**Company Based Interview**

**1.  “Why do you want to work here?”**

To answer this question you must have researched the company. Reply with the company’s attributes as you see them and how your qualities match them.

**2.  “Tell me about yourself.”**

This is not an invitation to ramble on. If the context isn’t clear, you need to know more about the question before giving an answer.

Whichever direction your answer ultimately takes, be sure that it has some relevance to your professional endeavors.  You should also refer to one or more of your key personal qualities, such as honesty, integrity, being a team player, or determination.

**3.  “What is the biggest challenge you have faced in work in the past 12 months?”**

This is often an opening question, as it allows you to use one of your strongest examples and may help you relax. For the interviewer, it is also an indication of where your natural focus or achievements may be – people development, process, cost reduction, change etc.

**4.  “What do you know about the centre/company/role?”**

You are not required to be an expert on the organisation or role, but a genuine interest and basic understanding is expected. If you are working with a recruitment consultant then they should be able to provide you with extra details and assist with preparation.

In addition, look for and use press releases, corporate and social websites. Ring the call centre to see how they handle your call: do they offer ‘up-sell’, ‘cross-sell’, how was the service? Read the job description to prepare for this question, a few key facts or some knowledge show a genuine interest and commercial awareness.

**5.  “Why do you want this job?”**

Whilst more money, shorter hours or less of a commute are all potential factors for your next role, they are unlikely to make you the ‘stand out’ candidate of the day.

Know what the company are looking for and the potential job available, and align this with your career to date.  Highlight your relevant experience, goals and aspirations in line with the role, to showcase why you are the best person for the job.

**6.  “How would your team/manager describe you?”**

Try to think about how you would describe yourself if someone asked you for your strengths, then relate these to what people say about you; peers, agents, managers and stakeholders. Have three or four at the ready, ideally in line with the role you are being interviewed for. Have examples or situations ready, in case your interviewer wants to drill down as to why you think or believe these are your key strengths.

**7.  “What is your biggest achievement?”**

If possible, think work related. There will hopefully be a number of things you are most proud of in your career to date. Think about your key achievements; were they commercial, people or process orientated? What was the cause and effect? How were you involved, what was improved, saved or developed?

If you are short on career-based examples, use personal achievements which demonstrate the commercial skills required for the role, such as team work, commitment, empathy, determination, attention to detail, etc.

**8.  “Can you give me an example of… ?”**

These questions will more often than not be based around the role competencies. Preparation and rehearsal are key to answering these effectively.

You will need two or three instances of how you may have: delivered change, managed conflict, improved performance, reduced absence, increased customer satisfaction, etc.  You also need to be able to clearly and concisely communicate the problem, solution and outcome.

**9.  “What have you done to promote great customer service?”**

Firstly, know what you think great customer service looks like. Look for situations and examples when you had an idea, a client, or customer call, where you personally went that extra mile.

Did you change a process or procedure? Or perhaps a staff member you mentored, coached or advised delivered a great customer service win or result for your team, brand or business.

**10.  “What are the key factors which make a successful call centre?”**

Fundamentally, if you look under the skin of the best teams and call centres, they do have certain things in common: clear communication, consistency, fun, performance management, leadership, engagement, incentives, etc.

Think what made up the best team or company you have been a part of or have seen. Have examples to back up any statements for how you would play a part in, or create, this team or environment yourself.

**11.  “How do you manage change?”**

Change is an essential part of life in any call centre environment, as the industry strives to achieve best practice for their customers and stakeholders. Have some examples on how you personally managed, or were affected by, some change. What was your focus, what were you aiming to achieve and how did you deliver the outcome? Know what the problems encountered were and what was learned through and following the transformation.

**12.  “What was your reason for leaving?”**

Wherever possible be positive, even if your role was short term or didn’t quite work out as expected, as it will have added extra experience or skills to your career history.

Although you are now looking to move on, acknowledge what you learned and what was on offer at the time. Demonstrate good reasons for the decisions you made and show that you understood what was to be gained, or acknowledge what you have learned from your past employer.

**13.  “Give me an example of how you have dealt with an under-performing team member in the past.”**

This question is a typical example of competency-based interviewing (CBI) in practice. It is the most popular interview approach, based on the premise that future performance can be predicted by past behaviour.

The best way to prepare for CBI questions is to revisit the job description and person specification before your interview. You should then ensure that you have covered all bases and can comfortably provide examples for each competency. You must also be able to describe the particular scenario, the actions you took and the impact it had on the business.

Approach this particular question by outlining the processes you followed to investigate and resolve this issue. It is also important to explain the outcome. For example, you may have set an agenda of required actions following on from the meeting you held with the particular team member – can you describe what that was? If you created a performance plan that included clear training and development objectives make sure you say so.

Always finish by explaining how the action you took impacted the business. For example, the team member started to meet all targets and bring in more revenue.

**14.  Within the interview process you may be required to perform a role-play. A popular example of this is being asked to role-play an escalated call with an unhappy customer.**

It is vital to have clear objectives before initiating conversation with the customer; what is your end goal? Ensure you are aware of the parameters, rules and regulations within the company. For example, if the issue is over money, can you refund it? What else can you offer to pacify the customer?

It is important to remain calm, confident, be clear and always remember to ask questions. The interviewer is looking for a patient and composed response. If you are still unsure about how best to approach role-plays contact your local recruitment consultant who should be able to offer you thorough advice.

**15.  “Can you give me an example of a time when you had to motivate and develop a team in a challenging work environment?”**

During interviews, difficult or awkward questions could come your way. The intention is not to catch you out, but to test how you operate under pressure.

This question is (again) in the format of competency-based interviewing, so remember to outline the specific actions you took to motivate your team, as interviewers want to see evidence of hands-on experience.

Make sure to describe all processes undertaken. For example: Did you use incentives to motivate the team? Did you implement training programmes? Did you improve internal communications to help engage staff? Did you implement or revisit career development plans to make the team feel valued? Did you take the time to understand each individual’s motivations?

Be clear and precise and be sure to convey any previous first-hand experience you have – they will want to feel confident that you can handle similar issues within the new role.

**16.  “What are your strengths and weaknesses?”**

Many interviewers will ask you to name your strengths and weaknesses.  Typically, people find it easier to express their strengths, but struggle when it comes to identifying even one weakness. Part of the reason for this may be that they do not want to disclose a particular weakness, as this may result in them failing to be successful in getting the job.

A good initial answer (bearing in mind you are applying for a telephone position) to the ‘strengths’ part would be “I have been told that I am an excellent communicator, especially on the telephone, but I feel I have good interpersonal skills generally and find it easy to get along with all sorts of people”.

For weaknesses you need to think of something which is really a strength but put it across as a weakness. It is also important to make it clear what you are doing to address that ‘weakness’.

A good example would be “I am a very conscientious worker and I get irritated by colleagues who don’t share this value and take any opportunity to take time off work or do the minimum required when they are there. I am learning, however, that these people generally get found out and I leave it to my supervisor to recognise these problems and address them”.

An answer such as this would probably make the interviewer think “well that’s not such a bad thing, actually”.

**17.  Give an example of this behaviour**

Having given your strengths and weaknesses, you are then likely to be asked to give examples of when you have displayed this behaviour. Your credibility will plummet if you cannot give an example of the strengths you have stated. With the strengths listed above, a good response would be: “In my present job, I am often asked to handle difficult customer situations because my supervisor knows that I will handle them politely, efficiently and diplomatically and therefore only a few cases would ever get referred to her. Also, because of my strong interpersonal skills, I have often been asked to buddy-up with new team members, to make them comfortable in their new role at the earliest stage possible”.

When asked to give examples on the weaknesses, you need to think very carefully, and plan in advance what your response will be, as many people dig a very deep hole here. A good response to the weakness quoted would be: “I had a situation once where I knew that a more experienced colleague was regularly absent from work  following nights out drinking, but she would say that she had a migraine. When this happened my workload increased significantly. I undertook this willingly but I must admit I was annoyed that this person was taking advantage of me and the company. However, I decided to let the supervisor do their job and just get on with mine. In quite a short space of time, the issue was addressed and the problem was resolved”.

**18.  “Can you give me an example of a particularly difficult customer you had to deal with and how you used your skills to successfully overcome the problem they had?”**

Many interviewees freeze at this question, simply because they cannot think of an example, rather than the fact that they have never dealt with one. So have an answer prepared and make sure it is one where you resolved the issue, not one where you had to refer the customer to a higher authority (it’s amazing how many people do this).  What the interviewer is looking for are the skills you possess in handling difficult customers, not the intricate detail of the particular issue the customer had.

In your pre-prepared answer you should include the following:

1. I listened carefully to what the customer had to say.
2. I apologised and empathised with their situation.
3. I confirmed my understanding of their concern.
4. I took responsibility to resolve the issue.
5. I offered a solution (plus alternatives if possible).
6. I confirmed the customer was happy with this.
7. I thanked the customer for raising the issue with me.
8. I took immediate action following the call to resolve the situation.
9. I remained calm throughout the whole process.
10. (If appropriate) the customer wrote in to my supervisor congratulating me on my efficiency.

This may seem like a very long answer. But by explaining the situation, without going into the minutia of the product or the complaint, your response need be no more than one minute or so. You will also impress your prospective employer by demonstrating that you already have the skills necessary to handle the most difficult calls.

**19. “Describe how you have brought about business change through use of technology and process re-engineering, describing what particular techniques you have employed, e.g. 6 sigma, lean management, etc.”**

What you need to show here is primarily an understanding of the particular project management methodology. For example, 6 sigma or lean management.

You should do this by giving an example of a project that went well, and show some of the challenges that you had to overcome along the way.

In particular, it would be useful to show examples of how you managed to get the team on your side and sharing the same vision for success.

If you have no experience of these types of methodologies, you should just give an example of a project that you worked on that went well.

**20.  “Tell me about a difficult obstacle you had to overcome recently at work? How did you overcome this?”**

Here your interviewer wants proof that you will tackle problems head on and not just bury your head in the sand.

A strong answer will clearly demonstrate a problem, an action and a solution.

For example:

**Problem:** When I was first promoted to team leader, I consistently struggled to ensure that my team achieved their sales targets on a Friday.  
**Action:** I sought the advice of more experienced team leaders to find out how they motivated their teams through the Friday slog.  
**Solution:** Acting on the advice of the other team leaders, I implemented a combination of incentives over the next few weeks and successfully boosted my team’s sales figures.

**21.  “Please tell me about a situation where someone was performing badly in your team.”**

**22.  “What was the situation?”**

**23.  “How did you deal with it?”**

**24.  “What was the outcome?”**

A model answer to the above 4 questions could look something like this:

*As part of my regular team monitoring, I assess all advisors call quality in order to measure them against the relevant KPIs. When reviewing calls for one advisor, I noticed a trend where the advisor was quite abrupt with callers. I scheduled a meeting in private with that advisor, which I prepared for by reviewing supporting information (including their performance statistics for the month).*

*I adopted a supportive style as I raised my concerns with the individual regarding their approach with customers, and confirmed their awareness of the business expectations regarding excellent customer service. I sensitively discussed with them any reasons they felt they were unable to deliver this, and emphasised the balance which needed to be maintained between quality and quantity. I adopted a coaching style to enable the advisor to work through any barriers and identify solutions, agreed reasonable and tangible expectations for improvement, arranged appropriate support and scheduled weekly meetings to review their performance against these expectations. As a result, the advisor improved their performance and now consistently achieves all targets.*

**25.  “How do you plan daily and weekly activities?”**

Here your potential employer is looking to see that you are capable of planning your time effectively.

They want to hear things like how you hold team meetings to discuss the week ahead and allocate time slots and deadlines for various projects.