

# Top 10 Qualities of the Best Customer Service QA Performing Call Center Agents

*SQM believes that call center agents have a tough job, and it takes the right type of individual to deliver great customer service QA.*



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[EINPresswire.com/](https://www.einpresswire.com/) -- The Importance  
of Call Center Agents

It may seem like digital touchpoints, such as online chat and web self-service, will put call center agents out of a job. But according to SQM Group's research, the call center is still the touchpoint of choice for 51% of customers contacting a company. Moreover, the call center is the most preferred touchpoint (e.g., call center, web self-service, online chat, email & IVR) for all ages resolving an inquiry or Problem.

In addition, it could be argued that call center agents are even more critical today than in the past, given that they handle more complex calls than in the past. For many customers, the call center is the last line of defense from customers defecting to their competition.

## [The Difference Between the Top and Bottom Agents for FCR Rate Performance](#)

In many cases, agents represent 60% to 75% of the call center's annual operating costs. Also, agents are the second biggest source of error (i.e., 40% of the time) for not achieving First Call Resolution (FCR). Furthermore, for every 1% improvement in FCR, there is a 1% improvement in customer satisfaction. So, making modest improvements in reducing agent-caused repeat calls represents enormous financial returns and, most importantly, protects customers from defecting to other organizations.

Many call center leaders are unaware of the differences between the best versus the worst-performing agents for FCR and the impact on costs and customer retention. The below figure shows agent post-call survey results for FCR benchmarking rates for the best (i.e., top 15%) agent's FCR rate is 77%, which is a very impressive rating. SQM considers the 80% FCR rate to be at the world-class level. Conversely, the worst (i.e., bottom 15%) agent's FCR rate is 62%, a 4th quartile level.

The difference between the top 5% of agents and the bottom 5% for FCR performance is 20%. Interestingly, in some world-class call centers, there is very little difference between the best and the worst agents for FCR performance. Conversely, it is not uncommon for third and fourth-quartile FCR-performing call centers to see a 30% to 40% difference between the best and worst agents for FCR performance.

### [Why Do Customers Still Use the Phone to Contact a Company?](#)

Companies have substantially expanded their self-service and digital touchpoints (e.g., web/mobile self-service, chat, & SMS) in recent years for resolving a wider variety of contact types (e.g., low to medium contact type complexity). Therefore, you might think the call center is an outdated touchpoint for delivering customer service. However, the majority of customers still use the phone to contact a company.

SQM Group's research shows the main reasons why customers still use the phone touchpoint is that 9% of them feel it's the best way to get information, 41% think it's the quickest way to resolve a problem, and 50% like to talk to a person about a problem. So you can strongly argue that the call center agent touchpoint is here to stay and will continue to be the preferred touchpoint for the foreseeable future for many customers.

### [Top 10 Qualities of the Best Customer Service QA Performing Call Center Agents](#)

The call center agent job can be challenging and demanding for new hires. SQM Group's research shows that the average call center benchmarked there was 28% agent turnover annually. Of that 28% annual turnover, 73% of agents leave the call center in their first year of employment.

Call center agents need to be able to work in a fast-paced environment and handle 40 to 60 calls daily. In many cases, calls are monotonous, and an agent will feel they are tied to their desk with limited freedom. Also, agents will be interacting with different customer-type profiles. Therefore, they must be knowledgeable, stay calm and friendly, and show empathy, especially when dealing with rude or dissatisfied customers.

SQM believes that call center agents have a tough job, and it takes the right type of individual to deliver great customer service QA. When an agent is the right fit and has the necessary qualities, they are more likely to be very satisfied working as an agent and be able to deliver great CX. Here are the top 10 qualities that make for a successful call center agent to provide great customer service QA.

#### 1. Problem Solver

SQM Group's research shows that 93% of customers expect to be able to resolve their call reason on the first call. Furthermore, agents handle as many as 60 calls daily on average. Since customers expect to be able to resolve their call and agents handle so many calls, they need to be effective problem solvers. An agent must be able to quickly discover the root of an issue and

present the most appropriate solution to a customer. Therefore an agent has to be analytical and a creative problem solver.

It is typical for an agent to use scripts to handle and resolve common inquiries or problems, which can be helpful. However, factors that can contribute to lower FCR and Csat are that call complexity increases every year due to easier calls being handled through self-service touchpoints, 20% of calls an agent needs assistance with, and 46% of customers being put on hold. Therefore, an agent having good problem-solving skills is one of the essential qualities for them to have.

## 2. Communication Skills

The agent's job demands effective communication skills. Most call center managers believe that soft skills matter more than hard skills. For this reason, communication skills are a critical quality for an agent to possess. Effective agent communication is about exchanging ideas, listening, and understanding the situation, knowledge, and data so the customer can understand the message with clarity and purpose. When an agent communicates effectively, both the agent and the customer feel more satisfied and more likely to resolve the inquiry or problem on the first call. An agent should speak clearly, use an appropriate pace, use basic vocabulary and avoid company jargon. In addition, an agent's communication style should match a customer's persona communication style to create a stronger connection and enhance their experience in doing business with your company, resulting in higher call resolution and Csat ratings.

## 3. Knowledge Retention

For an agent to resolve an inquiry or problem at the benchmark average of 88% of calls handled or higher, they need a good memory for retaining the knowledge necessary to resolve issues. Customers want quick answers to their inquiries or problems without being put on hold or transferred. Any hesitancy can lessen the customer's confidence in the accuracy of the information provided by the agent. Therefore, a call center agent needs to instantly be able to recall the information required to resolve the customer's inquiry or problem.

For agents to retain the required knowledge, they need to learn and retain a good amount of information about the call types and situations they handle. Furthermore, after an agent's new hire training, agents should understand the company's products and services from a customer's perspective. In addition, agents need to understand and retain their knowledge of the customer's inquiry or problem. A good agent understands and remembers the customer's situation the first time they hear it, so the customer does not have to repeat themselves, which can create customer dissatisfaction.

## 4. Attention to Detail

One of the main reasons a customer has to call back a company is that the agents were not accurate with the information they provided. As previously mentioned, the call center agent job can be monotonous. Agents often answer the same questions and handle the same type of

inquiries and problems. Therefore, as a result, they can become lazy or complacent in probing to ensure they understand the details of the customer's situation. Some agents assume they know the customer's situation, which can be problematic.

Successful call center agents listen carefully to the customer interaction details to ensure they understand the customer's situation and don't assume they know their situation. When an agent pays attention to the details by restating their understanding of the situation and probing for clarification, it demonstrates to the customer that they care about resolving their inquiry or problem. In addition, successful agents who have high FCR and Csat performance ensure that customers understand the solution they provided to the customer.

## 5. Customer Rapport

SQM Group's customer service research shows that an agent building customer rapport is the second biggest driver for achieving high call center Csats. Only an agent resolving a call is a more significant driver for providing high Csats. Agents are, in many cases, the primary customer interaction touchpoint. Therefore, it is crucial that an agent projects a warm, inviting, and friendly image when interacting with customers. In addition, agents should maintain a positive attitude during the entire call.

Building customer rapport over the phone can be very challenging when you can't see someone's facial and body language expressions. Therefore, agents must use other verbal communication methods to build customer rapport. Here are five tips for building customer rapport:

1. Engage the customer in a personal conversation.
2. Agent matches their communication style to customer persona.
3. Use customer rapport-building questions.
4. Walk in the customer's shoes.
5. Fix the customer first, then the problem

## 6. Customer Empathy

Customer empathy is a call center agent's ability to walk in the customer's shoes by understanding their situation and feelings to help them connect emotionally with the customer. The emotional connection helps guide agents with the necessary actions while using compassion.

Whether a call center CX is great, average, or poor, customer empathy builds an emotional connection and trust between customers and the company. Furthermore, customer empathy can help an agent handle an angry or dissatisfied customer. Building customer empathy throughout the call center can lead to better customer service.

Historically, customer empathy was considered a trait that an agent was born with and could not be taught. However, current thinking is that customer empathy is innate, but an agent can learn to deliver customer empathy by being trained, coached, and monitored through QA and post-call surveys.

At SQM Group, we have been collecting agent customer service success stories with leading North American call centers for over 15 years. The common theme of these stories is that the agent showed customer empathy. For agents to show customer empathy comes down to the daily actions an agent takes to ensure customers feel heard, understood, and valued. Also, customers feel their issues and concerns are taken seriously, and the agents do everything possible to help them. Here are 5 customer empathy statements that an agent can use to achieve Csats:

1. I'm sorry that you experienced this issue.
2. This has happened to me too.
3. If this happened to me, I would feel the same way as you do.
4. You are absolutely right.
5. I want to confirm that I understand what you told me. I'm hearing that.

## 7. Call Length Management

Many call center agents believe that if they were allowed to increase call length (better known as AHT), they would improve their call resolution and Csats performance. However, SQM's research shows that customers feel the opposite and want the agents to decrease the call length. In addition, SQM has found no correlation between longer average handle time (AHT) and FCR or Csats. Put differently, longer call length does not improve FCR and Csats.

Furthermore, SQM's research shows that the call center industry, as a whole, has a huge opportunity to lower AHT, which, if handled correctly, benefits both the organization and improves CX. Agents need to be organized and capable of multi-tasking (e.g., using the KMT, taking notes, reviewing and updating the CRM while listening and talking to a customer). To provide high Csats, agents need to be fast and efficient. Agents need to be efficient to ensure lower call length without sacrificing the quality of the customer service they provide. The customers' time must be valued, but at the same time, they want to experience FCR and Csats. Therefore, agents must strike a good balance between efficiency and effectiveness, which requires them to have good call-length management capabilities. Agents must be aware of their AHT performance and held accountable for their call resolution and Csats performance.

## 8. Dealing with Pressure

Many call centers experience high agent turnover and low job satisfaction due to the pressure of handling 40 to 60 calls daily. In addition, agents have to take calls where the customer is upset and angry, which can become very stressful and a lot of pressure to satisfy the customer. An agent needs to be able to deal with pressure by remaining calm on the call, even if the customer is yelling and is not rational. The lower the call center FCR, the higher the number of customers agents interact with daily will be angry. Therefore, staying calm throughout the call and not letting the upset, frustrated, or angry customer is an absolute must-have agent quality for them to possess.

## 9. Dealing with Different Customer Personas

Most agents cannot identify the different persona styles of the customers who call them or are not trained to be adaptive to match their communication style to the persona communication styles of the customers calling them. Therefore, most call centers do not understand the impact of different customer and agent persona communication styles on their CX performance. Matching an agent's communication style to a customer's persona communication style will create a stronger connection and enhance their experience in doing business with your organization, resulting in higher call resolution and Csats ratings. Each persona impacts the preferred way a customer and an agent act, think, and make decisions. By identifying the persona's communication style, an agent can use behaviors and word choices that match the customer persona's communication style.

## 10. Motivated to Achieve High Csats

Having passion and drive to deliver great Csats is essential for call center agents to succeed. SQM's research shows that 40% of customers who did not get their call resolved felt the agent could have done more to resolve their call. Furthermore, when calls go unresolved, or the customer is dissatisfied, they tend to be more agent-will issues than skill issues.

A motivated agent to achieve high Csats requires them to take ownership to ensure a customer has a positive experience resolving their call. Therefore, an agent must have patience, determination, strong rapport, and empathy. Happy call center agents create great Csats. Happy agents are most likely motivated to put in their best effort and go the extra mile to deliver great customer service. The fastest way to improve customer service is to create agent call resolution and Csats accountability and motivation using a VoC Performance Management System.

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