



Supporting the resolution and analysis of customer complaints

An overview of complaint
management ICT requirements

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.

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Complaint management ICT

Complaint management requires your organisation to focus on internal and external communications - your customers give comments on services and products using a variety of channels and your organisation conducts a variety of internal communicates to produce a satisfactory response that can be given to the customer. All of this produces data about customer interactions that you can measure and analyse. Therefore, technology is capable of providing a strong supporting platform to your organisation's complaint management process - but, given the human nature of complaint management, is unlikely to provide the complete solution.

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Key requirements for complaint management system design

Most organisations will need to design, implement or provide access to a complaint management system that will allow complaint handlers (the system users) to capture details of any customer feedback received.

Traditionally, complaint management systems have been utilised by organisations to allow a select group of users (often the 'complaints team' or contact centre) to input details of complaints received into a database or spreadsheet and analyse the data that has been collected using a variety of charting and reporting tools. These systems have evolved over the years and often deliver a rich variety of features that allow users to use the system to draft and post responses to complaints, complete process flow actions, trigger escalations, upload additional documentation and much more.

Your organisation may have a choice of a variety of options that could be pursued - whether to manage complaints within an existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system or implement a dedicated, off-the-shelf complaint management package or implement a Business Process Management (BPM) package to manage the complaint work-flows or to develop an 'in-house' solution.

Complaint management systems do need to be adaptable - allowing your system administrators to make changes to reflect changing requirements on classifying customer feedback, changes to your organisation's products and services and updates to the organisational hierarchy and associated business processes. If your system does not meet these requirements, the system will be unlikely to meet the ongoing needs of your organisation and will become cumbersome and burdensome to the staff that use it - hindering rather than supporting the handling and management of customer feedback.

Database

The core component of any complaint management system is the database - the physical storage of data that is manipulated and presented within the system. Both the physical data storage and system technology can either be located within your organisation's ICT infrastructure or 'hosted' externally (usually delivered using 'cloud computing' technology).

Your system's database will need to be capable of both storing details of customer feedback that is resolved at the first point of contact (capturing details of a single customer interaction) and also customer feedback that requires further assessment - this is commonly described as 'case management' (the database allows users to create and manage cases - each case potentially remaining open for days or weeks until closure and is also capable of being re-opened as required).

The range of 'case types' that are stored in the system's database will vary depending on the specific needs of your organisation but often the complaint management system is designed to incorporate more than 'complaint' cases - delivering increased value to your organisation but also allowing complaint handlers to obtain a single view of the customer's interactions with your organisation (assisting resolution).

A car manufacturer might use a complaint management system to manage cases such as:

- Enquiries
- Social media mentions
- Complaints
- Compliments
- Suggestions
- Survey responses

But a local government organisation might decide to use a complaint management system to manage cases such as:

- Enquiries
- Information requests (whether for personal information or public/official information)
- Complaints
- Compliments
- Suggestions
- Appeals (against a decision made under a statutory procedure)
- Petitions
- Survey responses

The benefit of storing all these case types in the same database is that they all often include some specific opinions and feedback that would otherwise sit within separate data 'silos' - often resulting in different parts of your organisations evaluating and assessing the collected information without reference to similar feedback having been presented by customers elsewhere within the organisation. Therefore, by collating all of the data within a single database, your organisation is able to build a true reflection of the voice of the customer.

Your complaint handlers often need to know if a customer has complained before about the same issue (to allow for escalation when required). Therefore, the database will either need to store consistent details about customers or pull in customer data from your organisation's central customer data repository (most probably a CRM system although the complaint management database could also be a fully-integrated module within the CRM system).

User interface

Your complaint management system will require a user-friendly interface such as 'point and click' or 'keyboard short cuts' to move around the system and also presents clear and focused information and visual aids to the user - such as highlighting in red any activities that are due for completion.

Users can also be supported with features such as input validation (eg. preventing a user from entering a future date where appropriate or validating the entry of an email address) and on-screen assistance.

Accessing the system

Your complaint management system will need to allow users to simply and speedily collect key details about both the customer (and any other party involved in the complaint - such as someone making the complaint on behalf of an affected customer) and the specific feedback that is being provided to your organisation.

Increasingly, access to systems is delivered using a cloud-based system assessable using the preferred Internet browser - allowing access to the system to be provided with no or minimal installation being required (reducing support overheads for the organisation). This often also provides opportunities to embed access to the system within your corporate Intranet - providing a one-stop area for staff members both access the system and access up-to-date content and documentation related to your organisation's complaint management process.

A complaint management system will often contain sensitive personal information about customers. Therefore, access to your system will need suitable controls that ensures that users are authenticated - often by being required to enter a username and password before being provided with access to the system's features. Ideally, your system should be capable of integrating with a user's standard, authenticated log-in (such as an Active Directory log-in) to prevent the need for users to remember multiple usernames and passwords to log-in across several systems.

If your organisation has staff members working remotely, necessary features of the complaint management may need to be made available to them. Also, your organisation may have partners, contractors or outsourced providers that are receiving complaints and may want to consider providing staff working within those organisations to have secure access to capturing the feedback they are receiving about your organisation's services and products.

Recording customer contact and cases

Ideally, any staff member should be able to access the system to capture details of any customer contact with your organisation - adding new feedback to the system or adding additional information to an existing case. Of course, some organisations prefer to centralise their complaint activities within a contact centre but will need to make sure that any other potential contact with customers is also capable of being tracked - for example, field service operatives may actually be the 'human face' of your organisation and have fantastic opportunities to capture feedback and resolve customer issues. Research into supermarket delivery services identified that the most successful companies actually empowered delivery drivers to receive and resolve customer complaints - preventing customers from being inconvenienced by spending time speaking to a contact centre to resolve simple delivery problems.ⁱ

However, any system that supports the capture of feedback, by those staff members that are not considered to be specialised customer service representatives, needs to be very quick and easy to use - capturing basic details but sufficient detail to provide value to your organisation.

Customer access

Many organisations utilise online forms to gather feedback from website visitors and also those customers that want to complain online. Online forms are often considered to be beneficial from an organisational perspective because structured information is collected about both customer and feedback details can be matched specifically to the needs of the organisation - allowing them to start dealing with issues raised without requiring additional clarification from the customer (as can happen when letters and emails are received). However, much time can be spent by staff members copying details from the received customer feedback forms into a complaint management system. Technology provides the capabilities to integrate and post this data immediately into the complaint management system and notify relevant users that a new case has been created in the complaint management system.

The screenshot displays the Lewisham Homes website interface. At the top left is the Lewisham Homes logo. To its right, contact information is provided: a freephone number 0800 028 2 028 and a general enquiries number 020 8613 4000. Below this is the organization's mission statement: 'Our mission To deliver great housing services for thriving neighbourhoods'. The main heading is 'Comments, complaints and compliments' with a sub-heading 'Welcome'. A central text block explains the purpose of the site and encourages registration. On the left, a sidebar contains links for 'Sign in', 'Start new feedback' (with a dropdown menu), 'My details', 'Register now', and 'Resume a pending form'. On the right, a 'Registered Users' section contains a sign-in form with fields for 'Username' and 'Password', a 'Remember me' checkbox, a 'Sign in' button, and a link for 'Forgotten username or password?'. A list titled 'Why should I register?' is positioned between the sidebar and the sign-in form, listing three benefits of registration.

Lewisham Homes

freephone **0800 028 2 028**
general enquiries **020 8613 4000**

Our mission
To deliver great housing services for thriving neighbourhoods

Comments, complaints and compliments
Welcome

Use this website to give us feedback anonymously by selecting a form on the left, or register with us to keep track of your feedback. Please log in if already registered.

Why should I register?

- Keep track of the progress of your feedback
- Save copies of all enquiries and feedback sent to us
- Party fill in a form and save it to complete later

Registered Users

Please sign in

Username

Password

☐ Remember me on this computer

Sign in

[Forgotten username or password?](#)

Additionally, some organisations are now deploying systems that not only allow the customer to record customer feedback using a form on a website but to also track the progress and interact where necessary - such as posting additional information, responding to queries from the organisation and even requesting escalation where a response is considered to be unsatisfactory. This delivers direct benefits such as reducing time spent by staff members in taking phone calls and keying details into the system but also by reducing the need for the customer to make additional contact by providing clear information in these 'self-service' facilities about the status of the case - such as the expected response time or date (therefore the customer does not need to 'chase up' a response). Of course, these self-service customer feedback facilities need to be secure - the customer also being provided with a username and password (and maybe additional security such as activation pin numbers) to check on the progress and access details of their feedback.

The local government administration of the rural district of Dhar in Madhya Pradesh, India, developed a project that delivered Internet kiosks across the district. These kiosks provide a range of information to the residents of this impoverished region of India but one of the most popular features is an online complaints service that "comprises a web page with a pull-down menu from which users can choose from twenty-one predetermined categories, including:

- Non-payment of salary, stipend, wages
- School closed or teacher absent from school
- Absence of a veterinary doctor
- Complaint against the secretary of village council
- Non-payment to farmers at auction centres
- Complaint against agriculture laborer accident insurance
- Hand pump or transformer not working
- Complaint regarding beneficiary schemes for the members of tribes and lower castes”ⁱⁱ

The results have been that schooling in the district, hand pump maintenance and the provision of public benefits have all improved in the district as government officials are held to account - providing them with the incentive to perform better.

Another technology that provides customers with access to giving feedback directly into a system is ‘web chat’ - the customer often being presented with a facility on your organisation’s website that allows them to ‘chat’ with a customer service representative (who is often based in a contact centre environment and handles web chat using an approach similar to call handling - moving through a queue of contacts).

We must not forget social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Complaint management systems are already being updated to allow complaints made on these sites to be tracked and managed - preventing additional silos from developing across your organisation.

Customer contact features

Effective complaint management starts and ends with contact with the customer. Therefore, a key component of your complaint management system will be contact management and will need to provide features such as:

- **Contact record creation** - allowing a user to create a new contact record in the database (a contact is usually a customer but might also be a contact acting on behalf of a customer - a lawyer, family member or - especially within public services - a politician who has agreed to take up the customer’s case). Contact record creation can also be enhanced and simplified by delivering features such as address lookups (removing the need to key in details, reducing potential for error and delivering consistent data for analysis purposes).
- **Contact searches** - allowing a user to search based on criteria such as name, address, account reference, and decide to select an existing contact or create a new contact record. The importance of this feature is that this should reduce the costly duplication of contact information in the database.
- **Contact history** - the system should display a history of contact from that customer and potentially gather additional relevant information from other connected systems (such as customer travel itinerary where a customer is complaining to a travel agent or policy details if an insurance complaint). This feature delivers relevant, up-to-date knowledge about the customer to the current user, provides the potential for prompt first contact resolution of any complaint and reduces any potential duplication of cases - by allowing the user to add information or escalate an issue where necessary rather than simply adding a new case.

- **Customer status and demographics** - the system should allow relevant information about the customer to be captured or obtained from linked systems. Some information may be important because it indicates a potential customer vulnerability that needs to be considered or a behaviour that should be made known to staff (especially if your organisation knows that the customer has threatened or assaulted staff previously and the complaint may bring staff members into personal contact with that customer). Demographic information may be useful for analysis such as customer age, customer value, customer location (and for public services, diversity information such as economic status, ethnicity, faith and so on may be useful when assessing whether or not services are inclusive and representative of the communities that they serve). Other useful information might include the value of the customer or accounts held and - on social media - their influence (such as the number of followers they have).
- **Feedback details** - the system should provide a customisable screen for user to capture a combination of structured data fields (such as how the complaint was received - letter or phone or in person and so on) and unstructured data fields (such as details of the complaint and action requested by the complainant. Your organisation will also want users to capture information specific to the needs of your organisation such prompting the user to select the product(s) or service(s) that were the subject of the complaint and the nature of the problem experienced. The system should also allow the user to scan or upload copies of both associated paper documents (such as a letter of complaint) and other relevant files (such as digital photographs of the damaged product or abandoned car that a local government organisation has failed to tow away).
- **Resolution details** - if the user has resolved the complaint to the customer's satisfaction, the system should prompt the user to enter details of what was done to put things right - this could be delivered using structured and/or unstructured data fields (maybe the user is asked to select the action taken from a pre-defined list of options).
- **Knowledge prompts, FAQs and handling scripts** - your organisation will hold a wealth of information and knowledge about its products and services and this information can assist those handling complaints. Simple sets of frequently asked questions (FAQs) can also be developed to help resolve the most common complaints and be presented from within the complaint management system and, where appropriate, call handling scripts can be developed to support the resolution of phone complaints - however, the emphasis must be on making sure the complaint management system supports the delivery of personalised complaint handling that recognises the specific circumstances and merits of individual complaints (and customers).

If a complaint is not resolved in the initial contact, your complaint management system will need to create a case record in the database and assign the case to a relevant user or group of users (such as customer relations team or specialist service team). This assignment may need to follow process rules that can be defined and implemented within the system. If a case is escalated or is classified to a specific priority, the complaint management system might also need to re-assign the case to a more senior or specialist user. However, the system should also deliver functionality that allows users with appropriate permissions to manually re-assign a case to a different user or team.

Processing cases

Your system will have collected details about the user (or customer) that created the case and should generate a unique reference number that can be used to track the case (at every step of the process). Your organisation should not become overly focused on the use of reference numbers (because often other relevant details can be used to find an existing customer or case) but understand that they can provide a useful mechanism for staff and customers to quickly locate a case.

Often, specialised complaint handlers (case workers) will be managing large workloads or have other day-to-day duties and responsibilities beyond their involvement in complaint handling. Therefore, your complaint management system should be designed to support them by notifying them when they have been assigned a new - rather than relying on the user (the complaint handler) to log-in to the system on a regular basis to check for any new cases to be actioned. If the complaint was submitted to your organisation by a customer using email or an online form, the system should be capable of automatically acknowledging receipt and advising of the likely time-scale for assignment and consideration (warning: do not allow an online form to specify a separate reference number where another reference number will be generated when a case is created in the complaint management system - this will very likely create inefficiencies and waste staff time if the customer subsequently contacts your organisation to check on the current status and uses an incorrect reference).

Your system should also support these case workers to manage their workloads - providing them with functionality that allows them to simply identify and prioritise all of the cases assigned to them, and - if carrying out a supervisory role - obtain an overview of the team's cases and assign or re-assign as necessary.

When accessing a case, a case worker should be able to access all of the relevant case details and update fields as appropriate - such as, during assessment of a complaint, being able to update the classification of the issues raised in the complaint. The case worker will also want to be view information such as current stage of the process, the status of the case, date (and time) received, target date (or time) for delivering the response and also links to any related online information or guidance specific to the services and products identified in the complaint.

The specific processes followed within a complaint management system by a case worker should reflect the business process but most processes (and systems) will allow or require the case worker to:

- Interact with the customer - whether by phone, email, SMS (text message), web chat, social media or any other method as appropriate.
- Send a message to someone else in the organisation or ask for their comments.
- Capture details of other activities such as notes of a phone call or a meeting with the customer.
- Deliver a response within the relevant target time (or Service Level Agreement) - this may be hours, calendar days or business days depending on the organisation's requirements - although this should be influenced by customer expectations and potentially allow for different target times based on how the complaint was made or the priority of the complaint.
- Record details of the response and the outcome (such as whether or not they agreed with the complaint).
- Record any follow-up actions to be completed (such as to review or change a policy or procedure).

- Allocate follow-up actions to another user to complete.
- Record any key learning points identified from a case and potentially any costs savings identified from action taken or costs incurred in dealing with the complaint.
- Create a link to another case to create an external review case (such as an adjudicator, Ombudsman, court of law or industry regulator enquiries).

The objective of the complaint management system's handling of processes should be to deliver the support and tools required by the case worker to carry out their role - and not to burden them with completing unnecessary system activities.

Correspondence (letters and emails)

Many customers still prefer to correspond in writing with organisations - often using email but some will also still prefer the written letter. Also, regulations might require your organisation to deliver a written acknowledgement or response to a complaint - even if only to confirm a resolution agreed in a phone discussion with the customer. Therefore, an important component of your complaint management system will be the set of features that assist case workers in corresponding with customers and also other parties that may be involved in the resolution of a complaint.

Your organisation may have developed standard correspondence templates and paragraphs that need to be produced and sent at different steps of the complaint handling process. However, these often need to be simply used as guidance or a starting point to the production of a personalised, individual response to a customer - but requires the complaint management system to integrate sufficiently with word processing and email tools to allow an appropriate template or set of content to be used, edited, saved and sent.

These features should also include the ability for system administrators to define and customise templates and insert where appropriate merge fields that will include relevant data from the case or the customer when accessed by a case worker (i.e. the template is pre-populated with customer name and address, case reference number, organisation contact details, complaint receipt date and so on). If these features are not available, case workers often have to spend a significant amount of time entering these details manually and the opportunity for error increases (potentially resulting in complaints about their complaint handling activities).

Bulk response features may also be considered useful to your organisation. The complaint management system should allow a case worker to respond to an issue that has been raised by other customers (or a complaint has raised an issue that impacts on many other customers that are known to the organisation). For example, a water services company might handle a complaint and recognise that the issues raised will also affect the customers neighbours and will therefore need to contact those neighbours as well.

Other features that are often found within the correspondence management component of a complaint management system include:

- Providing a case storage area where all documents and files related to the case are stored and can be accessed, previewed and reviewed by caseworkers that have permission to access the case.
- Sent correspondence is protected from amendment or deletion - providing a true audit record of what was sent by the case worker.
- The use of a signature image file when writing to someone - removing the need to put pen to paper!

Your complaint management system should also assist in delivering timely responses to customer complaints by generating reminder messages to caseworkers when a response is due and even to escalate a reminder to a supervisor staff member if a response is late.

Managing case workloads

Your complaint management system will be expected to provide a range of features to assist caseworkers and their supervisors to manage their workloads. Therefore, the system should provide those users with access to customisable views of:

- Active cases
- Active tasks and actions
- Active correspondence items
- Closed cases (that may need to be re-opened if a customer requests escalation) and completed actions

The ability to search the system will also be a requirement for caseworkers, supervisors, complaint managers and staff with quality audit responsibilities. Therefore, your system should provide these users with access to define criteria and perform searches of all cases held within the system (depending on the user's permissions). The user should be able to carry out searches that return:

- All unassigned cases at each step of the process
- All active cases assigned to the current user
- All active cases related to a specific customer
- All closed cases assigned to current user
- All closed cases related to a current customer
- All cases assigned to the current user
- All tasks assigned to the current user that require completion
- All correspondence items assigned to the current user that require completion

Your system should also allow a user to perform searches based on additional criteria such as based on a specific issue mentioned in a complaint or finding cases that may be similar to the current case (allowing the caseworker to research how similar complaints have been resolved). Again, the system will also need to consider the role of the user and the area of the organisation they operate within and decide whether or not they have permission to access those cases returned by a search.

Workflow management

The best complaint management systems allow system administrators to define workflow events within the system that will guide users through each step of the complaint management process - making decisions at appropriate steps and being guided based on that decision to the next relevant step of the process. These

events will often consist of tasked actions and correspondence items - therefore, on completion of an initial assessment action the system may be set to add a new acknowledgement template to be used to inform the customer of what will happen next and who is dealing with the complaint. However, those systems also deliver the necessary flexibility to allow user act and respond to unexpected events and circumstances that may not fit with the day-to-day process that has been deployed.

Therefore, workflow management should allow the user to monitor and participate within the life cycle of a case. Many complaint management systems will deliver a calendar- or diary-based view that displays process events that require completion. The workflow will also be required to set certain controls - preventing users from deleting certain workflow events or allowing only a specific group of users to perform certain events (linked to the roles that they actually perform within the process).

The system should also display the number of workflow events active for the current user. These task events should be clearly displayed and allow simple identification of the tasks - those in time, overdue, completed in target time, completed outside target time.

Statistical analysis and performance management reporting

The complaint management system will be a vital component of your organisation's performance management operations, trends analysis and customer intelligence gathering activities. The system will need to provide a user-friendly analysis and reporting tool to allow appropriate users to gain insight from the generation of tables of statistics and graphical presentation of data - and ideally with the ability to drill-down to identify the underlying data.

The visual impact of management information can be very persuasive within an organisation and systems should allow users to select from a variety of charting options to improve the presentation of the data that is being extracted and analysed. The system should provide or allow standard suites of key reports to be delivered and made available as appropriate to key staff members across the organisation.

Examples of operational performance reports that could be obtained from a complaint management system include:

Performance measures

- Time taken to acknowledge receipt of a new case
- Time taken to refer a case to the relevant internal team for comment
- Time taken to respond to a complaint
- Average time taken to respond to a complaint
- Time taken to respond to enquiries made by an external dispute resolution scheme
- Average time taken to respond to enquiries made by an external dispute resolution scheme
- Age of active cases
- Performance (in or out of target time) in completing workflow events - by team or individual user
- Performance in actioning remedies arising from complaints

Volume measures

- Percentage and number of first contact resolutions
- Percentage and number of cases received
- Percentage and number of cases rejected
- Percentage and number of cases received (by process stage)
- Percentage and number of cases resolved
- Percentage and number of cases active at each process stage
- Percentage and number of cases resolved at each stage
- Number of cases and amount of financial compensation paid

Trends analysis

- Comparative trends in response time performance
- Comparative trends in volumes received - by product or service
- Top 5 issues raised across the organisation
- Top 5 issues raised for each business area within the organisation
- Top 5 escalation reasons across the organisation
- Top 5 escalation reasons for each business area within the organisation
- Trends in customer demographics
- Trends in methods used by customers when making a complaint
- Trends in satisfaction with the complaint management process
- Trends in learning and improvement points identified from individual complaints

The system should provide users with the ability to select and run these reports using basic parameters such as:

- Date from... to....
- Business area
- Complaint handler
- Closed cases / Active cases / All cases

The system should allow reports sets to be regularly published and made available to core groups of staff such as:

- Contact centre manager
- Complaints manager
- Casework teams
- Quality or compliance team

- Senior management team

Other analysis and reporting features that may be desirable to your organisation include:

- **Threshold alerts** - the complaint management system allows triggers to be defined that will alert key users when a threshold is exceeded - such as when performance falls to a certain level or a specified number of complaints about a specific issue are raised.
- **Geographical presentation** - the complaint management system might be capable of integrating with a mapping system to present a graphical presentation of complaints based on their location.

Customer surveys

Customer surveys are often used to collect feedback from customers but many organisations will also want to check on the satisfaction of those customers who complain. Therefore, the complaint management system should provide facilities for gathering and collating customer responses to surveys. These surveys may be based on checking with a defined sample of customers and therefore the system should allow specified users to send a survey form to all or a random sample of customers who have contacted your organisation within a user-defined period.

The benefit of collecting survey responses within the complaint management system is that the data can be analysed and cross-referenced with the related complaint details - allowing the responses to be quantified based on the outcome delivered by your organisation and other profile data known about the complaint and the customer.

System configuration

A complaint management system should allow ongoing change and adaptation following the initial configuration and deployment of the solution by the administration users. The system should allow a local administrator to simply add new fields and update any representation of your organisation's team structures, products and services within the system.

The management of lookup lists should also be capable of being maintained by a local administrator and provide a simple user interface for carrying out this function. The management of word processing and email templates should also be capable of being maintained by a local administrator and again provide them with a simple user interface.

Training

Users of the complaint management system will need to receive adequate training on system use - relevant to their role in your organisation and within the complaint handling process. Your organisation will need to make sure that an ongoing training programme is made available to meet the needs of any new staff members as they join the organisation). The system should also be delivered with a user-friendly guide and relevant documentation to explain the system's functionality for both specialist and non-specialist users.

Remote access to cases

The complaint management system should give users the ability to remotely access cases (from home or another site).

Security

The complaint management system will hold valuable information and sensitive commercial and personal details. The system will need to be installed or hosted within a secure environment and should allow access to cases to be restricted (such as providing read-only access to certain users or disabling access completely to all but a few specific users where a case concerns confidential and sensitive issues). The system should support the data protection principle of only allowing access to personal information on a 'need to know' basis.

A complaint management system should allow system administrators to create and update user profiles that define roles and access rights for groups of users.

User administration

The complaint management system should allow an administrator to quickly and simply create, delete and update users – without causing any adverse effect on existing case files - such as corrupting the audit trail on any case. The system should allow administrator users to organise case handlers and their managers into workflow teams and allow them to simply allocate users to an individual workflow team or group of teams.

System audit

The complaint management system should provide a comprehensive audit trail that allows system administrators to trace all updates, including letters and emails, to a case - allowing access to a specific type of update performed, the date and time of the update and the user who performed the update or created a new record. This will also support the complaint management audit activities of your organisation.

The system should also allow staff to run reports that show, for example, all deleted tasks or cases together with the user who performed the action.

Data backup and archiving

The system should provide a simple process for regular backups of the database, and configurable facilities for managing the archiving of data held in the database.

Data migration

The supplier should provide options and costings for migrating data and associated files from any existing database to the new system.

Integration

Your complaint management system should be capable of integrating with other core systems within your organisation. These systems might include telephony systems, customer databases, warranty systems, address data solutions, email systems, office-productivity systems, and staff member directories.

Project management

If a complaint management system is being implemented, or substantial changes to an existing system need to be procured and implemented, your organisation will need to create and manage a project. The project team will need to develop the requirements and key milestones for delivering the project.

The project will need to ask potential suppliers to submit details explaining how they intend to deliver against your organisation's requirements. Those suppliers will also need to be asked to detail their proposed contract delivery timetable (based on the key milestones identified for the project), their own project management structure and provide a principal point of contact for the duration of the project.

Key project milestones might include:

- Invitation to tender
- Closing date for tenders to be submitted
- Evaluation of written submissions
- Supplier presentations
- Reference site visits
- Contract awarded
- Implementation project initiation meeting (with supplier)
- Implementation workshops
- Customisation and configuration
- User acceptance testing
- Training
- New system go live

System licence

A complaint management system needs to reflect the way that a complaint management process has been or is being delivered and operated within your organisation. The process should not be based on the requirements or limitations of the technology. This also means that the complaint management system should provide the necessary support and tools to all those staff members who participate within the process.

Therefore, your organisation should make sure that appropriate resources are available to support a sufficient number of system users to ensure the efficient operation of the system - otherwise, your organisation may have invested in delivering a fully functional and feature rich solution that has been fully customised to meet your organisation's specific process activities but is only available to a very small group of staff members (and often results in paper and emails being passed around the organisation to allow a designated user to then input details of complaints received and relevant responses into the system).

Conclusion

Technology is often a consideration when an organisation takes a look at its complaint management practices and complaint handling processes. Your customers are often looking out for the next big thing that assists their communications and the evolving technologies that they use will often impact on how they make complaints - not only making it easier for them to mention a problem with product or service but also providing them with a greater range of options to amplify their concerns.

But technology can also have a positive impact on an organisation's ability to rapidly address customer concerns - across a wide range of channels - and also to act on those concerns, comply with industry regulations, identify emerging issues, share learning and reduce the costs of complaint handling.

A US State Revenues department saved nearly \$1 million from implementing corrective actions following the identification of the root causes of their most common complaint categories. ⁱⁱⁱ

However, if implemented incorrectly, technology can also become a burden to your staff and add to the cost of complaint handling - hindering your attempts learn from your customer's daily experiences of your products and services.

Getting it right and righting the wrongs. Department for Communities and Local Government 2010 ⁱⁱ
Technology and social inclusion. Mark Warschauer. MIT Press 2004 ⁱⁱⁱ

http://www.lynksoftware.com/industry_government.asp

Author

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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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