



NZ Employment Market Report 2021

Contact Centre

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The Market

In recent years, customer experience has become a top priority for many organisations. Whilst chatbots and artificial intelligence have automated some areas of the Contact Centre industry, the demand for skilled, customer focused candidates who could demonstrate empathy, increased immediately following the emergence of the global pandemic. Last year, with the need to operate through alert levels, organisations moved quickly to establish remote operations, and prepare for a surge in customer enquiries. The challenge was to continue delivering a positive customer experience, but without face-to-face engagement.

Almost overnight, many phone and online Contact Centres became the face of customer experience in New Zealand. A large number of Contact Centre offices were established across the country, including ones to answer MIQ and COVID-19 related questions, with many roles encompassing live chat, email, and written communication.

It has come as no surprise that organisations that could trade successfully online, or those that were considered an essential service, thrived in this environment and were actively hiring. With the decline in home loan interest rates, and first home buyers moving to get in the market, the property industry grew. The freight industry also benefitted with an increase in online shopping. Both these sectors required considerable additional Contact Centre employees to meet demand.

Although customers are completing more tasks online than ever before, the need for Contact Centre professionals who could handle complex tasks, while demonstrating care and empathy, remained vital. Due to the sometimes technical, and ever-evolving job descriptions within this industry, organisations now favour candidates with solid, proven experience within the Contact Centre sector, where previously they may have considered candidates with transferable skills from other industries.

Across the nation, there was a reduction in Contact Centre Sales roles, and an increase in customer service roles, as several companies with large offshore service centres swiftly moved to a local Contact Centre solution. Due to the high demand for professionals with technical capabilities in this sector, salaries increased, and there were many more permanent and fixed-term roles on offer. The increase in business confidence is evidenced by the comparably high number of permanent, rather than temporary vacancies in the market.

The Contact Centre sector has traditionally looked to overseas candidates with working holiday visas to fill temporary roles. These candidates offer extensive Customer Service and Sales experience, prefer to engage in short-to-medium term assignments, and are often willing to be more flexible on pay rates than local candidates. With travel restrictions in place, this valuable pool of experienced candidates significantly reduced.

Organisations have since struggled to attract the same calibre of candidates that are willing to accept the pay rates on offer. However, there is also an influx of available candidates, most notably from the Tourism sector. We saw flight attendants, pilots and travel agents applying for Contact Centre roles, unsurprisingly without direct Contact Centre experience.

There were also skilled candidates, such as Account Managers and Team Leaders, who became available and were willing to seek a compromise and engage in temporary roles, while waiting for a permanent role to become available.

EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR	CANDIDATES LOOK FOR
Candidates with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solid Experience and Tenure• Clear Communication• People Skills• Good Attitude• Reliability	Opportunities with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salary• Stability• Flexibility• Learning and Development

Moving forward, candidates will look for new opportunities, and as business confidence continues to increase, new roles will be created.

- SOUGHT AFTER SKILLS -



Strong Technical Literacy



Strong Written Communication



Bilingual or Multilingual

- SOUGHT AFTER SOFT-SKILLS -



Interpersonal Skills



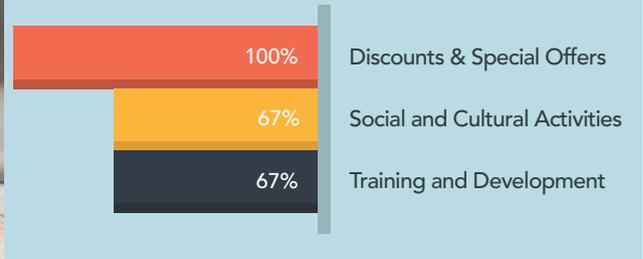
Emotional Intelligence



Problem Solving



- TOP 3 BENEFITS PROVIDED -



Contact Centre Salary Guide

2020/21 RANGE IN NZD \$'000S

ROLE	AUCKLAND		WAIKATO / BOP		WELLINGTON		CHRISTCHURCH	
	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Contact Centre Manager / Customer Service Manager / Customer Service & Sales Manager	95	180	110	130	110	170	70	120
Team Leader	65	95	85	95	70	95	55	70
Trainer / Team Coach	62	80	75	85	55	80	55	70
Claims Consultant	50	78	55	60	44	57	45	55
Telephone Account Manager	52	65	55	65	50	56	45	52
Retention Representative	50	60	50	60	45	56	45	55
Collections Officer	50	65	50	55	44	56	45	55
Customer Service Representative - Outbound	48	60	55	60	44	56	44	55
Customer Service Representative - Inbound	48	56	47	55	46	56	44	55
Customer Service Representative - Home Based	48	56	45	50	44	55	44	45
Outbound Sales / Telesales Consultant	50	60	50	55	43	56	44	46
Workforce Manager	85	130	70	85	85	115	65	80
Workforce Planner / Scheduler	65	80	60	70	65	100	60	70
Lending Officer	50	55						

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Employers

With employers adapting to greater numbers of their workforce working from home as a direct impact of the nationwide lockdown beginning in March 2020, they were generally more open to providing flexible work arrangements. This was especially evident in the latter half of 2020, and employers have been increasingly offering this as part of their candidate attraction strategy.

Some organisations have even gone as far as moving their entire Contact Centre teams to permanently work from home to reduce overhead costs.

With the number of experienced candidates significantly reducing, we expect to see longer notice periods in this space. Many organisations that have been successful in this environment are offering periodic reviews, and we expect to see pay increases in 2021.

Candidates

Salary remains a top priority for many candidates, and roles that offered less than \$46,000 per annum saw a huge drop in candidate interest.

In Wellington, salaries were on the rise due to talent shortages, and organisations were still doing annual pay reviews to retain their top talent.

Candidates in Auckland had realistic salary expectations and were generally interested in the whole package on offer.

Candidates applying for a 'work from home' role had lower than normal salary expectations. This was expected as they did not have to factor in carparking and travel costs.

This year, candidates were more willing to 'follow the work' and move regions for a better opportunity. We also saw candidates applying for multiple jobs at the same time, and on occasion they were accepted for a role before they have even completed a process for another organisation.

This suggests that organisations looking for top talent will need to refine their candidate engagement strategy and reduce the application, interview and offer processing time to remain competitive.

With more people working from home, there was an increase in online interviewing. Recruitment processes are

- MADISON RECOMMENDS -

- **Employers** - If you are unable to provide a salary increase, consider offering flexible work options, including working from home. If you have a reputation for high employee turnover, focus on workplace culture and employee experience to retain the best talent. With an increasing number of candidates making employment choices based on workplace culture, a positive and inclusive culture will ensure loyalty.
- **Job Seekers** - Aim for a tenure of least 18 months, you will gain extra experience and skills in different areas of the business. Be willing to take on new and varied projects, which will give you more value when applying for new roles.



more robust as employers want to ensure they are hiring long-term employees.

As a result, many businesses have elected to add an additional layer of behavioural questions to their hiring process and are now doing two interviews instead of one - delving deeper into candidates' long-term goals.

The Year Ahead

Moving forward, candidates will look for new opportunities, and as business confidence continues to increase, new roles will be created.

Returnees to New Zealand will bring new skills to the market. In order to attract and retain the best talent, employers will need to think about offering stability in roles - permanent over fixed-term, and consider increasing the starting salary to entice movement.

We also anticipate the establishment of further remote roles as companies invest more in technology. These organisations will be looking for candidates who are technologically proficient and can complete the majority of their training virtually.