

# BENCHMARK STUDY REPORT: CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES



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CONDUCTED BY

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# STUDY SUMMARY

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This report will summarize the findings of the Customer Service Representative (CSR) Benchmark Study conducted within the Independent Insurance Agency of Texas (IIAT), member agencies. The study was designed to identify, through objective means, the core traits and emotional intelligence competencies that correlate to success in the CSR position within the state of Texas.

By identifying and defining these core success competencies, IIAT members will be better equipped to recognize these competencies for two key purposes:

1. In future candidates to assist in making better hiring decisions
2. In current employees to determine training and development needs, as well as promotion decisions.

## ABOUT THE STUDY GROUP

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The study consisted of 213 current CSR's in Texas (33 Life & Benefits CSR's; 49 Personal Lines CSR's; 131 Commercial Lines CSR's).

The employees included in the study were classified by their overall performance ranking, and all were considered to be successful CSR's with over 1-year of successful performance in their respective roles, with a majority of the group has proven success in their role for 5+ years.

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## UNDERSTANDING CORE COMPETENCIES

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The ZERORISK Hiring System (ZRHS), based on the Hartman-Kinsel Value Profile (HKVP), was used as the method of assessment for the participants of this study. It is a value-based assessment that identifies a person's core emotional intelligence competencies and behaviors.

ZRHS measures six facets of thinking that contribute to these competencies. Three of these facets focus on how the person thinks about the world, things, and other people; these are labeled “Intuition and Empathy,” “Results Orientation and Decisiveness,” and “Adherence and Organization.” The other three facets reveal how the person thinks about the uniqueness of his/her self; these are labeled “Self View,” “Self Awareness,” and “Self Expectations.” As with the multiple ways a person views the world and themselves, the actual measurements of these thinking facets reflect much more about the person than the labels imply. It is important to understand that these labels are assigned to the measurements as a matter of convenience. The scoring scale for each facet is based upon a scale of 0 to 10, with 6 being the point of balanced thinking. Therefore, a higher score is not necessarily a better score. The closer the person scores to 0, the less the person pays attention to the issues falling within the particular facet. The closer the person’s score is to 10, the more fixated the person is on the issues involving that facet.

In the findings below, all six competencies are important. However, the critical competencies highlighted reflect a greater key variance exhibited among top performers vs. poor performers and were confirmed in this study.

There are certain correlations between the six competencies that can be explained during a debriefing call to present the results of the study. Please contact Mike Poskey ([mike.p@zeroriskhr.com](mailto:mike.p@zeroriskhr.com)), President and CEO of ZERORISK HR, to schedule a call to discuss the study results.

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## STUDY FINDINGS – INSURANCE SALES PRODUCERS

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This group consisted of 213 individuals. The following highlights the critical competencies identified for this role.

- **Intuition & Empathy** – This competency measures an individual's ability to see the uniqueness in other people. This allows them to connect emotionally with others, build strong client relationships, and be attentive to the customer's needs. 79% of the successful CSR's scored to be attentive to and have clear thinking in this competency (scores 6, 7, and 8). This data is in line with previous benchmark studies conducted on this role in this industry.
- **Results Orientation & Decisiveness** – This competency measures how an individual thinks in relative or comparative ways, and provides insight into the level of patience, and attention to detail they have. 83% of the successful CSR's scored to be clear in relative thinking (scores 4, 5, 6, and 7), which allows for their good attention to detail and a level of patience when attending to the customer's needs. This data is in line with previous benchmark studies conducted on this role in this industry.
- **Adherence & Organization** – This competency measures how attentive to black & white or right & wrong concepts the person is. This allows them to be more attentive to policies and procedures when dealing with customer requests and/or data. 86% of the successful CSR's scored to be very attentive to this competency (scores 7 and 8). This data is in line with previous benchmark studies conducted on this role in this industry.
- **Self View** – This competency measures how an individual handles rejection and criticism, and is a critical competency in any role that may require suggestive selling and/or persuasion. 85% of the successful CSR's scored 3, 4, or 5 in this competency. This means that the successful CSR's feel the "pain" of any sales rejection or customer criticism/complaints they encounter. This data is in line with previous benchmark studies conducted on this role in this industry.

- **Self Awareness** – This competency measures an individual's ability to think positively about their own personal competence in comparison to other people. This competency is one of the main sources of personal confidence, competitiveness, and a need for personal recognition such as commissions, bonuses, etc. 75% of the successful CSR's scored to have somewhat clear thinking in this competency (scores 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8). Additionally, 62% of the successful CSR's scored < 6, indicating more of a team-oriented individual that is not as motivated by personal recognition that comes in the form of commissions. However, if you have a CSR scoring 7, 8, or 9, they may have growth potential into a Producer role that is compensated by commissions and individual recognition. This data is in line with previous benchmark studies conducted on this role in this industry.
- **Self Expectations** – This competency measures an individual's ability to focus on their ideal self, personal commitments and goals. It also can measure a level of personal stress the individual may be under at a given time. 75% of the successful CSR's scored to be attentive to this competency (scores 6, 7, 8, and 9). This provides the CSR with the internal direction to stay focused on their personal goals and commitments. This data is in line with previous benchmark studies conducted on this role in this industry.

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## DIFFERENCE FOUND AMONG THE THREE GROUPS

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The success hiring benchmark below can be used for all three CSR roles (Life & Benefits, Personal Lines, and Commercial Lines), but the following will highlight the key differences between the three groups.

- Both the Life & Benefits Group and the Commercial Lines Group showed to be much clearer in reading people and had a greater ability to handle rejection and criticism than did the Personal Lines Group.
  - This indicates that Life & Benefits CSR's and Commercial Lines CSR's are a better "springboard" position to transition into a sales producer role.
- On average, the Personal Lines Group had much higher scores in Intuition & Empathy and had lower scores in Self View.
  - This indicates a greater sensitivity to people and their feelings.

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## HIRING BENCHMARK – CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

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Measured Competency	Success Score Range
Intuition & Empathy: (Service Orientation & Client Relationship Building Skills)	6 - 8
Results Orientation & Decisiveness: (Attention to Detail & Degree of Patience for Long Sales Cycle)	4 - 7
Adherence & Organization: (Attention to Rules & Ideal Concepts)	7 - 8
Self View: (Resiliency and ability to handle sales rejection)	3 - 5
Self Awareness: (Confidence, Competitiveness, and Persuasion Skills)	4 - 8
Self Expectations: (Personal Accountability & Goal Orientation)	6 - 9