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PRESENTS

TALENTRENDS
Uncovering Talent Supply & Demand

Customer Experience Edition
What Are Organizations Looking For and Who Is Applying?

FALL2018

Powered by the scalability of Artificial Intelligence and the deep insight of Industrial/Organizational Psychology, Plum helps companies hire, grow, and retain top talent. Since Plum's launch in 2012, over 260,000 people have taken our assessment, and thousands of job experts have told us what kind of applicants they want to hire.

That's a lot of data – data that we just couldn't keep to ourselves!

That's why, on a regular basis, we will leverage our unique human potential datasets to answer frequently asked customer questions in our Talent Trends Report. The aim of this insight is to expose opportunities and risks that exist between job seekers and those sourcing talent.

By quantifying and analyzing the potential of applicants and employees, we strive to help organizations prepare for the future of work. Plum accomplishes this by helping companies incorporate data-driven decision-making at every stage of talent acquisition and talent management, including hiring, professional development, strategic workforce planning, and emerging leader identification.

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Customer Experience Trends Across...

46
Companies

85
Job Experts

3,731
Applicants

In the Spring 2018 edition of our Talent Trends Report, we dug into one of the largest groups in our database — applicants for sales professional roles. This time, we're taking a look at customer experience roles, which include job titles such as call center agents, customer success managers, and account managers. In an analysis of our 2018 Q1 and Q2 data, we dug into the trends and gaps between what employers were looking for in a customer experience employee, and what kind of candidates were self-selecting into the application process.

In a nutshell, here's what we found — there's a discrepancy between the kind of applicants who apply for customer experience roles, and what hiring teams are actually looking for. **Job seekers who are team players (polite, compassionate, and socially astute) are applying to customer success roles. Yet, based on the job analysis criteria we examined, hiring teams value candidates who can execute in a stressful environment.**

We conclude that this kind of self-selection demonstrated by job seekers is due to a perpetuating stereotype that "nice" people — who are mannerly, empathetic, and people-pleasing — are the best fit for customer experience roles, which is not necessarily the case. If this is a widely-held belief among job seekers, we advise hiring teams to be wary of this kind of bias appearing in their own selection process. We recommend that every stakeholder on your hiring team (hiring managers, HR professionals, top performers) contribute to determining a set of role requirements. By aligning with other team members on what talents and behaviors really drive business outcomes, your team can challenge this stereotype from the onset.

Applicants score high in

COMPASSION

is never the top priority for success in the role according to job experts

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Key Findings

	ORDERLINESS	STABILITY	INDUSTRIOUSNESS	ASSERTIVENESS
In Most Organizations, it's...	A Top Priority	A Top Priority	A Top Priority	Not a Priority
Typical Customer Experience Applicants...	**Score Low** Only **16%** of applicants will naturally keep track of progress toward targets and follow a plan.	**Score High** **26%** of applicants are highly capable of handling the pressure to reach targets and staying calm with difficult customers.	**Score Low** **19%** of applicants won't falter under pressure to reach targets or when unexpected challenges arise.	**Score Low** Score Low Only **16%** of applicants may seem pushy to customers or interrupt during conversations.

Most Organizations

NEED: Customer Service Employees with High...

ORDERLINESS These are people who naturally keep track of progress towards targets and follow a plan.

STABILITY These are people who are even-tempered and able to stay calm under pressure. They can consistently get the job done, even if there is a high pressure to reach targets, or if they're dealing with particularly difficult customers.

INDUSTRIOUSNESS These are people who aspire to reach high quotas and execute on success plans. They are motivated to work hard, even when roadblocks emerge.

DON'T NEED: Customer Service Employees with High...

ASSERTIVENESS These are people who can seem pushy to customers and may interrupt during conversations.

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Customer Experience Applicants Score HIGHEST in...

which means they...

MANNERLINESS

Are polite even when customers are difficult or rude

Build positive relationships with clients

Are willing to cooperate to meet customers' needs

COMPASSION

Empathize with customer concerns

Care about customer needs

Are forgiving of customer transgressions

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Know how to manage angry or upset customers

Know the best way to influence customers towards an outcome

Understand how to lead customers toward upsell opportunities

31% of customer experience applicants are **exceptionally high in Mannerliness**

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Customer Experience Applicants Score LOWEST in...

which means they...

ASSERTIVENESS
Won't feel comfortable pushing back against unreasonable customer demands

Won't feel confident making decisions

Aren't likely to take a leadership role during customer meetings

INDUSTRIOUSNESS
Are less likely to work hard towards challenging quotas

Won't proactively find ways to improve processes

May struggle with working independently

ENTHUSIASM
Are less outwardly friendly and outgoing during customer interactions

Won't feel comfortable engaging in small talk with customers

Are less likely to take on a team cheerleader role

25% of customer experience applicants are **extremely low in Industriousness**

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Organizations NEED Applicants that Score High in...

which means they...

ORDERLINESS

Are meticulous with ticket management, customer operations, and success plan management

Are thorough and detail-oriented with customer needs across stakeholder groups, interests, and departments

Maintain documentation, collaboration platforms, and business artifacts to ensure buy-in and alignment across inputters

Are organized when onboarding and presenting to clients

Clarify roles and responsibilities while providing consistent follow-up and communication

STABILITY

Thrive in a fast-paced, high-pressure environment

Are able to provide consistent and uniform service across multiple customer interactions

Are able to maintain composure when handling upset customers and calmly drive escalations to an equitable close

Are even-tempered in difficult client interactions

INDUSTRIOUSNESS

Have the drive to attain and surpass targets for customers' satisfaction and success

Are able to align resources internally and client-side and persevere to manage and overcome complicated customer issues

Are able to maintain focus and effort to drive change over long projects and durations

Are motivated to continuously improve the customer success process

25%

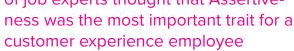of job experts agreed that Orderliness was the most important trait for a customer experience employee

Prioritize attracting and identifying these talents when you write job descriptions, use psychometric assessments, and conduct interviews.

Organizations DON'T NEED Applicants that Score High in...

which means they...

COMPASSION

Prioritize empathy at the expense of efficiency

Make exceptions for individual circumstances

Concede to unreasonable customer demands

ASSERTIVENESS

Make their point without fully listening to the customer's concerns

Interrupt during conversations

Act stubbornly towards other members of the customer experience team or with other departments

INTELLECTUAL DISPOSITION

Do things the way they want to, instead of following procedure

Focus too much on the abstract at the expense of being practical

Revise customer success processes that aren't broken

0% of job experts thought that Assertiveness was the most important trait for a customer experience employee

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Conclusion

Y ou're likely familiar with the challenge that comes with retaining customer experience employees. You're not alone — the average annual turnover rate in the call center industry, for instance, is between 30 and 45 percent (compared to the U.S. average of 15.1 percent across all jobs). And that kind of churn is costly. Turnover can cost up to 5X a bad hire's salary — not to mention the human costs, like decreased productivity, decreased employee morale, and lost time.

Bearing that in mind, it's time to consider that fulfilling some of the more immediate needs of the customer experience role (i.e. upping customer satisfaction) doesn't always guarantee tenure. Creating better experiences for your customer-facing employees starts with a talent-based hiring approach. When you hire people whose innate strengths are leveraged in their workplace, they are more likely to love their job, and do it well — and therefore more likely to stay.

In order to find customer experience professionals who thrive in your customer-facing roles, it's time to put to bed the stereotype that mannerly and compassionate people are always the best fit for these jobs. Our research shows that job experts understand the real needs of the role are executing tasks in an orderly manner, even in a stressful environment. We recommend having hiring managers, HR professionals, and top performers contribute to defining the role requirements to get everyone on the same page.

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Tips to Attract and Hire Talent with High Orderliness, Stability, and Industriousness

Instead of...	Try...
SOURCING	
Only sourcing talent with past experience in customer service roles.	Sourcing talent with alternative work experiences, where individuals have demonstrated reaching high goals and dealing with changing work conditions.
JOB DESCRIPTIONS	
Writing job descriptions that ask for a certain amount of previous experience, and using phrases like "customer hero" or "team player."	Writing job descriptions that describe how the role is dynamic, changing, and target-driven.
ASSESSMENT	
Using a video interviewing tool that measures extraversion and enthusiasm.	Using a talent assessment that measures the full spectrum of personality, including Orderliness, Stability, and Industriousness.
INTERVIEWING	
Asking interview questions such as, "How have you been an advocate for your customers?" or "Describe a time you've gone above and beyond for a customer."	Ask interview questions such as, "Describe a time when you had multiple competing priorities," "Describe a time when you had a challenging quota that you were responsible for meeting," or, "How do you ensure a win-win when it comes to customer needs and business outcomes?"
GOAL-SETTING & COMPENSATION	
Setting arbitrary goals that pertain to a number of touchpoints and follow-ups with customers, and emphasizing team-oriented compensation.	Setting quarterly goals and compensation that focus on renewals, upsells, and net promoter scores. Emphasize individual compensation.

About Plum

Plum's mission is to help companies hire, grow, and retain top talent with the power of AI and Industrial/Organizational Psychology. By measuring talents such as adaptability, innovation, and communication, Plum hosts the single largest database for quantifying human potential at every stage of the employee journey — predicting successful hires and informing professional development, strategic workforce planning, and emerging leader identification.

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Plum Traits

Plum assesses applicants on 12 unique characteristics based on cognitive ability and the Five-Factor Model of personality.

Cognitive Ability	**Problem Solving** Understands complicated ideas, learns from experience, and analyzes information to choose the best solution.	**Social Intelligence** Effectively manages difficult interpersonal situations, knows the "right thing" to say, and understands others' motivations and feelings.
Conscientiousness	**Industriousness** Maintains high standards, aspires to challenging goals, and willing to put forth extra effort.	**Orderliness** Acts deliberately, focused on quality, and prefers to be organized and have a plan.
Stress Tolerance	**Stability** Calm under pressure, even-tempered, and resistant to the effects of unexpected changes.	**Self Regard** Has a positive self-image, satisfied with who they are as a person, and self-assured and optimistic.
Openness	**Intellectual Disposition** Enjoys learning new things, interested in different ideas, and imaginative.	**Experiential Disposition** Seeks out new experiences, adapts to changes, and tolerant of differences between people.
Extraversion	**Enthusiasm** Interested in meeting new people, initiates conversations, and enjoys social interactions.	**Assertiveness** Voices opinions, comfortable being the center of attention, and gives direction to others.
Agreeableness	**Compassion** Shows empathy and warmth toward others, and is understanding and forgiving of mistakes.	**Mannerliness** Pleasant, willing to cooperate, polite, and considerate.

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