INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR

CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

[YOUR COMPANY NAME]

[DATE]

# INTERVIEW GUIDE

# **CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE**

**Applicant :**

**Date :**

**Recruiter :**

The goal of an interview is to determine whether an applicant has a good fit for your particular job. This is best accomplished by asking questions about job related competencies to determine whether the applicant has previous experiences successfully using these competencies.

**Introduction Phase**

* Encourage some small talk to give the applicant time to get settled and to help him/her ease into the conversational flow of the interview.
* Applicants usually feel more comfortable when they know what to expect in an interview. Share your general format with the applicant.
* Tell the applicant that you may be writing during the interview and explain why you will be doing this.
* Assure applicants that two-way questioning is allowed and encouraged. Make it clear that the applicant will have an opportunity to ask questions at the conclusion of the process

**Interview Phase**

Have your competency based questions ready for scoring. We recommend a 1 to 5 scoring grid; a score of 1 would mean the applicant has demonstrated no experience using the competency and a score of 5 indicating the applicant has a deep understanding of the competency and has used it successfully in the past with good results.

* **Probing:** After asking a planned question, you may want to probe for more information to support an applicant 's response. Probes are usually unplanned; you use them when you want the applicant to clarify or expand upon a point or when you want more insight into his/her thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.("Please expand upon that." "Describe how you .")
* **Clarifying Inconsistencies:** When an applicant appears to be caught in a contradiction, it may be appropriate to bring the conflicting information to the surface for clarification. ("You mentioned earlier that you were involved in developing a distance education course. You are now indicating that you have limited experience with distance education and need to learn more about it. Please clarify your experience with distance education.")
* **Paraphrasing:** When in doubt that you have fully understood an applicant's response, restate what you think you heard in your own words and ask the applicant for feedback. ("You are basically stating that there are several ways to handle this situation depending upon the way in which the client presents the problem. Is that what you meant?")
* **Silence or Pause:** Silences or pauses are an effective technique for encouraging the applicant to do the talking. When there is a silence or pause, don't jump in with another question; allow the applicant time to reflect and form a response. Look expectantly at him or her while you wait.
* **Repeating:** When the applicant appears to be avoiding a question, come back to it again. While the applicant may have reasons for trying to evade it, she/he may simply have gotten sidetracked or may not fully understand what you mean.

Attention to Detail

Attention to detail includes the employee’s ability to identify and manage important details associated with doing a good job. This includes things such as checking and rechecking work, setting up monitoring systems, noticing missing details, accurately completing forms, following directions, and planning projects to the final detail.

Before you ask this question, best practise suggests that you know beforehand the kind of details that are associated with both satisfactory and unsatisfactory job performance.

**What process do you use to keep track of many tasks happening at once ? Can you give me an example ?**

1 2 3 4 5

Minimal ability/NA

Average ability

Exceptional ability

Comments

Dependability

Dependability involves the employee being reliable, on time, responsible, dependable, and consistently fulfilling commitments. On the job the employees must do what they say and say what they do. A dependable employee can be trusted to give straight answers, follow through, and complete assignments on time and within budget. Their behaviour is predictable and seldom holds any surprises or unexpected reactions. They can be counted on to be honest and upfront with co-workers regardless of the situation.

Before you ask this question, best practise suggests that you know beforehand the kind of dependability associated with both satisfactory and unsatisfactory job performance.

**How do you balance socialising with co-workers with accomplishing the job ? Can you give me some examples? What were the results ?**

1 2 3 4 5

Minimal ability/NA

Average ability

Exceptional ability

Comments

Self Control

The position requires maintaining composure, keeping emotions in check, controlling anger, and avoiding aggressive behaviour even in very difficult situations. People who have self-control seldom let their disappointment show and keep working even when exhausted. They demonstrate consistent performance from day to day regardless of how they feel and rarely lose their temper with colleagues, customers, clients or patients.

Before you ask this question, best practise suggests that you know beforehand the degree of self-control associated with both satisfactory and unsatisfactory job performance.

**Some people are not easy to get along with. Please give me some examples where you had to deal with difficult people. What was the situation ? What did you do? What was the result ?**

1 2 3 4 5

Minimal ability/NA

Average ability

Exceptional ability

Comments

Stress Tolerance

The position requires the employee to accept criticism and deal calmly and effectively with high-stress situations over which they have little control. It includes maintaining effectiveness regardless of what conditions arise. Stress tolerant people don’t easily get their feelings hurt and are willing to accept criticism.

Before you ask this question, best practise suggests that you know beforehand the degree of stress-tolerance associated with both satisfactory and unsatisfactory job performance.

**How much do you worry about someone criticising your work ? Please give me some examples. What did you do?**

1 2 3 4 5

Minimal ability/NA

Average ability

Exceptional ability

Comments

Concern for Others

Concern for others includes being sensitive to others' needs and feelings in order to be understanding and helpful. A successful employee is concerned with co-workers and their well-being. In the case of a client, customer or patient the employee must be willing to take time to empathise with them and understand their concerns even though it might temporarily interfere with performing a task or duty.

Before you ask this question, best practise suggests that you know beforehand the degree of concern associated with both satisfactory and unsatisfactory job performance.

**How do you feel when people come to you with their personal problems ? What was the problem ? What did you do? What was the result ?**

1 2 3 4 5

Minimal ability/NA

Average ability

Exceptional ability

Comments

Integrity

Integrity is something all employees are expected to demonstrate; however, integrity becomes more critical when the job includes temptations such as handling financial transactions, handling sensitive personal or health records, or working with valuable property and materials. People with high integrity follow the rules and regulations associated with the job and are uncomfortable when they are violated.

Before you ask this question, best practise suggests that you know beforehand the kind of integrity associated with both satisfactory and unsatisfactory job performance.

**Some people are willing to break a few rules to get ahead while others refuse. Give me some examples from your experience that show your preferences.**

1 2 3 4 5

Minimal ability/NA

Average ability

Exceptional ability

Comments

Cooperation

Cooperation requires being pleasant with others on the job and displaying a good-natured, cooperative work attitude. This trait differs from concern for others in that it not only includes the willingness to empathise but includes volunteering to actively share their work-load or help resolve their problems. Specific employee activities include listening to what another person is saying, empathising with their situation, asking questions to clarify issues, explaining how the problem affects them both, and jointly developing a plan of action.

Before you ask this question, best practise suggests that you know beforehand the level of cooperation associated with both satisfactory and unsatisfactory job performance.

**Would you say you were more focused on achieving goals or maintaining relationships ? Please provide some examples. What were the results ?**

1 2 3 4 5

Minimal ability/NA

Average ability

Exceptional ability

Comments

**Conclusion Phase**

During this phase, you are shifting the emphasis to the applicant's need for information so that she/he is able to reflect upon the position and decide if it is personally suitable. Both you and the applicant are evaluating one another in the interview. This is your opportunity to present a positive, attractive image of the position and you the employer.

* **Describe** the position and your company to the applicant. You will probably want to discuss the position in more detail by clarifying the performance expectations, reviewing critical responsibilities and describing the work environment. You might also wish to talk about the support and training that may be provided and career development opportunities.
* **Encourage** the applicant to ask questions. Applicant s should feel that you respect their questions and that your responses provide the information they need to make a decision. Applicants often have questions about salary and benefits, and you should be prepared to outline the main facts and features during the initial interviews. If you are asked a question to which you do not know the answer, let the applicant know that you will research the question and report back to them. Record the questions asked and the responses that you gave.
* **Outline the timelines** for the final selection decision. Let the applicant know the general steps ahead and who to contact should the applicant e want to follow up.
* **Thank** the applicant and close on a positive note.

**Seven Cautionary Notes**

Although interviews are an excellent way of assessing how well applicant s measure up to your job requirements, they are subject to many influences that may reduce the effectiveness of the interviewer's judgment. Interviewers should be aware of these pitfalls and avoid them. Following are seven of the most common interviewing hazards.

* **Halo Effect:** This happens when an interviewer forms a global, positive impression of an applicant based on a characteristic or other information that biases the interviewer's assessment of the applicant 's qualifications.
* **Stereotyping:** Stereotyping is a generalisation based on personal or physical characteristics (e.g., racial/ethnic background, social status) that have nothing to do with the factor being assessed. It affects an applicant's rating if it elicits a negative or positive reaction in the interviewer. Restricting candidacy based on gender, race, or religion is one of the biggest mistakes companies make when hiring.
* **Order Effect:** The order in which applicants are interviewed can result in inaccurate ratings. A good applicant who is interviewed after an outstanding applicant may be given a lower evaluation than is merited because of the overshadowing effect of the superior applicant. The time of day may also influence an assessment. A tired committee is not as attentive or accurate as it would be earlier in the day.
* **Early Judgments/Impressions:** Interviewers should avoid making snap or early judgments (positive or negative) based on factors not related to the position such as appearance, voice, or handshake.
* **Rating Tendencies:** Leniency and strictness errors occur when interviewers gravitate to either extreme on the rating scale and are consistently too generous or too rigid in their scoring. Errors also occur when interviewers rate all applicants as average. Rating tendencies reduce the effectiveness of the assessment process by making it hard to draw clear distinctions among applicants.
* **Inadvertently Influencing the Applicant's Response:** The more you talk, the more you influence an applicant's response. At the beginning and in the middle phases, say as little as possible about the position and get back to questioning and listening. Body language and tone of voice will also influence an applicant, so be aware of the signals you may unintentionally be communicating.
* **Losing Control of the Interview:** As the chair, it is up to you to ensure that you control the interview, not the applicant. Use the communication techniques described above to take control of a chatty or rambling applicant, to refocus the conversation when it gets off track, to signal other committee members to ask their questions as required, and to monitor the time.

