Developing out-of-the-box solutions

Liberal arts students are ideal for the customer support industry because of their unbound creativity and interpersonal prowess.

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The Indian customer support industry is essential to the domestic economy because it generates employment and makes a significant contribution to the country’s GDP. The growing number of adults entering the workforce and lacking employment opportunities mean that there is considerable demand for jobs in the customer support industry. Today, the industry is being transformed by a smart young generation having liberal arts education backgrounds. Industry experts recognize that liberal arts graduates have the skills needed for working in customer support. Hence students who have studied the liberal arts are in demand by the industry. Some of the reasons these students have the perfect background to work in customer support are provided below.

- **Creativity:** Albert Einstein once said, "Creativity is seeing what everyone else has seen, and thinking what no one else has thought." These words highlight the importance of thinking differently. Liberal arts students can view challenges from many perspectives and arrive at an optimum solution. Because of competition among organisations in the customer support industry, there is a need for customer support managers and agents who can think creatively. Such professionals can understand customers’ requirements and fulfill them with ease. Managers with a customer support background excel at reviewing recordings to instruct others how to manage individual customers.

- **Empathy:** Liberal arts students can empathize better than pupils from any other background. They've read classics by western and eastern thinkers and are mindful of cultural differences and thoughts. They understand people better than most engineers and science graduates can. A customer support organisation needs employees who can contemplate questions like, “Is this product useful to me?” How was my experience using the product? How can I help a customer who is facing challenges with a newly launched product? What is the best way to manage an agitated customer who is continuously facing issues? The nuances of such situations are harder for those with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) degrees to understand because they require empathy rather than rationality and logic.

- **Gathering Information:** Students of liberal arts learn to gather information to support their views. Working in customer support requires employees to conduct research. They do so by listening to the information given to them by coworkers, managers, and especially customers and general public. Collecting data from strangers is an art, not a science. There are guidelines for collecting data, but no foolproof formula. It is a nuanced skill in which listening, responding appropriately, and asking questions must happen effortlessly. Liberal arts students excel at such interpersonal tasks.

- **Communication:** Managers with excellent communication skills are vital to the success of every organisation and to talk effectively to customers. Every liberal arts programme is committed to improving students’ communication skills. Through papers, presentations, and critiques, liberal arts students practice excellent communication and become terrific communicators and presenters.

- **Critical thinking:** A liberal arts education background expands the mind’s capacity to think critically and analyse information. It helps the brain connect seemingly disparate ideas from multiple disciplines. Critical thinking helps a customer support person connect the dots, draw connections, piece together puzzles, and confidently assume various stances.

Many times biases and stereotypes blind people from making the best decision. Having a background in liberal arts helps students to think critically about situations, circumstances, people’s behavior, motivations and tendencies. Equipped with knowledge about different types of people, liberal arts students can face up to the most challenging customer-facing roles.

There’s ample real-life evidence that the customer support industry is ideal for liberal arts students. Those at the helm of large customer support organisations value the creativity and interpersonal prowess of liberal arts students. Their ability to think on their feet and capacity for developing out-of-the-box solutions make liberal arts students a considerable asset to organisations that serve lakhs of customers every day.

Learn from proficient minds

Applications are open for Future News Worldwide 2020, a prestigious international conference for the next generation of journalists run by the British Council in partnership with some of the world’s leading media organisations. 100 fully-funded places are available for the brightest young student bloggers, vloggers, photojournalists and reporters from across the globe to take part in the two-day event at Sky Central, Isleworth, London, in July.

The conference will offer an equally rich and packed programme for the next generation of news makers and content creators. The opportunity is open to undergraduate and postgraduate students (between 18 to 25 years) from any country. Applicants should be able to speak English at an advanced level and need to demonstrate a passion for following a career in journalism. The deadline for applications is 14 February. For details, visit: futurenews.org.uk/future-news-worldwide

Providing proper guidance

University admissions and career guidance platform Leverage Ed-teh Private Limited, recently announced that it raised over $1.5mn from its existing investors. DSG Consumer Partners and Blume Ventures co-led the latest funding round. Saama Capital founder Ash Lilani and PayU CEO Amrish Rau