



Quality Standard Customer Service Complaints Handling

Version 1

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
OVERVIEW OF THE COMPLAINTS STANDARD	5
FRAMEWORK	6
MANDATORY SECTIONS	7
SECTION 1 - LEADERSHIP AND THE ORGANISATION	8
1.1 MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT	8
1.2 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT POLICY	9
1.3 MANAGEMENT PLANNING	10
1.4 MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION	11
1.5 MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS – GOOD INFORMATION	12
1.6 MANAGEMENT REVIEW	13
SECTION 2 – PEOPLE	14
2.1 MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION TO PEOPLE	14
2.2 EMPLOYMENT OF AN OVERALL COMPLAINTS CO-ORDINATOR	15
2.3 COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT TEAM	16
2.4 PEOPLE BEHAVIOUR DURING COMPLAINT ENCOUNTER	17
2.5 PEOPLE REQUIREMENTS IN COMPLAINT RECOVERY (COMPLAINT HANDLERS)	18
2.6 EMPOWERED PEOPLE	19
2.7 PEOPLE MEASURES (CORE DIMENSIONS)	20
SECTION 3 – CUSTOMER SERVICE COMPLAINTS HANDLING	21
3.1 ORGANISATION CULTURE	21
3.2 DEFINED COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCESS AND COMPLAINTS HANDLING ROUTE	22
3.3 CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS INFORMATION	23
3.4 COMPENSATION / GOODWILL SCHEME	24
3.5 COMPLAINT TRACKING	25
3.6 COMPLAINT ROOT CAUSE	26
3.7 COMPLAINT STORAGE	27



<u>SECTION 4 - CUSTOMERS</u>	<u>28</u>
4.1 CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP	28
4.2 CUSTOMER COMPLAINT SURVEY	29
4.3 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION MEASURES	30
4.4 CUSTOMER INITIAL COMPLAINT VERSUS ROOT CAUSE	31
<u>SECTION 5 - OUTCOMES AND RESULTS</u>	<u>32</u>
5.1 KEY RESULT AREAS	32
5.2 COMPLAINT PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENTS	33
5.3 BENEFITS	34
5.4 INTERNAL COMPLAINT RESPONSIBILITY - OWNERSHIP	35
<u>SECTION 6 - CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT</u>	<u>36</u>
6.1 COMPLAINT TEAMS	36
6.2 CLOSING THE LOOP	37
<u>APPENDIX 1 – STANDARD COMPLAINT FLOWCHART</u>	<u>38</u>
<u>APPENDIX 2 – STANDARD COMPLAINTS FORM TEMPLATE</u>	<u>39</u>
<u>APPENDIX 3 – KEY CUSTOMER SERVICE MEASURES</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>APPENDIX 4 – PROPOSED ESCALATION TIMINGS</u>	<u>41</u>
<u>GLOSSARY</u>	<u>42</u>



Introduction

The need for a complaint management standard within the electronic communications market

During 2008 – 2009, ComReg undertook a review of the Codes of Practice of a number of service providers and the availability to customers of a Customer Service Guarantee. Whilst the majority of service providers have a Code of Practice in place, the general standard of consumer care offered to customers, based on the Codes of Practice, varied considerably.

In the competitive electronic communications market, ComReg wants to ensure that all consumers have certainty in the customer services being offered and have the capacity to factor this into their decision making with respect to selection of service provider and switching. Whilst improvements in customer service complaints handling are principally a consideration for service providers, ComReg consider that the most appropriate way to encourage improvements is through the introduction of a voluntary Quality Standard for the handling of customer service complaints.

This standard is intended to provide a framework for consistency to ensure that similar practices are in place across the Irish electronic communications sector.

The benefits of a complaint management standard

High standards of customer service interaction minimise the time you spend on complaints resolution, whilst maximising your positive outcome ratio. Electronic communications is no different to any other customer facing organisation.

Listening to customers and taking specific action on their concerns and comments can lead to a beneficial outcome for both customer and organisation.

A complaint management standard provides the framework from which the organisation can:

- employ a consistent approach to how complaints or negative feedback are dealt with
- outlines what specific actions to take in order to gain a positive resolution
- understand all of the various impact to customers, staff and the organisation
- engage with a continuous improvement programme



Overview of the Complaints Standard

The 'Definition' of a complaint

Every organisation should have a 'definition' of what they consider a complaint to be.

This standard views a complaint as:

"An expression of dissatisfaction made to a Service Provider relating to its products and services, or relating to the complaints handling process itself where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected".

The standard

The standard is comprised of six individual sections.

The sections are:

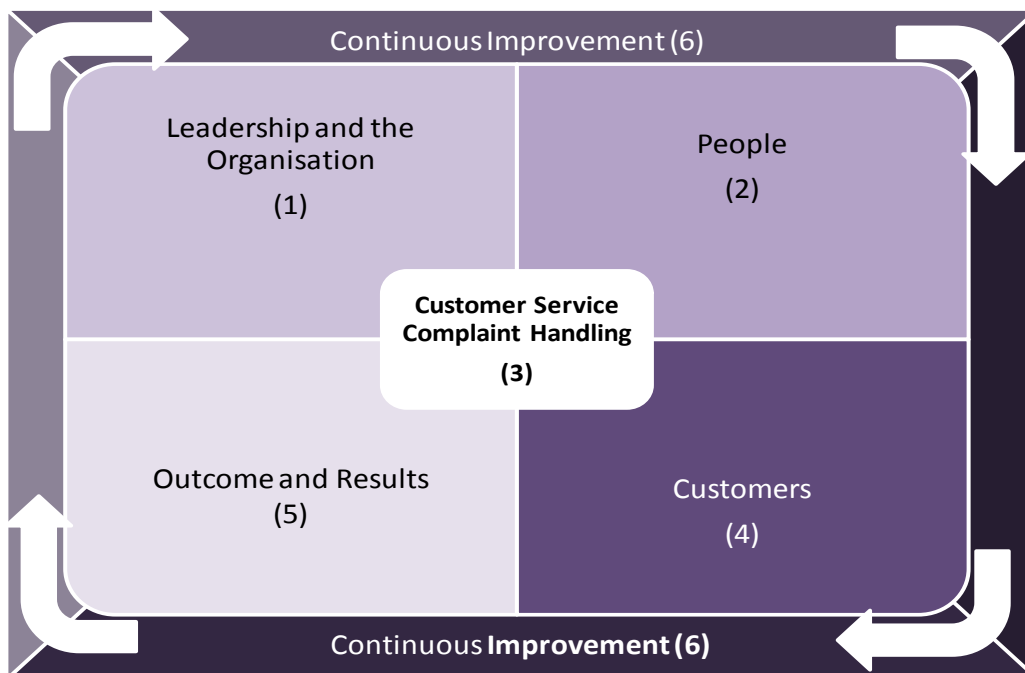
- 1) Leadership and The organisation
- 2) People
- 3) Customer Service Complaints Handling Standard
- 4) Customers
- 5) Outcome and Results
- 6) Continuous Improvement Cycle

The steps involved in assessment are as follows:

- understanding the certification requirements
- commitment to the 'Customer Service Complaints Handling Standard
- completion of the Self Assessment Document
- your on-site assessment
- feedback document completed
- certification



Framework



This framework outlines the six sections of the complaint handling standard.

At the centre of the framework is:

The Customer Service Complaints Handling Process (Section 3)

This outlines:

- the best complaints handling process
- the minimum, necessary requirements for handling a customer complaint
- the desired outcome of all customer complaint interaction

Supporting The Customer Service Complaints Handling Process are:

Leadership and The organisation (Section 1) - How the organisation plans and prepares for complaints handling.

People (Section 2) - Management & staff (including Contracted Personnel)- How people within the organisation who deal with complaints are trained, listened to and communicated with.

Customers (Section 4) – How the customers who lodge complaints are dealt with, what their feedback is and how this feedback is dealt with.

Outcome and Results (Section 5) – The measures that have been put in place for complaints handling, what the trends are in relation to these measures and how complaints has an impact on other elements of the business.

The entire framework is built within:

The Continuous Improvement Cycle (Section 6) - Surrounding the above five sections. It is implicit in any standard but in particular in complaints management.



Mandatory Sections

Following the pilot assessment process conducted June – August 2010, the following sections of the standard are deemed core to the overall standard and are mandatory.

An organisation must meet the requirements as outlined in the mandatory sections in order to pass the assessment. Please note that not having these mandatory sections in place will deem the organisation not ready for assessment.

- Section 3.2** - Defined Complaints Handling Process and Complaints Handling Route
- Section 3.3** - Customer Complaints Information
- Section 3.4** - Compensation / Goodwill Scheme
- Section 3.5** - Complaint Tracking
- Section 3.7** - Complaint Storage



SECTION 1 - Leadership and the organisation

1.1 Management Commitment

“Our Management Team are committed to resolving complaints and learning from all feedback, positive or otherwise”.

What?

This statement focuses on the way that the management team view complaints and their commitment to resolving them.

It reviews the strategies that your management team have in place when handling complaints and the strategies for management’s interaction with customer feedback.

Why?

The positive management of all complaints is of strategic importance to an organisation.

Management’s commitment to the ‘customer service complaints handling process’ is essential to the successful resolution of all customer complaints.

The ‘customer service complaints handling process’ supports an organisation’s vision, mission statement, values and its commitment to its customers, by guaranteeing a commitment to resolving customer complaints.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that the ‘customer service complaints handling process’ has been integrated into the way you do business.

You can demonstrate that all complaints are reviewed at regular management meetings.

You can demonstrate within your management system that you prioritise areas for improvement.

There is clear identification of the Key Result Areas (KRA) in relation to Customer Service.

There is clear identification of a Key Performance Indicator for Complaint Management linked to Customer Service.



1.2 Complaints Management Policy

“We have a Complaints Management Policy in place, which prioritises satisfactory resolutions for customers”.

What?

This statement implies that your Complaints Management Policy ensures that the complaint process is easy to understand and provides no ambiguity for either the organisation or the customer.

This statement includes a reference to ‘a resolution’, which is in the best interest of both the organisation and the customer.

Why?

A Complaints Management Policy backs up the organisation’s commitment to resolving customer complaints.

A Complaints Management Policy can clearly define how the organisation deals with complaints.

A Complaints Management Policy can outline the reasons for:

- adequacy or fairness of a complaint resolution
- positive customer interaction
- ease of access to the process
- friendliness of the organisation

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that you have a Complaints Management Policy in place.

You can demonstrate there is a culture for recording complaints and/or comments and compliments (3C).

You offer a ‘Complaint Response Guideline’ within your Complaint Management Policy.

You can demonstrate that complaints are highlighted to the responsible department or area.

Your Complaints Management Policy demonstrates to the customer **‘how easy it is to complain’**.



1.3 Management Planning

“Our complaint management plans allow us to deal with feedback quickly and fairly, ensuring that our customers are listened to”.

What?

This statement outlines the planning that is used by the organisation in relation to complaints:

- how they are gathered
- how they are organised
- how they are prioritised
- how they are dealt with

Why?

Planning at all levels ensures that the needs of the organisation are addressed.

The inclusion of a Complaint Management Plan within your overall Business Plan ensures that complaints are progressed and resolved.

A Complaint Management Plan demonstrates the commitment that the organisation has to the overall Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

Changes that have occurred which includes the positive and negative output from a previous cycle in any forthcoming Business Plan, is good management practice.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that you have a Complaint Management Plan which is prioritised within the organisation’s plan.

You can demonstrate that complaint management is of strategic importance to the organisation.

You can demonstrate that there is a top down approach to complaint management.

You can demonstrate how resources have been planned and trained to deal with complaints.

You can outline policies that empower your people to demonstrate ownership in dealing with complaints.

Your Complaint Management Plan outlines how to deal with avoidable and unavoidable breakdown in customer relations.



1.4 Management Communication

“Our management team keep everybody informed about customer issues”.

What?

This statement outlines your management team’s commitment to informing the organisation about what issues are current and on how feedback is being dealt with.

Why?

It demonstrates that your management team have a commitment to internal communication in relation to complaints.

It is important that your management team communicate their organisation’s messages, including consumer issues to all of their staff.

Communication of the Complaint Management Plan and its benefits are crucial to the success of the system.

Ensuring that every person involved in complaint management and customer service is fully aware of the Complaint Management Plan and its outcomes, has a positive impact on the entire process.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate how information on customer feedback is communicated within the organisation.

You can demonstrate that what was said by management was heard and understood by people.

You can demonstrate that complaints and their resolution are included in communication meetings between management and staff.



1.5 Management Systems – Good Information

“Our management team are committed to dealing with complaints and analysing the reasons for them”.

What?

This statement ensures that your management team engage in pursuing the Root Cause of a complaint and that they have a commitment to resolving these root causes.

This statement ensures that systems have been put in place to gather, analyse and produce statistics in relation to complaints, which allows management to make decisions that are based on clear and concise information.

Why?

Backing up the commitment shown and the planning that has been put in place and carried out, the systems that back this up are essential to the process.

The Management Information System should allow for easy access to information, ease of reporting and ease of distribution.

An integrated Management Information System (MIS) is integral to the complaints management process and should be used to review existing information.

Analysis of the information coming from a good MIS will ensure that the correct information, which includes complaints and their resolution, is used in the future planning and analysis of the organisation.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that there is a complaint team in place which is supported by senior management.

You can demonstrate that management review the outcome of all complaint team meetings.

You can demonstrate that both complaints reports and complaints statistics are detailed within management reports.



1.6 Management Review

“Our management team are committed to an annual review of the entire Complaint Management System and to using that information when planning for the future”.

What?

This statement focuses on the way in which your management team review the Complaints Management System.

It addresses the outputs from the review and how these contribute to the following years planning process.

Why?

Your management team should have access to the information gathered from your Complaints Management System at their annual management review.

Information such as costs, benefit analysis and outcomes, which is gathered through your complaint management system should form an essential part of any review.

Your effective use of the information gathered from complaints resolutions and Root Cause solutions will have a positive impact on your customer service.

How? – Examples

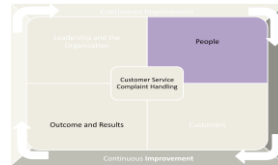
You can demonstrate that management review the information gathered from your Complaint Management System at least once every year.

You can demonstrate that the inputs to management review at least include:

- review of volumes and trends
- review of corrective actions
- review of results
- review of benefits

You can demonstrate that a pro-active approach to retaining and retrieving customers who have made a complaint, is employed at management review meetings.

You can demonstrate that you are listening to and learning from complaints – and that there is a continuous improvement cycle.



SECTION 2 – People

2.1 Management Communication to People

“Our people get regular information on complaints and their resolutions”.

What?

This statement reviews the regularity with which the people within the organisation receive information on complaints and how often this information is communicated.

It focuses on the process by which information, on the resolution of complaints and improvements made is communicated to direct or indirect employees.

Why?

Successful process management is achieved when all of the people involved are kept informed.

Good Communication between managers, their teams and all third parties creates a strong organisational practice and swifter, more positive outcomes to complaints.

It is equally important that teams hear what management are saying and that the messages are clearly communicated.

Complaint management, its resolution and its impact on positive customer service should be communicated clearly.

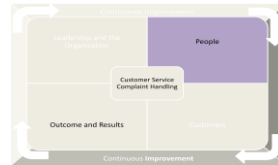
This communicative approach should give recognition in the areas that have contributed positively to the resolution of complaints.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that there are regular communications with people in the organisation.

You can demonstrate that these communications inform all of the relevant people with the appropriate information.

You can demonstrate that you have empowered people within the organisation to review information on complaints and their corrective actions, and on the impact of complaints on the overall organisational processes.



2.2 Employment of an Overall Complaints Co-ordinator

“We have a dedicated complaints co-ordinator who has personal responsibility for resolving complaints”.

What?

This statement reviews the responsibility for:

- the co-ordination of complaints
- the role that the complaints co-ordinator plays
- how the complaints co-ordinator communicates with others who are involved in the complaints system
- how the complaints co-ordinator interacts and reports with their management team

Why?

The appointment of the complaints co-ordinator reinforces the commitment of management to the Customer Service Complaints Handling Process.

Having a complaints co-ordinator, who coordinates and assumes responsibility for the management of the Complaint Management System, gives you a single point of reference when reviewing any complaint.

Your complaints co-ordinator can be a liaison between your complaints management team and the organisation’s management teams.

How? – Examples

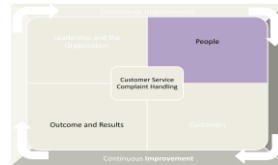
A complaints co-ordinator has been appointed.

Your complaints co-ordinator can demonstrate that they have:

- collated information for management
- co-ordinated the complaints handling team
- reported relevant data from the Complaint Management Systems as appropriate

Your Complaints Handling Literature makes reference to your Customer Service Complaints Handling Process.

Your Complaints Handling Literature makes reference to your complaints co-ordinator.



2.3 Complaint Management Team

“We have a dedicated complaints management team who take personal responsibility that complaints are resolved”.

What?

This statement outlines the commitment of dedicated people within the organisation, who have been appointed to deal with complaints.

It examines the role that the people on the complaint team have and how they work within the Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

Why?

The complaints management team allows each area of the organisation to contribute to the complaint management process.

By meeting on a regular basis, the team ensure that the process is continually improved.

Each team member is personally responsible for ensuring that the complaints handling process is completed and reviewed in their area.

How? – Examples

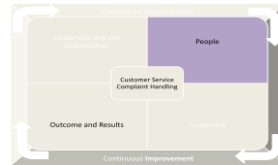
You can demonstrate that you have appointed a dedicated complaints management team.

You can outline the role and responsibilities of your complaints management team.

You can demonstrate that your complaints management team meet regularly.

You can demonstrate that the complaints management team meetings have practical outcomes and these results provide input to management review meetings.

If the organisation has many departments, your complaint management team could be a dedicated team, with individuals having responsibility for sections of the organisation. Alternatively, if the organisation is smaller, ‘the team’ could be a person appointed to deal with complaints as they come into the organisation.



2.4 People Behaviour during Complaint Encounter

“Our people will listen and try to resolve your complaint, quickly and without blame”.

What?

This statement focuses on the method in which complaints are dealt with at the first point of contact. This includes:

- methods of logging a complaint
- how the people dealing with complaints interact with the complaint logging process
- the process that is used to deal with the complainant.

Why?

It is valuable to the organisation that your customers know that they are listened to and that their feedback is valued.

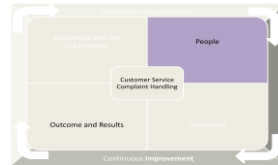
It is important that people dealing with complaints understand their limitations, whilst being trained to deal with customer issues, deal with difficult customers and remain customer focused.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that people have been trained to handle complaints.

You can demonstrate that the complaint handlers have a ‘can do’ attitude and engage with customers in a helpful, pro-active way.

You can demonstrate that the complaint handlers endeavour to resolve issues at the first point of contact – and only then is the complaints procedure invoked.



2.5 People Requirements in Complaint Recovery (complaint handlers)

“Complaint handlers are trained to the highest standards and have been appointed because of their strong skills and dedication to the resolution process”.

What?

This statement refers to the people that are dealing with complaints and to the level of responsibility they hold. We review what training they have been given and how they were appointed to be a complaint handler.

Why?

People dealing with complaints should understand the organisations common goals and be trained in order to meet these goals.

Complaint handlers should:

- clearly understand the processes and procedures that make up the Customer Service Complaint Management Process and the service that it provides
- be trained in the various products that make up this service
- be trained in interpersonal and negotiation skills

Training in; root cause, corrective action and preventative action, equips complaint handlers with the information, background and skill-set they need to deal with all complaint types and issues.

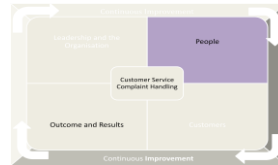
How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that training for complaint handlers includes the following:

- customer empathy
- negotiation skills
- interpersonal skills
- complaints handling skills
- root cause
- efficiency and organisation
- product and process knowledge
- organisation information systems / escalation points

You can demonstrate that all people involved in complaint resolution have the following -

- an understanding of a Continuous Improvement Cycle
- common goals / common standards
- an ethos of delivering on their promises e.g. contacting a customer as promised



2.6 Empowered People

“Our people have been empowered to deal with complaints to the best of their ability”.

What?

This statement relates to the levels of individual responsibility given to the people who deal with complaints.

This statement looks at the levels of responsibility that the person dealing with the complaint can handle and also the points at which they will escalate the issue.

Why?

People need to be able to deal with customers in an informed and decisive manner.

They need to be given the authority to deal with various scenarios on their own, without having to escalate these to another level.

This allows the complaint handler to call upon a ‘can do’ attitude and allows for a relationship to develop and progress between the customer and the organisation.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate as an organisation that empowered people are at the heart of your complaint management culture.

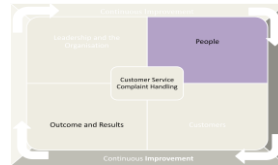
You can demonstrate that your people are customer focused.

You can demonstrate that there is a ‘can do’ attitude among the people in the organisation.

There is a facility in place through which people can provide feedback to management.

There is a facility in place which includes a feedback section on complaints management.

There is a facility in place which includes an employee survey.



2.7 People Measures (Core Dimensions)

“We measure and monitor people involved in complaint management so that they are constantly improving their customer service skills”.

What?

This statement focuses on the performance of all people involved in the Customer Service Complaints Handling Process.

It reviews various metrics, including productivity and the service levels that each person is achieving and as a result, any training that may be required.

Why?

Tracking and monitoring of performance is valuable information for the organisation to have.

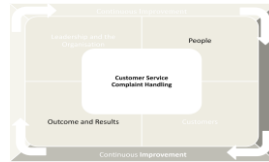
Tracking and monitoring gathers valuable information about the volumes, service levels, performance and productivity of your people.

It provides feedback to each individual about their own performance, on goals achieved, the areas that need improvement and the next steps in their overall performance.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate tracking and monitoring of the following areas:

- service Level
- performance
- productivity
- review
- attendance
- customer retrieval



SECTION 3 – Customer Service Complaints Handling

3.1 Organisation Culture

“Our organisation welcomes complaints and we are committed to continuously improving our customer complaints handling process”.

What?

This statement focuses on the entire complaints handling process and acknowledges the organisation’s commitment to complaint handling and continuous improvement.

It allows for a manual or automatic system which captures all data, including time, date, customer name and details and details of the complaint.

Why?

All types of feedback are of value to the organisation.

Feedback that is in the form of a complaint can go forward to the Root Cause Process.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that the culture of the organisation includes the acceptance and resolution of complaints.

You can demonstrate that you have established guidelines for immediate and effective complaint resolution.

You can demonstrate how complaints have been dealt with.

You can demonstrate that all complaints are dealt with routinely and fairly.



3.2 Defined Complaints Handling Process and Complaints Handling Route

“We have defined our complaints handling process which makes the complaint path as easy as possible”.

What?

This statement is at the centre of the entire standard which all other elements support.

This statement reviews the actual complaints handling process, the routes that are used to access it and the ease with which the process is accessed, understood and carried out.

Why?

The complaint process needs to be defined and outlined by the organisation.

The process needs to be simple, inexpensive and concise, so that it reduces any barriers to a customer who feels the need to complain.

It allows the organisation to outline the steps in the process and should include the following:

- method of contact
- complaint acknowledgement
- complaint management
- corrective action
- root cause
- preventative action

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate the organisation’s own definition of a complaint.

You can demonstrate that the entry point for complaints has been identified.

You can demonstrate that the entry point for complaints has been promoted and is visible.

You can demonstrate that communication barriers have been removed in relation to the complaints process.

Your complaint handling form (or other means of logging a complaint) is easy to use, customer friendly, clear and consistent.

Your process includes:

- a step that acknowledges the receipt of a complaint
- identification of key personnel dealing with complaint
- a single point of contact for customer
- the placement of a complaint handler who has the necessary skills to deal with the complaint type
- prioritisation of the complaint with the customer in mind



3.3 Customer Complaints Information

“We have outlined complaints process information for our customers”.

What?

This statement is a follow on from the complaints handling process.

It examines the methods chosen to give access to customer information.

It focuses on the information that is available on the complaints process and the paths that are available to the customer in order to resolve any issue.

Why?

It is important that the customer of an organisation is able to have information available to them on how to complain.

You afford your customer a level of comfort by outlining the customer complaints information process, its accessibility and ease of use.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate the ease of access from a customer’s point of view.

You have outlined the accessibility of the complaint processes.

Your complaints information leaflet / package:

- includes an overall complaint management flow
- gives a step by step guide on how to register a complaint
- shows the methods available to make a complaint
- highlights escalation points within the complaint flow
- denotes specified time frames for escalation points



3.4 Compensation / Goodwill Scheme

“We have a compensation/goodwill gesture scheme in place for customer complaints which are communicated to the complainant and adhere to specified circumstances”.

What?

This statement reviews the compensation and / or the good will gesture schemes that are available to the complainant.

It focuses on the method by which the schemes are implemented and on the transparency of the scheme and the methods in which they were previously used.

Why?

The compensation scheme outlined by the organisation should be communicated to the complainant, setting a level of expectation as to the final outcome.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate the complaints compensation policy / goodwill gestures for the organisation.

You can outline the transparency of the compensation scheme.

You can demonstrate the ease with which this information is available to complainants.

You can demonstrate that compensation / good will gesture scheme has been used fairly and promptly where appropriate.

You can demonstrate how the scheme has been accessed and used by your customers.



3.5 Complaint Tracking

“We record and track our complaints from outset to resolution”.

What?

This statement examines the methods used to log and track complaints.

It focuses on how the information is gathered from the system and how each step in the process is carried out.

Why?

The tracking of complaints through the various stages of the Customer Service Complaint Management Process allows management, direct employees and contracted staff to have an understanding of the complaint volumes that are incoming, resolved and outstanding.

Having clarity on all stages of the process is a key element of the overall process.

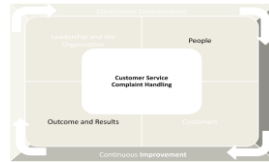
How? – Examples

You can demonstrate how your Customer Service Complaint Management Process logs and tracks all complaints.

You can demonstrate how this information is used to keep the customer up to date on the status of their complaint.

You can demonstrate how the complainant has been kept up to date on a regular basis – even if no progress has been made.

You can demonstrate those complaints which have been escalated as part of the Customer Service Complaint Management Process.



3.6 Complaint Root Cause

“We review all of our complaints in order to fully understand why they occurred”.

What?

This statement focuses on the Root Cause of complaints, how Root Causes are reviewed and what process is then undertaken to resolve them.

It examines the disparity that may exist between the initial complaint and the actual root cause.

Why?

Root Cause Analysis allows for preventative action to be put in place to stop the complaint from re-occurring.

Root Cause Analysis forms a significant part of the Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

While the initial complaint may be resolved at the time of complaint, the Root Cause Analysis offers a level of comfort to a customer which is above and beyond compensation.

Root Cause Analysis ensures that you deal with the ‘real’ issue.

Root Cause Analysis guarantees that the appropriate organisational area can be addressed, allowing for a correction of the appropriate processes and procedures.

Root Cause Analysis allows for the ‘closing of the loop’ of complaints.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that you have a Root Cause Analysis process in place.

You can demonstrate how you get to the actual Root Cause of a complaint (this may differ from the initial complaint).

You can demonstrate that you have established the right corrective action for the Root Cause of any complaint.

You can demonstrate that the Root Cause department or the area that owns the Root Cause is informed of any corrective action.

You can demonstrate that internal communication of the Root Causes and the corrective actions has been put in place.

You can demonstrate the loop of complaint resolution and continuous improvement.



3.7 Complaint storage

“We store all of our complaints information and have it readily available”.

What?

This statement reviews the methods that are used to store complaints and how easy it is to access this information.

It focuses on the length of time that complaint information is held.

At a minimum, complaint records should be retained for a period of not less than one year, following the resolution of the complaint.

Why?

The storing of information for a set period of time after a complaint has been closed, has been outlined in regulations. Stored information allows you to review all correspondence with a customer.

Stored information allows for valuable trend analysis to be taken and provides an overall picture to both front line people and management.

How? – Examples

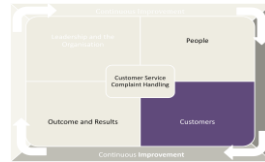
You can demonstrate that information on complaints is stored for an agreed period of time – at least one year, post resolution of the complaint.

You can demonstrate that complaints information is easily accessible to selected people.

You can demonstrate how information on complaints is held and used for continuous improvement.

You can demonstrate how corrective action information is gathered and that the Root Cause information is used to update existing processes.

You can demonstrate the archive of changes to the Customer Service Complaint Management Process and to the Root Cause Analysis process.



SECTION 4 - Customers

4.1 Customer Relationship

“We strive to maintain a relationship with our customers”.

What?

This statement examines the way in which the customer is treated having made a complaint and the relationship that ensues.

It reviews the methods that are used to collate customer feedback and the ways in which that feedback is acted upon.

Why?

Your customer and the treatment you extend to them, is at the centre of the entire Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate post complaint, relationship measurement.

You can demonstrate the value of your relationship with your customers.

You can demonstrate customer retention trends after their interaction with your Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

You can demonstrate customer loyalty trends after their interaction with your Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

You can demonstrate the methods you employ to maintain a relationship with your customer:

- surveys
- feedback calls - throughout the complaint
- update calls to keep your customer in the loop



4.2 Customer Complaint Survey

“We survey our complainants in order to have valuable information which can improve our processes”.

What?

This statement focuses on the level and frequency of complainant surveys.

It reviews the methods by which the information is fed back to the ‘root cause’ team and subsequently the overall Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

Why?

Gaining feedback from complainants is valuable to the organisation.

Surveys can depict if your Customer Service Complaint Management Process is operating to the organisations best advantage.

Surveys can inform you about the degree of success you have achieved in the maintenance and continued loyalty of your customer.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate that you survey all complainants after a set period of time has elapsed.

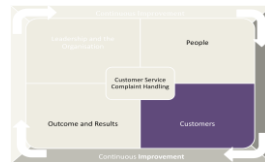
You can demonstrate rates of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

You can demonstrate tracking of customers who have switched to alternative organisations post complaint.

You can demonstrate that customer complaint trends on the handling of initial complaints are reviewed.

Sections of your survey ask for the customer’s opinion of:

- complaint access
- ease of complaining
- complaint processing
- complaint tracking
- employee attitude
- compensation
- complaint resolution



4.3 Customer Satisfaction Measures

“While surveying our complainants, we measure how satisfied they are with our Complaints Management System”.

What?

This statement focuses on how satisfied the complainant is with your Customer Service Complaint Management Process, including the service they received and the outcome of their complaint encounter.

This statement addresses how the customer satisfaction information is reviewed by your complaints management team and incorporated into your overall management plans.

Why?

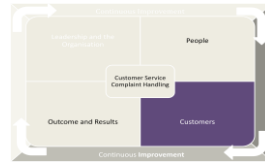
Your customers' views on the services you provide add value to the organisation by contributing to your Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

The organisation should have specific measures in place to collate feedback on your Customer Service Complaint Management Process

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate the following trends and how they relate to customer satisfaction:

- levels of dissatisfaction
- benefit of complaining
- likelihood of resolution
- expectation at outset versus expectation at resolution
- perception at outset versus perception at resolution
- customer experience / lack of experience



4.4 Customer Initial Complaint versus Root Cause

“We endeavour to identify the symptoms of a complaint in order to get to any possible, underlying issues”.

What?

This statement reviews the procedures that are used in order to establish the initial complaint from the root cause.

It focuses on the initial complaint while discovering if there are underlying issues, through the Root Cause Process.

Why?

It is always beneficial to determine if a logged complaint is a symptom of another problem.

Although the complaint may be the customer’s current issue, it may be masking the real problem that the customer has had with the organisation.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate how the Root Cause of a complaint has differed from the initial complaint and the measures you have in place which identified this.

You can demonstrate that you have pro-actively used complaint information in order to stop repeat complaints from happening.



SECTION 5 - Outcomes and Results

5.1 Key Result Areas

“We identify and prioritise our key result areas and our key performance indicators”.

What?

This statement focuses on your management plan, including its key result areas and key performance indicators and it addresses how your Customer Service Complaint Management Process impacts on the plan.

Why?

The results of an ongoing Customer Service Complaint Management Process can be used as an indicator of customer relations satisfaction.

The prioritisation of customer satisfaction and the impact of the Customer Service Complaint Management Process should be monitored at senior management level.

Key result areas and key performance indicators can form some of the inputs to the management review process.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate a complete set of results for the organisation including:

- your complaint management statistics which include all methods of contact
- the Root Cause Analysis statistics
- the impact to the organisation’s bottom line



5.2 Complaint Performance Measurements

“We monitor and measure all information about our complaints”.

What?

This statement focuses on the complaints performance metrics and how these relate to customer service performance with particular attention to the impact on quality measures.

Why?

It is important to look at complaints metrics, incoming volumes, outstanding volumes and the number resolved. These volumes will include all complaint routes: phone, e-mail, letters and website communications.

Root Cause Analysis guarantees that the appropriate organisational area can be addressed, allowing for a correction of the appropriate processes and procedures.

Reviewing the impact of corrective actions can demonstrate the benefits of the Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

How? – Examples

The following measures could be considered

- key Process Indicators - complaints
- complaint volumes versus contact volumes
- complaints versus enquiries
- root causes and trends
- corrective actions versus root causes
- trends in complaints' contact routes
- trends in corrective actions
- trends in turnaround times
- monitor re-purchasing behaviour – best practice
- complaint voicing – trends in line with ease of access
- complaint volumes versus complaint type reductions
- customer outcomes
- satisfaction with organisation procedures

Key customer service metrics are outlined in Appendix 3



5.3 Benefits

“We review and report on the benefits achieved from our Customer Service Complaint Management Process”.

What?

This statement focuses on the improvements to the Customer Service Complaint Management Process, as a result of Root Cause Analysis, Corrective Action and the Continuous Improvement process.

Why?

Many benefits can be outlined from the correct resolution of a complaint.

The outcome of Root Cause Analysis can lead to:

- information that is beneficial to your overall organisation
- improvement of attitudes within the organisation
- improvement of Communication within the organisation

How? – Examples

The following benefits could be included:

- information benefits
- attitude benefits
- re-purchase benefits
- communication benefits

The priority associated with these benefits could be outlined e.g. re-purchase and information is prioritised over attitude and communication.



5.4 Internal Complaint Responsibility - Ownership

“We ensure that individual areas take responsibility for issues arising from their business section”

What?

This statement focuses on the Root Cause Analysis and the responsibility that is associated with it.

It reviews the level to which Root Causes are attributed back to the appropriate area and the impact that it has on the appropriate areas’ overall processes.

Why?

It is important that the area from which a complaint originated should be notified, once the Root Cause has been identified.

This helps the teams in the area to understand the impact of the corrective action on the organisation as a whole and lets them rectify the process which caused the complaint.

How? – Examples

You can demonstrate how the Root Cause Process has highlighted a specific area for review and how this area demonstrates its ownership of the issue.



SECTION 6 - Continuous Improvement

6.1 Complaint Teams

“Our organisation learns from the Complaint Management System and constantly improves from it”

What?

This statement focuses on the commitment to continuous improvement which is reviewed throughout the entire Customer Service Complaint Management Process and on the improvements that have been made to date.

Why?

All outcomes from Root Cause Analysis give you valuable feedback which can aid your complaint handlers and their teams in future customer interactions. These processes can then be noted and integrated into your Customer Service Complaint Management Process.

How? – Examples

Continuous improvement can be specifically demonstrated in the following areas:

- you have established Cross Functional Complaint Teams
- complaint teams hold regular meetings
- there is clear feedback from meetings
- impact of complaint resolution on corrective actions
- impact of corrective actions on overall complaint trends
- impact of complaint resolution and corrective actions on Quality of Service



6.2 Closing the Loop

“We have identified and can demonstrate the benefits our Complaint Resolution Policy has in the overall improvement of our customer services”.

What?

This area focuses on the impact of complaint resolution on the overall customer service process.

Why?

It is important that the benefits of the Customer Service Complaint Management Process and its Root Cause Analysis can be seen in the overall impact on customer service.

All information gathered on impacts, surveys and benefits needs to be reviewed in line with the appropriate key result area.

The organisation should be able to demonstrate all positive impact and realise the benefits of dealing proficiently with customer complaints.

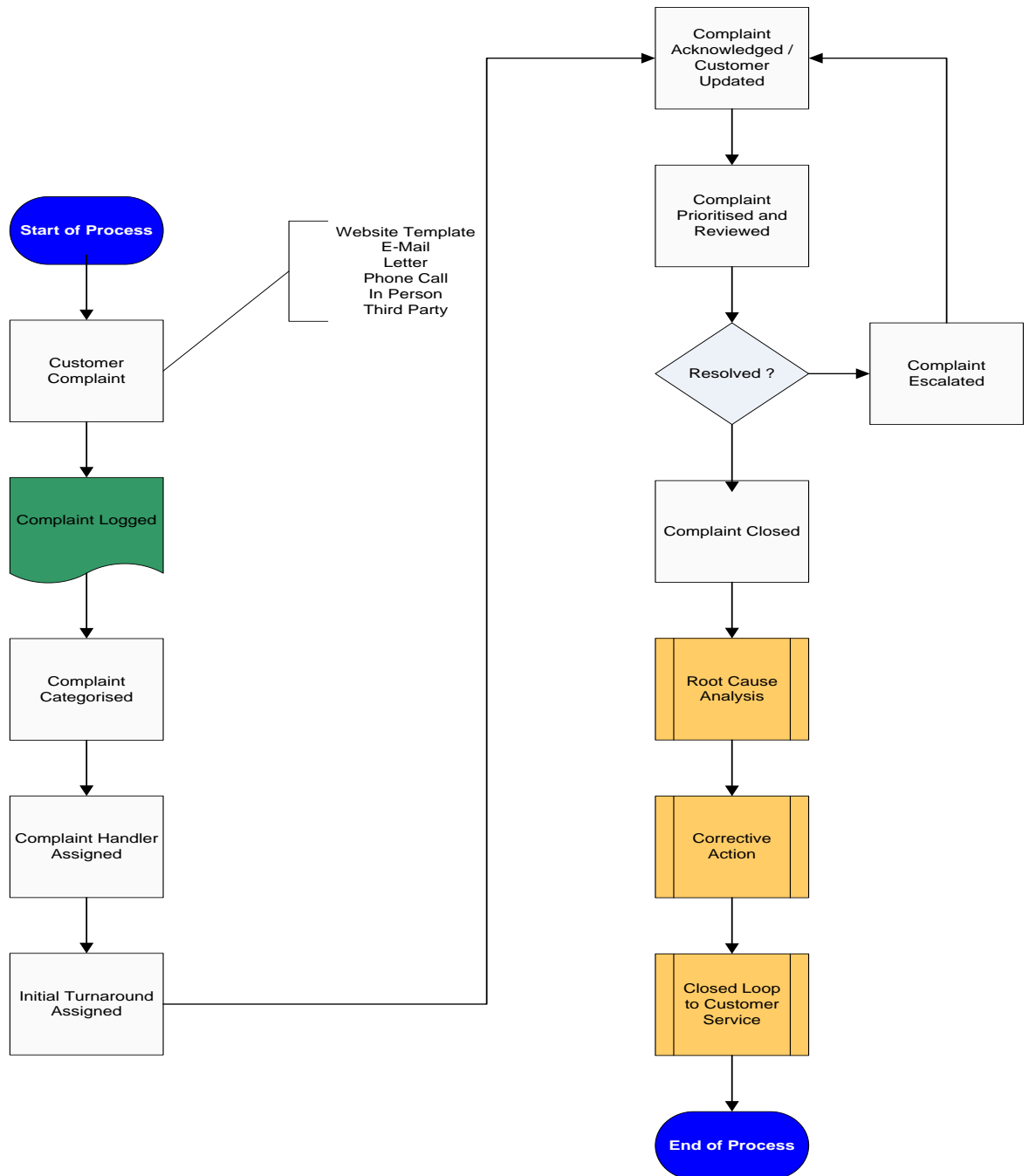
How? – Examples

You can demonstrate through your Customer Service Complaint Management Processes, that the ‘complaints loop’ has been addressed.



Appendix 1 – Standard Complaint Flowchart

Standard Complaint Flowchart





Appendix 2 – Standard Complaints Form Template

This template outlines the basic information that needs to be included in the capturing of complaint information.

Customer Name	Customer Address
Date and time of Complaint / /	Nature of Complaint
Initial Contact Name	Complaint Handler
Complaint Closed Date / /	Customer Informed / /
Initial Root Cause	Final Root Cause
Corrective Action	Corrective Action Date / /



Appendix 3 – Key Customer Service Measures

- Hours of Service
- System Downtime
- Average speed of answer
- Queue Time
- Call Resolution
- Abandonment rate
- Call Volumes
- Contact routes
- Employee Statistics
- Service Levels
- Employee Performance Measures
- Service Quality Measures
- Customer Service Survey results



Appendix 4 – Proposed Escalation Timings

Complaint Step	Timeframe
Acknowledge Complaint	Within 2 days of receipt of complaint
Resolution of Complaint	Initial resolution date – within 5 days of receipt of complaint
Customer update – no resolution	Within 5 days of receipt of complaint
Customer further updates	Each 5 days after initial update until complaint is resolved or referred



Glossary

Item	Explanation
Business Plan	The plan that is in place within an organisation, which outlines the required steps to take the organisation from where it is to where it wants to be.
Certification	Once the assessment has been completed and the required levels are attained, the organisation is awarded The Q Mark for Customer Service - Complaint Management.
Code of Practice	Guidelines issued by an organisation which define how their organisation should conduct itself.
Company	<p>The firm, company or organisation which is in compliance with the complaints handling standard, including all areas that are affected by the standard even though they may not be located at the same site. Collectively, all areas make up a body for the purpose of producing or administering a product or service.</p> <p>Note:- Firm, company and organisation are interchangeable.</p>
Complaint Handler	The person who has been nominated to handle a complaint and the relationship with the customer. This person will be the central point of contact for all correspondence with the customer in relation to the complaint.
Complaints Co-ordinator	This person has a high level view of all complaints within the organisation. This person will hold or have access to complaints statistics, formulate reports for management and convene meetings of all complaint handlers, in order to share and distribute complaint information.
Complaints Management Team	The representatives of each business section that have responsibility for ensuring complaints are resolved and managed.
Complaints Team	The complaint co-ordinator and all complaint handlers – or representatives of complaints handling groups.
Contact Methods	Contact methods are those routes which customers use to contact an organisation. These include but are not limited to telephone, e-mail, letter, web site enquiry form and in person.
Contact Volume	The volume of contacts that have been made to an organisation using the contact methods available.



Continuous Improvement	On-going efforts to improve processes, products or services within the organisation.
Corrective Action	An action taken to fix a problem, product or service which has been identified through day to day operations, assessment or review.
Culture	The behaviours and beliefs of the organisation which define you as an organisation and set you apart from other organisations.
Customer Service	The service that an organisation gives to a customer who buys or avails of its products or services.
Empowerment	The level of authorisation that a person is given, in order to deal with an issue / complaint before escalating it to a superior.
Escalation Point	The point at which a person dealing with an issue or complaint needs to raise it to a more senior person.
Feedback document	The report completed by the assessor(s) at the end of the assessment. This document details the strengths and areas for improvement that have been identified during the assessment.
Flowchart	This is a graphical representation using symbols of the steps in a process.
Framework	The basic structure of the customer service complaint standard which outlines the six sections and graphically demonstrates how they interlink.
Issue	A complaint or a point of dissatisfaction with a product or service that is being offered by the organisation.
Key Performance Indicator	A measure of how a process is progressing against a preset target. These measures are quantifiable and allow the critical processes and success factors of an organisation to be monitored.
Key Result Area	Key result areas (KRA) are the results or outcomes that a particular department is responsible for. Collectively, all KRAs will form the overall organisation KRAs.
Management	Includes all personnel within the organisation who have responsibility for providing the service required. This includes personnel who have responsibility for individual people, areas or relevant processes.
Off-Site	Not at the main location of the organisation, i.e. a regional office or a depot in a different part of the city.



On-Site	The main location of the organisation, generally where the assessment will take place.
Organisation	<p>The firm, company or organisation which is in compliance with the complaints handling standard, including all areas that are affected by the standard even though they may not be located at the same site. Collectively, all areas make up a body for the purpose of producing or administering a product or service.</p> <p>Note:- Firm, company and organisation are interchangeable.</p>
People	All people involved in customer service / complaints handling, complaints management or co-ordination.
Preventative Action	A change completed to address a weakness in a management system, where the weakness has not yet caused a problem or issue to the product or service.
Proactive	Action taken in advance of an expected issue or problem.
Reactive	Action taken to deal with an issue or problem that has already occurred.
Root Cause	The original cause of an issue or problem. This may differ from the problem or complaint being dealt with.
Root Cause Analysis	Reviewing problems or complaints in order to get to the root causes.
Self Assessment	The process by which the organisation reviews itself in compliance with the standard, without the intervention of an external assessor. Self assessment gives an organisation an indication of how well they are performing against a standard prior to external assessment.
Senior Management	Covers all senior personnel within an organisation, including organisation directors, board members etc.
Standard	A standard is a set of principles approved under general consensus as providing a basis for comparison.