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**SUBSCRIPTION**

***Cheat Sheet:***

***Customer Service Representative***  
***INTERVIEW QUESTIONS***

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By Dana E. Neuts

# CHEATSHEET

## CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### DURING THE INTERVIEW:

Use the following questions as a guide as you interview your potential customer service reps. While not all of these questions may work for your situation, they offer a good jumping-off point to ensure a meaningful interview process. Notice that these questions are open-ended and ask for specific examples of performance, rather than a statement of belief. This will help you get greater insight into the strengths and weaknesses of your candidate. Asking to cite examples of work or how they handled a situation will help you understand their actual experience (that you can then confirm in your reference checking as well). Use the ones that work best for you or adapt as necessary.

Question	Skill Addressed	Listen for:
"What Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software applications are you proficient in?"	Technical Adaptability	Comfort level with using CRM systems you use or plan to use. The ideal candidate would have specific experience with your systems.
"In what ways have you interacted with customers in the past?"	Technical Adaptability	Comfort level with live chat, email, text/sms and/or telephonic communications
"What products/services have you supported in the past?"	Industry Knowledge	Subscription-service business, subject-matter expertise, technical proficiency

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Question	Skill Addressed	Listen for:
"How many queries did you deal with in an average day?"	Capacity, Energy	Experience with similar volumes and resolution expectations.
"How was your success measured?"	Comfort with Metrics	Match with your plan for recording performance metrics.
"Tell me about a time you escalated a customer recommendation that changed your product for the better."	Problem Solving	Critical, big-picture thinking and identifying patterns.
"Give a specific example of when you had to resolve a complex problem for a dissatisfied customer."	Problem Solving	Examples of asking questions to find the right answer and demonstrating persistence, logical thinking and patience.
"Describe a recent situation when you had to handle a very angry customer."	Aptitude for Customer Service	Patience, ability to say "I'm sorry" while not necessarily agreeing with the customer or taking blame and allowing the customer to vent while maintaining professionalism.

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Question	Skill Addressed	Listen for:
"How do you define 'going the extra mile' for a customer and give me an example."	Aptitude for Customer Service	Extent of effort and willingness and creativity in helping.
"Describe a time you had to change your approach to a customer because your first efforts were unsuccessful."	Adaptability	Customer-focused thought process and empathy.
"Give an example of when you had to deal with a major change in the customer service policies at your company."	Adaptability	Ability to adapt and questioning to understand versus questioning to challenge.
"Tell me about a customer encounter that really tested your patience."	Stress Tolerance	Sense of humor, patience, empathy and persistence to resolve.
"What do you regard as being the most positive aspects of dealing with customers?"	Job Motivation	Enthusiasm and ability to give several examples.
"What do you like and dislike about the customer service job?"	Job Motivation	More positives than negatives and more enthusiastic than not.

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Question	Skill Addressed	Listen for:
"What is good customer service?"	Job Motivation, Fit	How does the candidate's answer align with your views?
"What, in your opinion, are the best metrics to measure customer service?"	Job Motivation, Fit	How does the candidate's answer align with your plans to measure success?
"Tell me about a time you upsold a customer to a new or enhanced product package."	Aptitude for Selling, Flexibility	Comfort level with some selling and the ability to spot a customer who clearly wants or needs to buy.
"What tools do you like to have at your disposal?"	Job Motivation, Aptitude	Customer data, buying history and the ability to resolve without getting management involved.
"Did you ever work somewhere where you disagreed with the policies you needed to follow? What were those policies and how did you adapt?"	Stress Tolerance, Adaptability, Fit	Maturity, poise in front of the customer, and philosophical fit with your strategic goals.

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### POST-INTERVIEW:

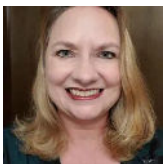
After the interview, you will discover a great deal about the candidate's ability to be both persistent and diplomatic, two very valuable skills in a Customer Service Representative.

Evaluate your candidates at this level based on:

- Prompt follow-up. A good rule of thumb is a one-day turnaround or an extended absence greeting that explains a delay.
- Does the candidate diplomatically move things along, encourage a decision and ask for the job without harassing you or your team?

With all of this considered, you should have a solid foundation for a successful first hire to your customer service team!

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Dana Neuts is Subscription Insider's Editorial Director, covering our daily subscription news as well as member features, case studies, premium content, and reports.

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