



Missouri Occupation Pathways Customer Service Careers

Customer Service occupations are in high demand across the State of Missouri. Occupations can range from sales to some administrative service jobs, such as receptionists and secretaries. Customer Service employees have high visibility and represent the company to the public. They are vital to the success of businesses. Virtually every firm has an employee in some type of Customer Service occupation and the skills developed in these jobs can have a lasting, positive impact on a person's career.

Top Job Postings Employers Entry-Level Customer Service

Lowe's Companies
Dollar General
Macy's
Sears
Dick's Sporting Goods
BJC Healthcare
Target
AT&T
Best Buy
Chipotle Mexican Grill

Source: Labor/Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), Sep 01, 2016 - Aug 31, 2017

Getting Started in Customer Service

Several Customer Service jobs can be pursued with little or no training in most cases. Seven entry-level Customer Service occupations are selected for analysis: *Retail Salespersons, Cashiers, Customer Service Representatives, Hotel Desk Clerks, Receptionists, Food Preparation and Serving Workers, and Restaurant Hosts and Hostesses*. Over 90% of industries in Missouri employ over 300,000 people in these seven entry-level Customer Service occupations.

Top Employing Industries for 7 Entry-Level Customer Service Occupations

Industry Code	Title	2016 Employment
722	Food Services and Drinking Places	78,574
452	General Merchandise Stores	36,552
447	Gasoline Stations	20,992
445	Food and Beverage Stores	20,429
448	Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	15,797
444	Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	13,984
561	Administrative and Support Services	11,265
441	Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	9,498
453	Miscellaneous Store Retailers	8,337
451	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	7,755

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), 2016

Customer Service is in Demand

Current demand for these occupations is high. From September 01, 2016 - August 31, 2017 there were nearly 34,700 on-line job ads for the seven selected entry-level Customer Service occupations, making up 8% of total job postings for the time period (Burning Glass Technologies*).

Employment in these occupations is expected to grow over time. From 2014-2024 the seven occupations are projected to have over 130,000 total openings from both growth and replacement jobs. *Retail Salespersons* are projected to have the most openings, followed by *Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers* and *Cashiers*. All seven occupations combined are projected to create 14.7% of total openings for all occupations in Missouri from 2014-2024.

Entry-Level Customer Service Occupations				
Occupation	Total Statewide Openings 2014-2024	Entry Wage	Average Wage	Experienced Wage
Retail Salespersons	34,062	\$17,960	\$27,160	\$31,760
Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers	33,524	\$17,750	\$19,700	\$20,680
Cashiers	31,650	\$17,820	\$21,240	\$22,940
Customer Service Representatives	18,621	\$23,060	\$34,200	\$39,770
Hosts and Hostesses	5,043	\$17,760	\$19,580	\$20,500
Receptionists and Information Clerks	4,993	\$19,070	\$26,140	\$29,670
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	2,460	\$17,900	\$20,790	\$22,240

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), 2016. MERIC long-term projections, 2014-2024.

Because these are entry-level jobs, wages are lower than most occupations. Most of these jobs pay below \$20,000 for workers just starting out but with time those wages can grow. For experienced *Customer Service Representatives* pay can exceed \$39,000.

Entry-level customer service occupations give employees the opportunity to develop the soft skills that will be important throughout their careers, whether they remain in customer service or move to another career field. Customer Service jobs put people together in work situations that require positive attitudes, diplomacy, negotiation, and team work. A tough day meeting a demanding client's needs is offset by the joy of seeing a customer you helped return with a smile. While people often move up the career pathway from these entry-level jobs, the skills acquired in Customer Service occupations can build a lasting foundation for career success.

Customer Service Skills

Soft Skills are highly valued in Customer Service occupations. Several soft skills, such as Communication, Writing, and Organization ranked in the top 10 basic skills requested by employers in online job postings. As expected with these occupations, the top specialized skill of Customer Service was requested in nearly one-half (46%) of job postings for the time period. Other top requested specialized skills are Sales and Retail Setting.

Top 10 Specialized Skills Entry-Level Customer Service	
Skill	Online Job Postings
Customer Service	16,060
Sales	10,584
Retail Setting	6,134
Customer Contact	4,581
Product Sales	3,260
Customer Checkout	3,188
Retail Sales	3,035
Cash Handling	2,787
Merchandising	2,627
Cleaning	2,588

Source: Labor/Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), Sep 01, 2016 - Aug 31, 2017

Top 10 Basic Skills Entry-Level Customer Service	
Skill	Online Job Postings
Communication Skills	10,570
Writing	5,627
Physical Demand	5,015
Organizational Skills	4,708
Computer Skills	3,502
Telephone Skills	3,075
Multi-Tasking	3,035
Mathematics	3,025
Detail-Oriented	2,786
Problem Solving	2,689

Source: Labor/Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), Sep 01, 2016 - Aug 31, 2017

Even at the entry-level there is a need for basic computer skills, in particular Microsoft products. Microsoft Excel was the top requested software skill, followed by Microsoft Office and Palm OS.

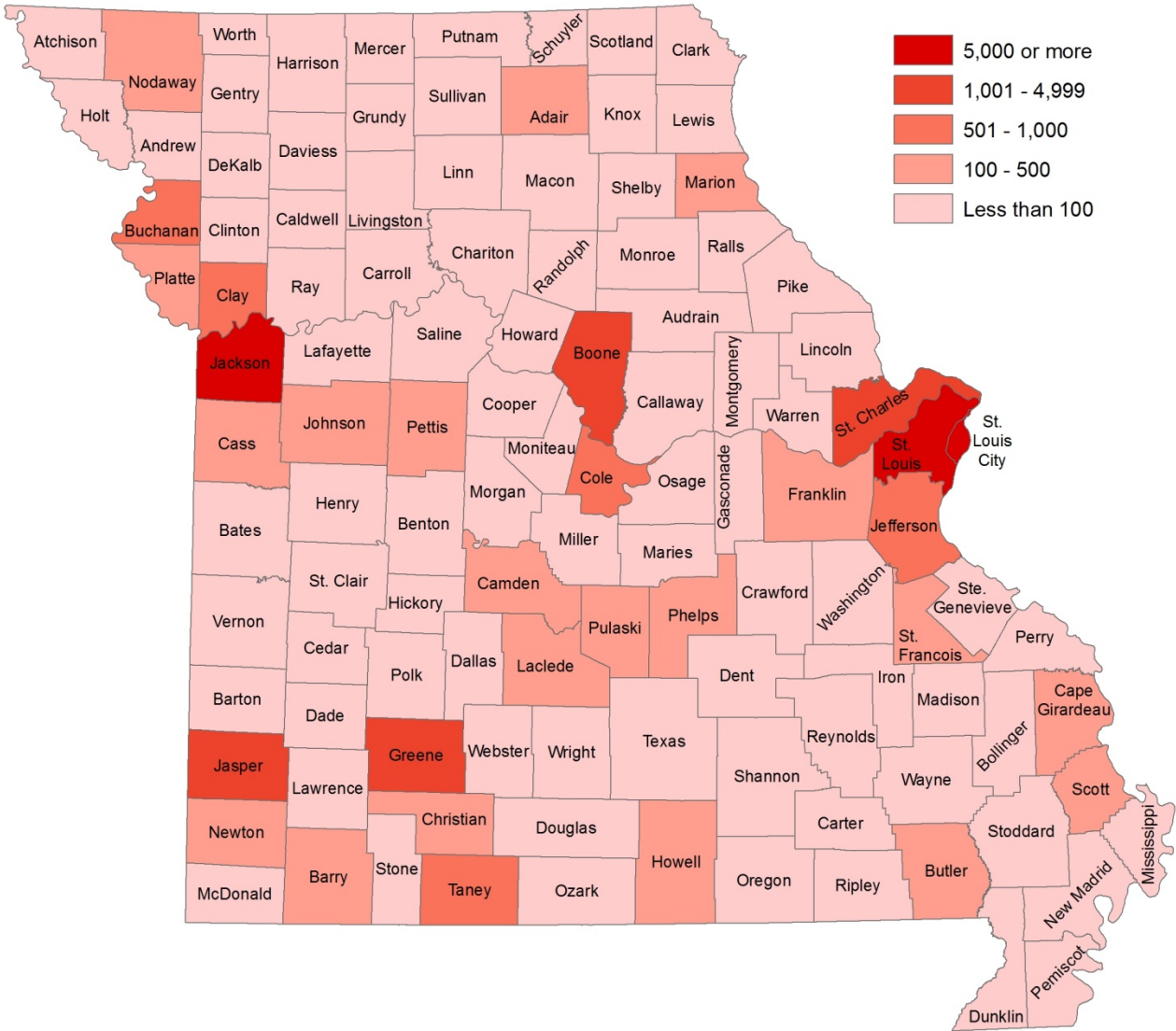
Top 10 Software Skills Entry-Level Customer Service Skills	Online Job Postings
Microsoft Excel	2,026
Microsoft Office	1,875
Palm OS	1,456
Microsoft Word	1,252
Microsoft Powerpoint	370
Microsoft Outlook	298
Word Processing	248
Microsoft Windows	243
SAP	161
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	121

Source: Labor/Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), Sep 01, 2016 - Aug 31, 2017

Entry-Level Customer Service Jobs by County

Most job openings for entry-level Customer Service occupations are found in the St. Louis and Kansas City metropolitan areas, with smaller concentrations of employment found in the Central part of the state, as well as in the Southwest. This is in part due to the large concentration of population in the Kansas City and St. Louis metro areas and popular tourist attractions in the Ozark region.

Entry-Level Customer Service Job Openings



Source: Labor/Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), Sep 01, 2016 - Aug 31, 2017

Customer Service Career Pathways

Job seekers can progress into higher-level Customer Service jobs with additional experience and education. While Customer Service occupations generally have low pay in lower skilled occupations; by gaining experience and developing management skills, workers can move up into higher-level Customer Service jobs with higher pay. The charts below list some possible career pathways for Customer Service occupations.

Information and Support Services

Now Occupations	Avg. Wage	Next Occupations	Avg. Wage	Later Occupations	Avg. Wage
<i>One-Twelve months of on-the-job training</i>		<i>Long-term OJT, Certificate, Assoc. Degree</i>		<i>Bachelor's Degree or Adv. Degree</i>	
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	\$20,790	Desktop Publishers	\$48,340	Proofreaders and Copy Markers	\$33,610
Receptionists and Information Clerks	\$26,140	Lodging Managers	\$45,940	Administrative Service Managers	\$86,980
		Executive Adm. Assistants	\$53,930		
		Supv. of Office and Adm. Workers	\$56,020		

Sales and Customer Services

Now Occupations	Avg. Wage	Next Occupations	Avg. Wage	Later Occupations	Avg. Wage
<i>One-Twelve months of on-the-job training</i>		<i>Long-term OJT, Certificate, Assoc. Degree</i>		<i>Bachelor's Degree or Adv. Degree</i>	
Cashiers	\$21,240	Supv. of Retail Sales Workers	\$40,510	Sales Representatives, Tech. and Sci. Products	\$79,310
Retail Salespersons	\$27,160	Supv. of Non-Retail Sales Workers	\$70,520	Sales Managers	\$134,120
Customer Service Representatives	\$34,200	Wholesale and Retail Buyers	\$60,020		
		Real Estate Sales Agents	\$54,060		

Restaurants and Food Services

Now Occupations	Avg. Wage	Next Occupations	Avg. Wage	Later Occupations	Avg. Wage
<i>One-Twelve months of on-the-job training</i>		<i>Long-term OJT, Certificate, Assoc. Degree</i>		<i>Bachelor's Degree or Adv. Degree</i>	
Hosts and Hostesses	\$19,580	Restaurant Cooks	\$23,120	Chefs and Head Cooks	\$44,580
Food Preparation/Serving Workers	\$19,700	Supv. of Food Prep./Serving Workers	\$30,530		
		Food Service Managers	\$49,150		

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), 2016

Workers who gain enough experience and education can move into advanced-level Customer Service jobs and upper management positions such as *Administrative Service Managers, Sales Managers, Food Service Managers or Head Chefs*.

While many advanced level Customer Service occupations such as *Sales Representatives of Technical and Scientific Products* typically require a Bachelor's degree, some do not. Burning Glass analysis shows that of the job postings that specified an educational requirement, 34% percent of *Chefs and Head Cooks* postings required only a high school diploma, and an additional 32% of postings required only an associate's degree. Eighteen percent of job postings for *Administrative Service Managers* and 46% of postings for *First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers* over the 12 month period only required a high school diploma.

With a large current and projected demand for entry-level occupations and the opportunity to advance to higher-level occupations, Customer Service would be a good choice for someone starting on their career path.

**Data for this analysis has been extracted using Burning Glass Technologies Labor/Insight™ tool which collects information from over 38,000 web sources, including job boards, newspapers, and employer websites. Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) uses this data to compile and publish reports for the State and Labor Market Regions. While this analysis presents a broad picture of hiring activity and serves as a measure of labor demand, it does not capture openings that are filled through other networks*

Now, Next, Later categories are defined using Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) typical education, experience, and job training requirements for each occupation.

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