



Call Centre Operator

Level Intermediate

Salary £12,000 – £17,000

Do you like talking on the phone?

Call centre operators work in call centres and are generally based in the customer services department of companies and organisations. Their primary function is to maintain regular contact with customers and clients. This is mainly carried out via telephone but can also involve email, fax, post and even SMS messaging interactions.

The main objective is to consistently maintain a high level of customer service, whether providing information and advice or when selling goods and services. As the voice of the company or organisation, the call centre operator plays an important role and will often undergo an intense period of initial training.

A considerable part of the role will involve keeping customer records up to date on the computer.

The role may also include telesales or 'cold calling' in order to sell products or to conduct market research.

This role is also referred to as: Contact Centre Operator

The 'Low-down'

To be a call centre operator, it is important that you enjoy speaking on the phone and you must have a confident telephone manner. The majority of the role will be spent speaking to customers and clients. Reasons for calls may include: providing advice, promoting new services or products, selling goods or conducting market research. Some roles may include telesales or 'cold calling'.

All calls need to be backed up with administration and part of the role will be maintaining customer/client records. This involves entering data into a computer database or CRM (Customer Relationship Manager) system.

Typical duties may include:

- Answering incoming calls
- Making 'cold calls'
- Updating customer records
- Interacting with customers via email or post
- Taking orders/bookings
- Providing advice and information

These are just a few examples of the kind of tasks that you may be responsible for; in reality the role of call centre operator may vary depending on the type of organisation.

A typical day...

9.00	Log into computer and start receiving calls
9.30	Receive incoming calls
10.30	Receive incoming calls
11.30	Receive incoming calls
12.30	Receive incoming calls
13.30	Out for lunch
14.30	Update customer records from morning activity
16.30	Make outgoing calls
17.30	Sign off

The Facts

Hours:	Work hours are variable and depend on the company or organisation. Both full time and part time opportunities are available and many roles offer flexible working patterns. Some companies may operate shift patterns.
Salary:	Entry salaries start at approx. £12,000 and can rise to approx. £17,000 with more experience.
Prospects:	Experience and training can lead to progression into a supervisory or management position, or transfer your skills into a different area of work such as human resources, resource planning, marketing or training.
Location:	Lots of choice! There are approximately 10,500 call centres in the UK, employing 800,000 people. And the number is rising! Call centres are usually found on the outskirts of main towns and cities.
Travel:	Predominantly office based. In a more senior role, you may be required to travel between other call centres.
Environment:	This is an office-based role where you will be situated at an individual workstation, with a computer, telephone and headset. Usually based in a huge room with many other call centre operators, there is often a high-energy atmosphere.
Stress factor:	This can be an intense role as you may be dealing with calls all day long. Some roles may also require you to deal with some difficult enquiries.

What skills will I need?

To do this role, you have to enjoy speaking on the phone and dealing with all types of people. It is essential to have a confident telephone manner and be able to keep calm under pressure. A good sense of humour may also be useful!

Ideally, you should:

- Possess excellent communication skills
- Friendly and confident telephone manner
- Be computer literate
- Able to work under pressure
- Possess excellent customer care skills
- Able to work both as part of a team and autonomously

Is it possible to specialise?

All call centre operator roles are similar in that they require excellent communication skills and the ability to deal with all sorts of customers and clients. It is possible to specialise by focusing purely on your telesales ability for example or by building experience within a particular area such as, finance. It may also be beneficial if you possess fluency in a second language.

Opportunities

If you are looking to get into call centre work, there are plenty of opportunities open to you. With approximately 10,500 call centres in the UK, there is certainly lots of choice and due to the increasing growth of telecommunications technology, this number is rising.

Experienced call centre operators are in demand and companies are always looking for skilled people to represent them. Progression opportunities are good. With training and experience you can progress into a team leading role and then on into management. It may also be possible to specialise in new sectors such as finance or travel. Or maybe you will transfer your skills into a new area such as, marketing, training, human resources or resource planning.

Where do I start?

There is no set minimum qualification required for the role of call centre operator although; many employers will look for a good, general education. For example: a GCSE grade C or above in English and Maths (or equivalent). So, if further education is not your thing, you can breathe a sigh of relief. Most employers look firstly, for personality. It takes a confident and determined personality to do this role and its essential that you can deal with the occasional difficult customer. It may be worth considering a vocational route by taking on an Apprenticeship. This will enable you to gain work experience whilst also furthering your learning through N/SVQs.