

Career Exploration for the ESOL Classroom

Human Services: Customer Service



Student Workbook

Institute for the Professional Development of Adult Educators

CAREER EXPLORATION FOR THE ESOL CLASSROOM

Human Services: Customer Service

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A-Z Call Center: Customer Service – Sophia, Lucas, Carla, Ivan

Scenario

Sophia and her husband Lucas were having dinner with Carla and Ivan. It was hard to believe that three of them had just started new jobs. What was even more amazing was that all three of the jobs were in customer service. When Sophia started applying for a new job, she never thought that she would be working for a call center.

Sophia thought about what she wanted in a career. She wanted to use her computer skills. Sophia also wanted a job where she could talk with people. Although her English skills were not perfect, Sophia knew that she had a warm and friendly voice.

When she started the new job, she was given different scripts to use. She had practiced reading each greeting aloud. She wanted to be comfortable talking with each caller. Plus, she wanted the caller to understand what she was saying. The hardest thing was to remain calm. Sometimes, there were four or five calls coming in at the same time. Trying to figure out which was most important was difficult.

“Ok, Sophia, tell me what you think about your new job,” Carla asked.

Vocabulary

- Call center
- Career
- Customer service
- Manager
- Opportunities
- Script
- Supervisor

“I really like my job. It’s the best!” exclaimed Sophia. “I get good wages. Plus, I have health insurance. The hardest thing is to figure out what problem the customer is having. Once I know that, it’s easy. The company has this great program on the computers we use. All I have to do is type in the question, and the answer pops up on the screen. In fact, the program answers pretty much every question a customer may have.”

“What happens if you don’t know the answer?” asked Ivan.

“Well, then I forward the call to my supervisor,” said Sophia. “My supervisor is great. She has been with the company for five years. In fact, she’s applying for a manager’s position with the company. There are so many opportunities. I never thought I’d enjoy answering the phone so much.”

Sophia’s husband laughed. “With as much as Sophia likes to talk with people, I think it’s the perfect job for her.”

What Do You Think?

1. What are different jobs in customer service?
2. What skills does Sophia have that will help her in her career in customer service?
3. If you were Sophia, what would you do to improve your customer service skills?
4. Why do you think Sophia’s husband, Lucas, says that “it’s the perfect job for her”?

Different Paths – Sophia, Lucas, Carla, Ivan

Scenario

“Carla, now that I’ve told you about my new job,” said Sophia. “I want to hear about your job at the airport.”

Carla had been working part time for a local hotel. She had also been working day and evening shifts. It made it hard to set up daycare for their children. Although Carla liked working at the hotel, there were no full-time jobs available.

Carla knew that she wanted to work with people. She enjoyed helping people. She also liked solving problems. Carla just wasn’t sure where to start looking for a new career.

“I still can’t believe I got a job at the new car rental company at the airport,” said Carla. “In fact, I wasn’t sure what type of career I wanted. My ESOL instructor said I should see the career counselor on campus. The career counselor, Mr. Diaz, gave me a test. He called it a career inventory. The test told me what skills I had and what careers would be of interest to me. After I finished, Mr. Diaz helped me to look at the different careers. The one I liked most was customer service.”

“Then did you just apply and get the job?” asked Lucas.

“Well, it took a little more than that,” explained Carla. “Ivan and I both need to work. So, I wanted to look at entry-level jobs that would train

Vocabulary

- Career inventory
- Complaints
- Computer reservation system
- Difficult customer
- Entry-level job
- On-the-job
- Patience

me. Someday, I'd like to get my degree, but not now. So, I couldn't believe it when I saw the job opening at the new car rental business. It was an entry-level job. Plus, it provided on-the-job training. It was a perfect job to get started in the customer service industry."

Carla thought about her first weeks at her new job. She had learned how to use the computer reservation system. She had also learned how to accept credit cards. What Carla had not realized was that she would have to deal with difficult customers. Sometimes the customer's complaints seemed silly. One of her customers was upset that he had a blue colored car, instead of a black one. Patience was one thing that the job description didn't say was needed.

What Do You Think?

1. Have you ever taken a career inventory? If so, what information did it give you?
2. What information should Filipe have before he makes a decision?
3. Do you know someone who works at a car rental facility? What skills does the person need?
4. Have you ever dealt with a difficult customer? What did you do?
5. Why do you think Carla thought some of her customer's complaints were silly? What should Carla do when faced with these types of complaints?

So Many Careers – Ivan and Lucas

Scenario

“Alright, it’s my turn,” Ivan said excitedly. “I also have a new job in customer service. I have a new job at the automotive supply store.”

“That’s great!” said Lucas. “With your knowledge of cars, that is a perfect job for you. I know that you have always been interested in business. Maybe someday you can open your own store.”

Ivan thought about his new job. Lucas was right. He had always dreamed of owning his own business. Starting at the entry-level was a perfect way to see how a business should be run.

What Ivan had not realized was how much reading there was in operating a business. His first two weeks were spent learning about the computerized inventory system. The computerized inventory system could tell him whether they had a certain part. It also had a listing of the inventory at the other stores in the franchise. Then, there was learning what parts worked for a specific vehicle model. Ivan never realized how many different types of sensors there were for one car. His boss had told him that he needed to just look it up in the manuals. The problem was there were so many different manuals. Ivan was worried that maybe his reading skills were not good enough. He remembered one of his instructors teaching the class how to use an index and how to scan information. He was really using both of the skills.

Lucas looked at Ivan. “Do you not like your new career?” he asked.

Vocabulary

- Automotive supply store
- Computerized Inventory system
- Franchise
- Index
- Manuals
- Operating

“I really do like my job,” said Ivan. “In fact, I really enjoy talking with our customers. It’s fun to talk about cars and how to repair them. It’s just that the job is more challenging than I thought it would be. Customers don’t always know what they need. An important part of my job is solving their problems. I need to ask the right questions so that I know what parts they need. Then, I figure out the right part to fit their particular vehicle. Today, I learned that there are different types of fuel injectors.”

“Wow, it sounds like a lot of work,” said Lucas.

“It really is, but I think I have found the career of my dreams,” said Ivan. “I really enjoy working with the customers and solving their problems. Now, I just need to build my own skills. I think I may take a few classes to improve my reading and math skills. To be successful in business, I need to have good skills in more than just being liked by customers. My teachers would be surprised if they knew how much I am using what they taught in class.”

What Do You Think?

1. Why do you think Lucas says, “It’s a perfect job for you.”?
2. What parts of the job does Ivan find challenging? What would you do if you were in Ivan’s position?
3. How will Ivan’s new job assist him in becoming a business owner?
4. Do you think Ivan should improve his reading and math skills? Why?
5. Have you ever had a job where you did not have the skills you needed? What did you do?

Glossary

Automotive supply store: *noun* – also referred to as an auto parts store, this type of store provides different parts for automotive repair.

Call Center: *noun* – an office set up to handle a large volume of telephone calls, especially for taking orders and providing customer service.

Career: *noun* – a profession that usually requires training.

Career inventory: *noun* – questions that help a person decide on a career and shows a person's likes, dislikes, and skills. Also called an interest inventory.

Complaints: *noun* – a statement that a situation is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.

Computer reservation system: *noun* – a computer program that shows which vehicles are available and which have been reserved or rented.

Computerized inventory system: *noun* – a computer program that lists the items and number of items that a store has in stock.

Customer service: *noun* – the assistance and advice provided by a company to those people who buy or use its products or services.

Difficult customer: *noun* – a customer who is hard to deal with or who is unreasonable or angry.

Entry-level: *adjective* – a beginning job that often requires little or no experience.

Franchise: *noun* – a license that allows a person the right to use a company's name, products, and business system.

Index: *noun* – an alphabetical list of products with references to the places where they are found.

Manager: *noun* – someone who is in charge of a business or a department.

Manuals: *noun* – a book of instructions.

On-the-job: *adjective* – training that takes place at work while an employee is being paid.

Operating: *verb* – performing a task.

Opportunities: *noun* – chances to do something.

Patience: *noun* – the ability to stay calm and wait without becoming annoyed.

Script: *noun* – something written.

Supervisor: *noun* – a person who monitors employees in their tasks.