

- Trainee managers usually earn between £16,000 and £20,000 a year.
- Experienced managers usually earn from £20,000 to £40,000 a year.
- Senior managers in large organisations may earn up to £60,000 a year.

Bonuses or commission may also be available in some sectors like retail, sales or banking.

Figures are intended as a guideline only.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)

Stowe House
Netherstowe
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS13 6TJ
Tel: 01543 266867
<http://www.i-l-m.com>

Chartered Management Institute (CMI)

Management House
Cottingham Road
Corby
Northants
NN17 1TT
Tel: 01536 204222
<http://www.managers.org.uk>

Institute of Customer Service (ICS)

2 Castle Court
St Peters' St
Colchester
Essex
CO1 1EW
Tel. 01206 571716
<http://www.instituteofcustomerservice.com>

Skillsmart Retail

Fourth Floor
93 Newman Street
London
W1T 3EZ
Tel: 0800 093 5001
<http://www.skillsmartretail.com>