



7 things to remember when designing a complaint management strategy

Start taking better control of
complaint management today

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Introduction

This document is part of our series of overview guides to specific areas of complaint management. This guide has been designed to assist anyone that is involved in the development or review of an organisation's ICT (Information and Communication Technology) requirements for a complaint management system and is based on our team's extensive experience of helping organisations to successfully implement technology to support effective complaint handling activities.

Your customers don't like to complain

Well, they don't like to complain using formal, bureaucratic procedures and receive officious responses full of technical jargon, acronyms and legalistic words (full and final settlement, ex-gratia, without prejudice...). However, if they trust you, they will happily share a problem with you and give you the opportunity to put things right – and you might even learn something from identifying the cause of the problem!

When your customers complain, they don't have to be angry or difficult

A customer complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction. The [Oxford dictionary definition of dissatisfied](#) states that dissatisfaction occurs when someone is either not content or not happy with something. However, unhappiness and discontent do not need to be accompanied by anger. Customers will get angry when the impact of the problem experienced causes significant frustration and/or embarrassment. But they will also become angry if their complaint is poorly handled and/or the process of making the complaint causes further inconvenience. Difficult processes also create 'difficult' customers – increasing the burden on your frontline employees and more costly to handle. If you design easy to access, simple to use complaint processes and systems, you are likely to have fewer angry and difficult customers.

Your customers do not expect an immediate resolution of a complaint

We are bombarded with statistics telling us that today's consumer is very demanding and expects an immediate response – especially when making contact with you on social media channels, such as Twitter and Facebook. But, although customers increasingly expect an immediate acknowledgement of a problem, a customer will understand that you may need time to investigate before you can offer an appropriate resolution. However, don't take too long and always keep your customers informed about the progress during the handling of a complaint. Complaints are not free. However, the receipt of unsolicited feedback, such as complaints, does not require you to incur the additional expense of mailing survey forms or implementing market research programmes to seek out the views and opinions of your customers. Complaint handling does have associated administration costs but can also deliver wider benefits when it prevents problems from recurring and/or produces improvements and innovation in the development of your services and products.

Your customers may not always be right

Good complaint handling requires you to clearly explain the ethos, principles, policies and processes used across your organisation. You will need people who are great at being able to say 'No'. Sometimes customers are wrong but often that is because of confusing websites, product literature or dreaded small print. If you are regularly saying 'No' to customers about the same type of complaint then you will need to question why this is happening – are you actually communicating with customers in a way that is undermining satisfaction with your organisation.

You don't need a complaint reduction strategy

You just need to reduce the problems you cause. Yes, focus on the root cause not the consequences of the cause of the problem! If you (truly) welcome complaints and make it easy for your customers to complain, you really will get to very quickly discover when you are causing upset to your customers. Remember, in many industries, customers will choose to stay silent and go elsewhere without even letting you know that they even experienced a problem with your product or service!

You do need your customers to trust you

Your customers will complain to you when they believe that you can do something to put things right – they need to have some trust in your ability to do this. You don't want your customers to choose not to complain because they don't trust you or simply complain because they need to contact you first before contacting a third party body (such as an Ombudsman) due to regulations that apply to your industry sector.

Your complaint handling should deliver a human interaction with your customers

Make the most of it! Increasingly, consumers are utilising self-service tools when dealing with companies and organisations. The purchase of a product or application for a service offering may not require the customer to have any direct contact with your employees. But, when something goes wrong, a customer will expect to be treated as an individual; as a human being. That means that they will expect someone to listen, understand the issues, assess the problem and deliver an appropriate and relevant resolution or explanation. Customers are judging companies and organisations on their ability to put things right when things go wrong.

About Civica Case Management

The Civica Case Management team enjoy the benefits of being part of the wider Civica group, giving us the freedom to help organisations of all types to better manage complaints and feedback, with the support and resources of a global company. Our business is the coming together of two key areas of expertise - software design and cloud architecture coupled with a deep understanding of complaint management, as both a process and the practice of consumer redress.

Our experience of system design and project management of enterprise level complaint, feedback and case management solutions in highly secure and regulated environments such as finance, local government, health and social care, central government departments and regulatory bodies stretches back over 25 years.

Our professional experience of complaint management goes back equally as long. Whether turning around customer service operations of public bodies by helping repair relationships with citizens, improve perceptions and re-build reputations; or providing the complaint management expertise to help finance operations in the UK, Europe, North America and APAC meet the demands of local and international regulatory frameworks.

Few understand how to apply technology to meet the complaint management objectives of today's regulated environments as well as us. Critical to this is uncovering the trends within complaint data and applying it for the purpose of Quality Management and Continual Improvement. Quite simply, we're better at Complaint Management because we love turning negatives into positives.

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