

## Talk up your career

Working in the diverse call centre sector is a great opportunity for those who want flexible working hours. So whether you are looking for a second job, something temporary, or to fund yourself whilst studying, you will find something that suits you. Written by Chandni Sahni & Sam Ahmed

The work will vary with each type of firm that you work for. Some call centres deal with customer services, where they receive incoming calls from consumers with enquiries or problems relating to the firm, such as the Carphone Warehouse or Bid TV ([www.careersatcarphone.com](http://www.careersatcarphone.com); [www.sit-up.tv](http://www.sit-up.tv)). The alternative is "cold calling", where outbound calls are made usually to businesses or consumers for sales or marketing purposes. It is an extremely popular area to work in, with flexible hours and reasonable pay of £7-10 per hour, often with commission on top.

There are recruitment agencies that cater specifically for the needs of Central and Eastern Europeans and can be extremely helpful when searching for careers in call centres. Central European Staffing ([www.cestaffing.co.uk](http://www.cestaffing.co.uk)) is particularly designed to find jobs for CEEs working within the UK.

Agnes Wrodarczyk, managing director of the agency, emphasises that the right person must have an outgoing personality. The employers want someone who is rather open, friendly and has a confident manner. A good command of written and oral English is also a must, as you are required to speak with people with a variety of regional accents."

Although it may seem daunting to those who have recently moved to London and are struggling with the language, there are a growing number of call centres which look for bilingual CEEs to work in their customer services department.

If you are multilingual your opportunities widen. Instead of the average customer service job, you might find yourself dealing with clientele from Asia or Eastern Europe, who you may have to talk to in another language. This is also an excellent way to earn more money. It is important that you specify which languages you speak as this is your greatest asset within this industry.

Agnes says: "Training is often given to the employee, but having A-levels, or equivalent, is the basic requirement. Computer literacy is also a must, because data entering is one of the key features in any call centre job."

One of the largest telemarketing companies that has pioneered communication solutions is Pell & Bales which was established in 1990. They work with commercial companies as well as non-profit organisations including Green Peace, WWF and Oxfam, both in the UK and abroad. The company's turnover has doubled in three years. Call centres are continuously expanding and constantly on the lookout for people to work for them.

In recent years a large number of companies have moved their call centres to Central and Eastern Europe. The Czech Republic has over 300 call centres with firms like DHL and IBM setting up in the country. In Hungary, the industry is estimated to employ over 10,000 people. Even if your stay in the UK is only temporary, you can gain the relevant skills here and transfer them back to your native country.

Besides being a good short term career, there is also the opportunity for promotion within the company. You could work as a team leader or become a trainer, where you will be entrusted with managerial responsibilities.

So the next time you contact a call centre to moan about something, just pay attention to how polite and calm the agent is, and if you think you can react the same way, ask them for the number of their recruitment department.