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FOREWORD

Rene Joy Rivera is one of the most valued employees at EGS. Being in the company for over ten years, he has learned and seen a lot in this industry. He spent the past 4 years as a Product Trainer in EGS-Marikina (Cricket). Being in Wave 1 and having strong command, he is one of the most trusted people not only in the account but for the whole company. He also has a website that talks about dealing with call center jobs. The book "*How to Love Your Call Center Job (Even if you don't)*" integrates insights about call center industry. How it affects people socially and emotionally and how can an individual be successful in this type of industry.

Call center neophytes, employees who have stayed too long in their jobs, and people with managerial positions will find this book very helpful in terms of interpersonal development and coaching. It would be helpful to those employees in the industry who is struggling for all the possible reasons. It would also help managers give advice or it could serve as a guide for them to help their subordinates who are currently struggling.

My favorite chapter is "*Assess This Mess*". Reading this chapter was what I needed at the time to help me with one of my subordinates. "*Assess This Mess*" talks about how one can organize his thoughts first before making a decision. It is not only focused on deciding to stay but in making the best decision you could make for yourself based on the root cause of your struggles.

I'm very positive that this book would be a great help to people in the call center industry. You did great, Rjoy. I hope you'll write more books that would inspire people.

Lenina Bontigao

Team Manager

EGS Marikina

How to Love Your Call Center Job (Even if You Don't)



INTRODUCTION

Hey there! My name is Rene Joy Rivera (just call me RJ) and I am the owner of www.ReneJoyRivera.com. I worked in the call center industry for over ten years now. But I'll be honest; it was no smooth sailing over the years. I started out as an entry level call center agent and worked my way up to where I am at right now. I have been a trainer for around 6 years now handling different lines of businesses. Throughout those years, I've met different people who helped me get a better insight of the call center industry. Some of them seem to enjoy what they are doing while others have taken the job on a whim. Others got in the industry by accident (literally and figuratively) while others made it as his/her life purpose (which is very rare). And I have summarized (or at least that's what I tried to do) all those days in this e-book.

My main reason for writing this book is to address the fact that a lot of call center employees (both agents and non – agents) are either totally leaving the industry or goes on to hop from one company to another. In the end, most (if not all) call centers are the same. Obviously there are differences on how things are being managed but more or less the job is the same --- taking calls (or managing those who are taking calls for non – agents). And doing these things over and over can definitely take a toll on one's self physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially.

It is my hope that the book will help you (in some way if not totally) in surviving the so called "nightly call center wars". May you find value in it, and in the end, help you to become a better person, whether you opt to totally leave the industry or stay, either short or long term. For my non – call center employee readers, may you find enlightenment on what the rudiments of the industry are, and may you find greater appreciation on what our evening warriors do when darkness strikes.

Rene Joy "RJ" B. Rivera

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I hate my job...

So, you hate your call center job and you are looking for ways to survive or get by. Or maybe, you don't really *hate* your job; it's just that you frequently find your mind wandering at times—like every minute of the day. Maybe you are at your wits' end. How will you get through another week without losing your mind?

Hey, no need to feel bad, most people are in the same situation (I have to admit I feel the same way at times); research shows that only very few call center employees just *love* their jobs. So what do you do now; are you stuck being bored and unhappy at work every day for the rest of your life? It's possible, but it is not the end of the world. Let's discuss a few strategies for successfully living through the employment blues.

Not all of these strategies will work for you. Although taking calls is what each and every call center job has in common, each job is different and every employee has different reasons for not getting the most out of their job. Let's face it, like any other line of work or business, call center jobs can sometimes (or for some people, it is always) really are really awful, and some employers really are as grasping, selfish, and slack-witted as those bosses in the Sunday funny papers. So make sure that you try the methods

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that you feel the most appropriate for your situation, and remember that one call center employee may have fewer options as compared to another. In other words, your mileage may vary.

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Assess This Mess

First things first, you've got to figure out why you are struggling to get through the day. Take some time; sit down and figure out the negatives of your job. Write them down and then sleep on it. It would be best to put in more information once you have a clear mind. Then write down a few more, and maybe delete one or two. Just get a clear picture in your mind of exactly what you need to fix. The bottom line here is you have to have a very good idea of why you are feeling that way. Otherwise, you may regret taking actions on these things.

Now, rank your list-- the most irritating facets of your job on top. We'll need a good list because unless you are planning on hitting the lottery tonight and retiring, we need (yes, it is a necessity) to attack the most hated items of your list first. Once done, we'll get to the not so hated items in your list, like the awful parking situation around your job, the annoying empty coffee pots and the lunch-thief later.

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Look at your listed items. Would you consider them reasonable? If your number one issue is that your customers are always irate and the boss won't give you any hall pass, well... I'm not sure if there's going to be a solution for you until you change jobs, or start a business or hit that lottery like we were talking about earlier. There are a few areas that you simply cannot change—and areas that your employer has complete control over. These are things you'll have to learn to live with—or leave your job.

So, do you consider your list is sensible or sane at the very least? If yes, then good, now we can take a crack at it! We can't read your list from here, so we'll divide the general areas of complaint into several sections. If your number one item is lower down on our list, don't worry about it, just skim down.



All about the money!

Many people hate their jobs because they feel like they work hard all day and never really get anywhere. By the time they pay for the necessities of life, their wallets and purses contain only dust, cobwebs, and the occasional moth. Oh, the receipts and IDs should still be there! Just two days after withdrawing money from the ATM, you are back to what they call in Spanish “petsa de peligro” or critical days. Is this you? If so, there are two main strategies to dealing with your problem, one is motivational, and one strategic. Truth be told, you probably should work on both of them.

We'll talk about strategy first. Are you really doing everything you can to maximize the amount of money that you make? Are you getting more training and or “leveling up”? Have you spoken with the boss about bonuses, or about what it takes to be considered for a promotion to the next level? Is there a next level at all? Well most likely there is but have you thought of going there?

Many employees never actually get up the gumption to sit down and speak with their employer (or at least with their supervisor). Do it, and do it without delay! Like right now if you can! If you get nowhere with your boss,

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at least it will show you what you're up against. Maybe your supervisor has no idea that you'd like to move up the call center corporate ladder, many employees are quite content with their present situation, you know (or they try to think they are contented). The only way he or she is going to consider you is if you speak up. Your boss, much like your spouse, is not a mind reader. Once your boss knows, there can only be two things that would happen: Either he/she will start preparing you to the next level, OR he/she will just nod at you and then just forget the whole conversation right after. Either way, it will give you an idea how to go about things.

Let's talk about motivation for a moment. Do you have a husband or a wife? Children that like to eat (of course you have to eat too!)? Does your unfulfilling job provide health insurance that you have proven useful when you or some from the family gets sick? Maybe there are incentives like free travel for performing employees? Sure the nuts and bolts of your job might be boring, but rather than focus on that, think about what that job provides for you. So many folks focus on what they don't have, rather than what they do. Does your boring job provide the money for a basically happy life? If so, you might give that some thought instead of dwelling on the negative. This is what you call FOCUSING ON YOUR "WHY", the reason behind all the actions you are taking. If you do not have a very deep "WHY", whatever endeavor you take will be like carrying the world on your shoulders. If you think you had a very good and compelling reason for taking the job to begin with, focus on that. Would you be able to sleep soundly in the day knowing that you kids don't have food on the table?

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Booooooring!

You've just logged in and been waiting for a call for ten minutes now, and already your eyes are rolling back in your head. Your job doesn't challenge you to think, and sometimes you think that even your pet dog could do your job just as well. Sounds familiar? Many people are bored out of their minds while they are at work.

The truth of the matter is that most jobs are exactly like this. This is not limited to the call center industry. Repetitious tasks must be done (especially taking calls), and chances are good that whoever designed your job created it in a way that insured that the employee would never have to think for himself. So many employers seem to be risk-adverse (well all of them should be, otherwise the company would be losing a lot of money in the process), and these are the guys who design a job that can't be easily screwed up. Boring is always high on their agenda, meaning everything has to be standardized and all resources are available to you so you can do things right. Remember K.I.S.S? Keep It Simple... you know what's next.

So how does one live through this? The answer is simpler than you'd think—games and competition. There have been a lot of initiatives in call centers revolving around this. If for some reason there's none, start it up with your fellow agents/call center employees. Depending on what is your top metric is, compete with them. Try putting up bets around it (although you don't

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want management to know that you guys are gambling). Bottom line is you have to raise the stakes to put more excitement in what you are doing.

Take a lesson from your childhood. Remember when you were a kid and you had to make your way through your daily chores? You made a game out of it didn't you (especially if you have siblings or friends, this is very common)? While you might not have managed to get someone else to do your job for you, Tom Sawyer probably had nothing on your ability to make a game out of drudgery. So why did you stop? If your job is mind-numbingly boring, make a game out of it! Chances are good that those around you will wonder why you're suddenly smiling all the time and you appear to be having fun. Or maybe if you have a bunch of buddies who are feeling the same way, ask them to join. Instead of following the mantra "misery loves company" make your day enjoyable together with everyone. Later on, more people will notice that you are constantly smiling instead of just sulking with your headset on. Just don't smile out of nowhere.

Keep them guessing.

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I really hate him/her!

Evil coworkers are everywhere, and we're not talking just about rude and disinterested individuals. There are many call center employees out there who are positively *evil!*

You know these types. They hate their job even more than you do. Heck, they seem to hate their life itself, the world they are moving around in, and everyone in it. The fact that you continue breathe seems to annoy them somehow (not that they want you dead, they just hate the fact that they hear your breathing), and they refuse to be cheered up in any humanly possible way. You already feel so negative but this guy next to you is even worse. You are forced to spend a considerable amount of time in close proximity with this person. You even have to interact with them. Or even worse, he is your assigned "buddy" by your supervisor. Worst case scenario is that you may be asked to contact him if he is not around! And you have to do this knowing that the only words that he/she utters to you is "yes", "no" and "maybe". So what now?

Have you thought about talking to them? You have to try to have that conversation with them about how you do not enjoy their attitudes towards you and you don't deserve such treatment from them. Give them a chance

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to change or at the very least hear his/her side. You don't have to be confrontational, at least, not at first. Focus on one particular thing that the coworker says or does, and try to convince them to change it—get them to throw trash in their own can, or refrain from calling you “dearie”. Sometimes, a minor change works wonders. In situations like these, baby steps are considered big victories.

If you are rebuffed, or even worse, insulted; it may be time to have the conversation with your supervisor about the way you are being treated. Remain calm, don't yell or make unwarranted accusations or unnecessary comments. (Key note though, this is not easy. If you think you can't calm down then put it off first until such time that you can.) Politely ask for help, and remember that your supervisor is probably not looking forward to this conversation, or the one he or she is going to have to have with the other employee either. Be patient; give the situation time to improve.

Prepare yourself for the possibility that this annoying person may not change and may in fact continue to bother you. Unless it's a sexual harassment situation or some other behavior or work issue that the company has specific rules about, you may simply be forced to continue working with the person. Of course there are always other options like requesting to be moved to another team but some circumstances may not allow that.

You could kill them with kindness, ignore them or learn to handle the situation as best you can. Find a way to live and work with this situation. You can do it. Go back to the conversation that we had in the previous section. Focus on your “why”. Just think of it this way, they are not the reason why you are working so don't let them get you out of work.



My Boss Really is an Idiot

This factor is the one toughest to overcome if not the toughest of them all. If your boss is a bad one, things probably will not improve until he is taken out of position. Unfortunately, someone has got to be in charge in any organization, team, or department, and when your boss is a total dumb @\$ or just unreasonable or biased, you are going to be in for a long, tough slog each day.

If your boss is merely incompetent, the best thing you can do is to provide as much help to him as you can. You have to remember that he is representing and leading your team and if he is not doing it right, everything will fall apart. Not only will you make yourself invaluable to him, you will also gradually learn his job—thus positioning yourself to move up in this, or a different organization. The greater your skill set, the greater your flexibility when it comes to finding a more challenging and fulfilling employment opportunity. With this, you become more valuable and if you are perceived as such, you will be looked at as the next leader, if not perceived as the leader already. And when you are in such a state, opportunities are going to be endless!

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On the other hand, if your boss is unreasonable and/or biased, you have several strategies available—none of them good ones. You can buckle down and take the abuse (but remember that martyrs nowadays are only remembered through stone statues). Just do the job as best you can and hope and pray that he/she notices your value (I wish you all the best in doing that). You can also start looking for another job (but obviously that is a lot of hassle on many levels on your part). Another option (and IMHO I think this is the best one) is that you can go over his head and hope that his boss might help. This usually, if not all the time, works. Lastly, you can seek legal action. But I highly suggest taking the previous option first before going to the last one.

Keep in mind that your boss's boss may well not care if he is abusive towards you (you may need to take the last suggested option if this is the case). The higher ups in a company tend to be bottom line oriented, and if your boss's numbers are good, your unhappiness may just be the price of doing business to them. If you are going to fight, keep in mind that there is a very good chance that you are going to lose. So make sure you understand the risks before you make the attempt! Make sure that you have already exhausted all humanly possible options before going through it. Try asking yourself if you have reached a point where keeping your sanity mandates that you take the risk?

Your mantra (if you choose to fight) is DOCUMENT DOCUMENT DOCUMENT. Write everything down. Keep a journal of what's going on, every time you have contact with your boss, note it. Keeping a record will also enable you to cover your backside if things do get out of hand. Protect yourself.

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I'm tired!

You are buried in work; you have more on your plate than you can possibly handle. There are new types of calls/concerns waiting in queue before you've finished your current call. You are emotionally stressed out, physically drained and there is no relief in sight. Now what?

First things first, most, if not all there other agents in your company are doing the exact same job. Having said that, and they are managing the same amount of work without stressing out, the problem may be that you are either in the wrong job or doing your job wrong. But if you are the only one doing this job (which is highly unlikely, unless your position has very special duties), or alternately, if everyone doing this job is having the same problems, you have several strategies available.

Do NOT allow yourself to be abused. Take your lunch, take your breaks, and indeed take all of them! A stressed out employee does a poor job (this is probably worse if you are on the night shift), so working through your personal time is a recipe for poor performance and things will get even worse from here. When you are on your personal time, keep things personal and avoid talking about work related stuff. Try to take your mind away from the rudiments of work so once you get back to your work station, your brain is totally refreshed.

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Ask for help! Let your supervisor know that you are over-burdened and getting further behind. Show your boss what you are doing with your time (is trying your best even though you are tired) and if you can prove that you are working hard and still falling farther and farther behind, it will then become her responsibility to find a solution. A lot of people are fearful of asking for help, fearful that their boss will believe that they are lazy or incompetent. But if you are going quietly insane trying to do the unreasonable, it's much better for everyone in the organization to be honest about your situation. Most employers will appreciate the honesty. Your poor performance will eventually go back to them so let them know.

If possible, have a solution in mind. Are there tasks that you should not be doing? In the call center industry this is thing called "support boundaries" meaning the thing that you can do is only limited within a set of parameters. If it is not your duty, then refer your audience to the right department or the right person instead of you doing it. Are you behind because you've been forced to cover for someone else (like if somebody is absent, obviously the people at work are forced to take in the bunch of calls)? Be ready to make suggestions. They may not be accepted, but it certainly won't hurt to try. Your supervisor will appreciate the fact that you've taken the time to fully explore the situation and your options to fix it.

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Conclusion and a Call to Action

There are many reasons that you might hate your call center job, but no matter what they are, you're not the first person to have gone through this. The call center industry has been around for decades already so at the very least, you know that you're not alone and a lot of people were able to get over the hump. Keep an open mind about possible solutions for your problem. Think it through, communicate with your co-workers and employer, and be ready to change your attitude. You've probably heard it before, but it's true.

No one can make you feel inadequate without your permission

This is true for a lot of things—no one can make you feel unhappy without your permission, no one can make you feel angry without your permission, and so on. The only reason that it happens is because you have allowed it to happen. Your attitude may very well be the ONLY thing you CAN change about your job and that's really ok. It's up to you as to how you react to things. Learn to look for the positive in each situation instead of the negative aspects of the job. You'll find that it will truly make a big difference.

And if all else fails, ask yourself if your present job really worth the loss of your sanity and your health? Stress is probably the leading preventable cause of poor health in the world today. If you've tried everything to improve your job, and nothing has helped, do NOT be afraid to seek out a new position (or better yet a

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new career) elsewhere. Remember, a job is merely a means to pay for your life. Your life is not something that you should be giving to your job!

So until (and if) you make that big change, do your best to adjust your attitude. You might even discover that your job isn't as bad as you once thought. In case that you have decided to ditch the industry, make sure that you do your homework and make the necessary preparations. If you plan to look for employment in another industry, make sure that you are properly equipped with the knowledge that you would need to make yourself successful in your new venture. **EDUCATE YOURSELF**. I cannot emphasize this enough. Whether you are going to start your employment in a totally different environment, or if you want to start your own gig (AKA business), it is the same principle. Failure to do this will just give you more problems and will eventually lead to your own downfall. Make yourself better and don't just be someone who just quit because he wants to. If you opt to stay, good for you then. Make the most of every moment that you are there. The call center industry is a good place to learn leadership skills that you can put to good use anywhere you go. But going back to what I said earlier, **EDUCATE YOURSELF. MAKE YOURSELF BETTER.** The only way you will be able to attract opportunities for to you is if you are able to give value to others. And you can only do this if you educate yourself. Don't delay it, DO IT TODAY! If you need help in getting you in the right track, you may contact me through the "Contact Me" form in my website and I will be sure to contact you right away. Or you can subscribe to my website (if you have not done that yet), www.ReneJoyRivera.com and you will be receiving updates and FREE TRAININGS that will help you develop yourself overall. Hope you enjoyed this EBOOK and may you have a great day ahead! Take care and may God bless you and your family ALWAYS!