



# 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.

## Getting Started in Customer Service

Several Customer Service jobs can be pursued with little or no training in most cases. Seven selected entry-level Customer Service occupations are *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 Job Posting Employers Entry-Level Customer Service

Lowe's Companies  
Dollar General  
Macy's  
Target  
Sears  
AT&T  
BJC Healthcare  
McDonald's  
Best Buy  
Dick's Sporting Goods  
*Source: Labor/Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), Jun. 01, 2015 - May 31, 2016*

### Top Employing Industries for 7 Entry-Level Customer Service Occupations

NAICS code	NAICS Title	2015 Employment
722	Food Services and Drinking Places	77,610
452	General Merchandise Stores	37,360
445	Food and Beverage Stores	19,910
447	Gasoline Stations	18,850
448	Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	15,550
444	Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies Dealers	13,640
561	Administrative and Support Services	13,050
441	Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	9,750
451	Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book and Music Stores	8,180
453	Miscellaneous Store Retailers	8,070

*Source: Occupational Employment Statistics*

## Customer Service is in Demand

Current demand for these occupations is high. From June 01, 2015 - May 31, 2016 there were 36,121 on-line job ads for the seven selected entry-level Customer Service occupations, making up 9% of total job postings for the time period (Burning Glass Technologies\*). Employment in these occupations is expected to grow over time. From 2012-2022 the seven occupations are projected to have over 130,000 total openings from both growth and replacement jobs. *Food Preparation Workers* are projected to have the most openings, followed by *Retail Salespersons* and *Cashiers*. All seven occupations will create 14.4% of the projected total openings from 2012-2022.

Occupation	Total Statewide Openings 2012-2022	10th Percentile	Average Wage	75th Percentile
	Combined Food Preparation & Serving Workers	37,256	\$16,400	\$19,190
Retail Salespersons	33,312	\$16,830	\$25,590	\$27,460
Cashiers	31,096	\$16,520	\$20,320	\$22,040
Customer Service Representatives	19,622	\$19,690	\$33,250	\$39,090
Receptionists and Information Clerks	4,859	\$17,620	\$26,150	\$30,600
Hosts and Hostesses	4,223	\$16,420	\$18,940	\$19,710
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	2,555	\$16,670	\$20,400	\$22,720

*Source: Missouri Occupational Employment Statistics, 2015. MERIC Long-term projections, 2012-2022*

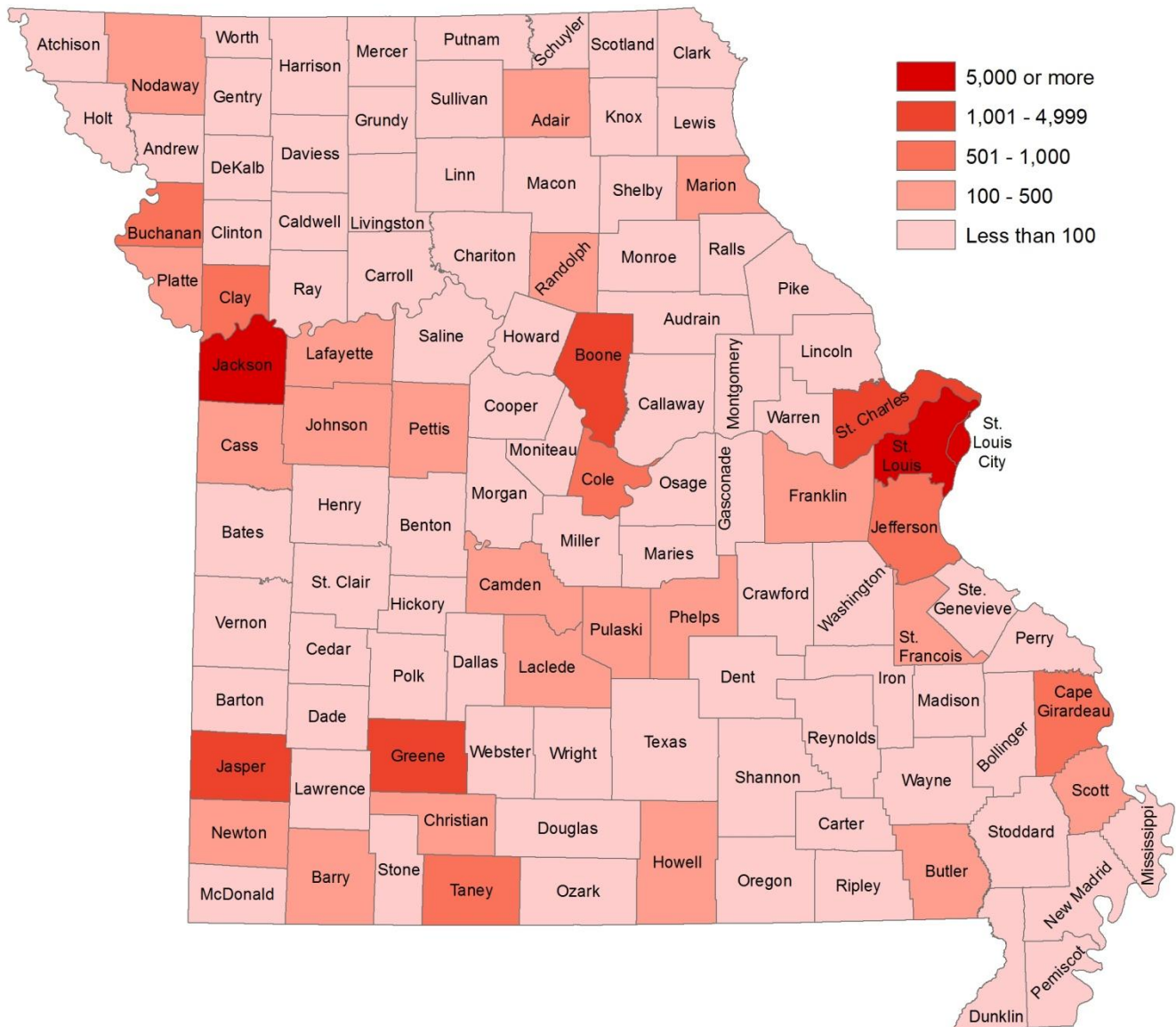
Because these are entry-level jobs, wages are lower than most occupations. Jobs pay below \$20,000 for workers just starting out but with time that wage can grow. For experienced *Customer Service Representatives* pay can exceed \$39,000. However, the most important benefit of this field of work may be the soft skills developed while on the job.

In surveys employers often note that job applicants lack strong soft skills, such as communication, needed for success in a given 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.

## Where are the Entry-Level Customer Service Jobs

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 part of the state. 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), Jun. 01, 2015 - May 31, 2016

## Customer Service Skills

Soft Skills are highly valued in Customer Service occupations. Several soft skills, such as Customer Service, Communication, Writing, and Organization ranked in the top 10 basic skills requested by employers. As expected with these occupations, Customer Service skills were requested in nearly one-half (48%) of job postings for the time period. Sales experience was the top requested specialized skill, followed by Customer Contact and Building Relationships. Basic Math Skills, such as Cash Handling and Cash Register Operation, were also in the top requested specialized skills.

<b>Top 10 Basic Skills</b>	
<b>Entry-Level Customer Service</b>	
<b>Skill</b>	<b>Online Job Postings</b>
Customer Service	17,351
Communication Skills	10,887
Writing	4,816
Organizational Skills	4,454
Physical Demand	4,212
Computer Skills	3,338
Multi-Tasking	2,994
Detail-Oriented	2,793
Mathematics	2,672
Telephone Skills	2,664

*Source: Labor/Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), Jun. 01, 2015 - May 31, 2016*

<b>Top 10 Specialized Skills</b>	
<b>Entry-Level Customer Service</b>	
<b>Skill</b>	<b>Online Job Postings</b>
Sales	11,530
Customer Contact	4,942
Building Relationships	4,372
Retail Sales	3,745
Customer Checkout	3,421
Product Sales	3,417
Cash Handling	2,860
Cash Register Operation	2,780
Merchandising	2,562
Product Knowledge	2,549

*Source: Labor/Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), Jun. 01, 2015 - May 31, 2016*

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.

<b>Top 10 Software Skills</b>	
<b>Entry-Level Customer Service</b>	
<b>Skill</b>	<b>Online Job Postings</b>
Microsoft Excel	2,288
Microsoft Office	1,782
Palm OS	1,400
Microsoft Word	1,303
Microsoft Powerpoint	429
Microsoft Outlook	341
Word Processing	295
Microsoft Windows	240
SAP	203
Microsoft Access	151

*Source: Labor/Insight Jobs (Burning Glass Technologies), Jun. 01, 2015 - May 31, 2016*

## Customer Service Career Pathways

Job seekers can progress into higher-level Customer Service jobs with additional experience and education. While sales jobs in particular 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.

<b>Information and Support Services</b>					
<b>Now Occupations</b>	<b>Avg. Wage</b>	<b>Next Occupations</b>	<b>Avg. Wage</b>	<b>Later Occupations</b>	<b>Avg. Wage</b>
<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	\$20,400	Desktop Publishers	\$43,460	Proofreaders and Copy Markers	\$36,990
Receptionists and Information Clerks	\$26,150	Lodging Managers	\$45,910	Administrative Service Managers	\$84,190
		Executive Adm. Assistants	\$51,530		
		Office and Admin. First-Line Supervisors	\$53,850		

<b>Sales and Customer Service</b>					
<b>Now Occupations</b>	<b>Avg. Wage</b>	<b>Next Occupations</b>	<b>Avg. Wage</b>	<b>Later Occupations</b>	<b>Avg. Wage</b>
<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	\$20,320	First Line Super. Of Retail Sales Workers	\$39,720	Sales Reps., Technical & Scientific Products	\$71,710
Retail Salespersons	\$25,590	First Line Super. of Non Retail Sales Workers	\$66,130	Sales Managers	\$126,370
Customer Service Representatives	\$33,250	Wholesale and Retail Buyers	\$51,990		
		Real Estate Sales Agents	\$53,360		

<b>Restaurants and Food Service</b>					
<b>Now Occupations</b>	<b>Avg. Wage</b>	<b>Next Occupations</b>	<b>Avg. Wage</b>	<b>Later Occupations</b>	<b>Avg. Wage</b>
<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	\$18,940	Restaurant Cooks	\$22,810	Chefs and Head Cooks	\$43,710
Food Prep & Serving Workers	\$19,190	First-Line Super. Of Food Prep/Serving Workers	\$29,570		
		Food Service Managers	\$48,750		

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, only 22% percent of *Chefs and Head Cooks* postings required a high school diploma, and an additional 40% of postings only requested an associate's degree. Twenty-three percent of job postings for *Administrative Service Managers* and 37% 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 to 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*

