



# SIZE DOESN'T MATTER!

**YOU DON'T NEED TO BE BIG TO BENEFIT FROM  
MANAGING CUSTOMER FEEDBACK**



# CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDE TO BEST PRACTISE PROCESSES

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## ABOUT US

### **When it comes to 'getting complaints', we really 'get' complaints**

That's because at managemycomplaints.com we have over 18 years experience providing enterprise customer complaint and feedback management software solutions to the UK's leading customer facing organisations.

With managemycomplaints.com we took all the functionality and work-flow processes of the enterprise systems and wrapped them up into one easy-to-use, on-line service at a fraction of the price.

So whatever the size of your business, you can get all the benefits of a specialist customer complaint and feedback management system without the high cost.

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# CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDE TO BEST PRACTISE PROCESSES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Introducing the 7 key enterprise approaches to managing customer complaints and feedback that EVERY company can adopt**

The UK's leading customer facing organisations use customer complaints and feedback to improve their businesses. However, you don't need to be a big company to benefit.

This practical guide highlights what and how to adopt the 7 key enterprise approaches to managing customer complaints and feedback – and why they can have a positive impact on your business.

If your organisation is receiving 30+ complaints or customer comments per month then you will definitely benefit from reading this guide.



# CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDE TO BEST PRACTISE PROCESSES

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## THE 7 ENTERPRISE APPROACHES TO MANAGING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND FEEDBACK

### Introduction

- Welcome to the fundamentals of excellent customer service

### 1 Where to collect the feedback

- Welcome the contact/open ears and eyes /complaints are a gift
- Recruitment, training/empowerment, cultural change/feedback is welcome

### 2 Direct, Log and Record the feedback

- Where to direct the customer feedback
- Why log and record the contact to centralise the information
- How to choose the right descriptions to log the customer feedback

### 3 Solve the customer query/complaint

- Prioritise and when to escalate the contact
- Re-contact from the customer
- Satisfying the customer
- Protecting company assets and prevent market damage

### 4 Reporting out to the business

- What and how to report
- Selection of reports to various audiences

### 5 Identifying the Root Cause

- Where did it go wrong – putting it right, locally and at head office
- Continuous improvements, changing policies and procedures
- Customer perceptions
- Engaging the company to action
- Removing defensive responses/road shows
- Using MI reporting in a positive way to eradicate the errors
- League tables/targets to improve

### 6 Summary of processes

- The international closed feedback loop

### 7 The use of Technology

- How can technology help
- What to choose and why



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## INTRODUCTION

### **Welcome to the fundamentals of excellent customer service**

Customer satisfaction and service has played a very important part in the growth history of many companies. Delivering high levels of customer service is one of the key differentiators from your competitors in the market place.

By measuring and monitoring customers' likes and dislikes you will have the exceptional opportunity of being able to adapt your service to meet and exceed your customers' expectations, needs and demands. Superior service delivery, together with resolution of complaints to the satisfaction of the customer, will ensure customer loyalty to your company. Loyalty in the form of repeat purchasing is extremely important, and will of course result in higher revenue and profit.

In the case of a negative comment the feedback is valuable for keeping the company aware of which areas need addressing to satisfy all customers. External research has shown that complainers are frequently an organisation's most valuable customers in terms of total spend and profitability.

External and internal research shows that in business today approximately 30% of all customers have some dissatisfaction with a transaction, either process or personal service or even both, but they do not take the time to complain or enquire.

Fewer than 1 in 20 customers with a complaint actually make the effort to complain. This is usually because they do not think it will do any good. However, where a complaint is handled effectively and to the satisfaction of the customer, 91% will continue to use the service.

As it is 4 times cheaper to retain a customer than it is to find a new customer, it is most important that you do everything in your power to retain your customers.

### **All your employees should understand the fundamentals of excellent customer service:**

- ✓ get the job done right the first time
- ✓ every customer contact whether positive or negative is welcomed
- ✓ every contact is handled to the customer's satisfaction, while protecting your company assets
- ✓ every contact is logged and recorded into a database
- ✓ internal errors are eradicated wherever possible through corrective root cause actions
- ✓ the customer voice in the database is reported in a relevant way for management information
- ✓ the reports should be summarised, analysed and diagnostic support is provided and reviewed for continuous improvement of your service delivery and additional marketing opportunities for customer loyalty and growth



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## 1 WHERE TO COLLECT AND WELCOME CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

### Why is this important?

Recognising the points of contact with the customer will provide the organisation with 'pain points to be eased' and critical points of opportunity to provide service excellence.

Every customer has a journey before and after their transaction with you. So to identify where to provide the opportunity for the customer to provide you with feedback, it is necessary to draw out a complete customer journey through this whole period.

Where does the customer first come into contact with your company? Is it advertising or through a third party like a travel agent or an internet site? Is there an opportunity for you to include a contact channel directly to you at this point? You need to make it easy for the customer to contact you with perhaps questions relevant to your processes here, the service provided by this third party or advertisement, and a verbatim box opportunity for the customer.

To duplicate this thought pattern throughout the customer journey to invoice or collection of payment stage, or next booking stage takes time and thought. But once these stages are identified and you have implemented a questionnaire or contact details to you - it gives the customer plenty of opportunity to feedback their thoughts about that stage of their relationship with you and opens a new channel of additional ideas and improvement opportunities which you may never have been aware of – had you not provided this opportunity.

Most enterprise organisations go through this identification stage over time and continuously tweak these 'points of awareness' to gain the most information they can to help improve their service delivery.

Of course – once the feedback channels are opened – you then have to have the processes and preferably the technology coupled with the right attitude and behaviours in place to capture and use this new information. Otherwise there is no point in collecting the feedback in the first place!

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## KEY MESSAGES

- Feedback matters to an organisation.
- Understanding where the role of feedback sits as a part of a basket of measures.
- Feedback is used as part of a strategy to increase overall customer experience.



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## 2 DIRECT, LOG AND RECORD THE FEEDBACK

Customers will contact you for a number of reasons; it could be before, during or after a transaction has taken place. It is therefore important that all staff are provided with the tools and the training to assist customers with their enquiries. There should be a flow chart in each customer service handling area clearly showing the handling and pass off of contacts to other areas.

### DIRECTION AND OWNERSHIP

#### Why is this important?

So the staff know where to direct any customer feedback they cannot handle themselves. So the customer can trust that their feedback will be handled by the right area.

Contacts and feedback will arrive by a variety of means, eg: letter, fax, email, phone call, txt – to any area of the business. Therefore everyone in the company should be empowered to accept and welcome customer feedback and to record it.

All staff should be able to resolve a customer query or complaint to the best of their judgement but they must also be aware of when and where to direct a customer complaint or any feedback which is outside of their control.

Getting the contact to the right place for further handling is a critical factor in customer satisfaction. For example, if a customer calls and is transferred to several different parts of the organisation, and perhaps not to the right place at all - he is likely to be discouraged, creating additional dissatisfaction and more likely to generate negative word of mouth advertising, which may result in escalation both inside and outside the company.

The customer service departments and/or representative will generally handle the customer contact after a transaction has been completed and probably after an invoice has been issued. It is necessary that all staff in this department are aware of the full customer journey and processes throughout so that a knowledgeable and confident response is provided.

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### KEY MESSAGES

- Everyone to welcome any customer feedback.
- All staff to know where to direct the contact if they are not able to handle or record it.



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## 2 LOGGING/RECORDING OF THE CONTACT

### Why is this important?

So the company knows the number of, the priority, the reasons, the type and the efficiency of the handling of the customer contacts.

So the customer has trust in the fact that their feedback is accurately recorded.

All customer contacts/feedback must be recorded and logged into a central system. If the contact is received at an outlying store/depot etc, there must be a mechanism for the contact to be recorded and forwarded to the central records. Ideally every customer touch point in the organisation should have an IT system in place which is easy to use for all staff to be able to log that feedback.

The contact should be logged to a description which is an accurate recording of what the customer has reported. Ideally all staff throughout an organisation should be provided with clear guidelines and examples of which description to use to ensure consistency and clarity.

This accurate logging is very important because it will provide the management information to identify root cause problems for changes in procedures and processes in the customer journey, as well as providing opportunities for further customer loyalty programmes and customer excellence practice.

For example, this contact and the reporting will provide local analysis as well as consolidation reports. Therefore the right description and accuracy of the customer feedback is paramount right from the start.

If inaccurate information is entered then reporting will be meaningless to the audiences it is provided to in order to help improve any customer delivery programme.

The descriptions should be updated on a regular basis to accurately reflect the customer journey. They should also be grouped together for summary analysis as well as detail.

Ideally customer verbatim comments should be captured to help further identify the customer perceptions as well as process issues. Sometimes a customer will comment on the personal service delivery as well as the process, and this again will be helpful to identify training needs.

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## KEY MESSAGES

- Revisit contact descriptions regularly to ensure they reflect the customer journey.
- Record the contact as accurately as possible.
- Rubbish in – rubbish out!



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## 2 HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT DESCRIPTIONS TO LOG THE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

### Why is this important?

Easy to read, logical descriptions will be remembered by the person logging the feedback and prevent guess work or the use of 'other' which is of no use to anyone for root cause actions.

Accurate descriptions will make sense to the right area of the business to help put things right.

The identification of the description is not as easy as it sounds. Each description must match the customer journey correctly, both for the customer and the staff. The 'staff' meaning those recording it and those understanding the reporting to understand exactly what it means.

It is best practise to involve other areas of the business to select the description for the feedback for the following reasons:

- Each department will identify with the end management reporting because they have selected the part of the customer journey that affects them personally and described it in their own way.
- The reporting is in their language that they use day to day – so the description of the contact is meaningful to them.

For example, the customer has called to say that the bill is wrong and they have been overcharged. If the description you have selected is just 'overcharge' then that covers a multitude of costs covering many parts of the customer journey: which means that it might be applicable to any area/department and so it is then 'owned' by none to solve. End result - there is no point in logging or reporting.

On the other hand, if the description is clear to all, then the identification from what the customer is saying is easy to log and for the report reader to understand and then own.

So a better example is 'overcharge' followed by exactly 'what' from the invoice is the offending charge. Or 'poor service' is followed by exactly where in the customer journey that the customer perceived this to be the case. Or 'additional booking' is followed up by 'another seat' or 'another date' and the detail. And so on.

An easy way to identify what to have as descriptions is to chart out the customer journey first. Walk it yourself to give you a good idea of what a customer is likely to want to tell you. Not in your head – actually do the customer journey yourself. You can draw this in a flow chart perhaps to help identify what the customer might want to tell you, and will help with training the staff to know what to ask for to make sure the identification is correct.

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## KEY MESSAGES

- Walk the customer journey to identify all the steps.
- Remember to include perceptions and influences before they arrive and after they have gone past all the customer facing points.
- Keep the descriptions relevant and up to date – often revisit these.

# CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDE TO BEST PRACTISE PROCESSES

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## 3 PRIORITISATION AND ESCALATION OF THE CUSTOMER CONTACT

### Why is this important?

So the staff know how to investigate and handle any customer feedback and have the support of knowing they can raise the contact to a higher level when needed.

So the customer has trust in the company knowing that their contact will be handled correctly and at the right level and service standard agreed.

Customer contacts need to be responded to fully and in a timely fashion meeting procedures and service level agreements as agreed with customer groups. This will include all customer feedback whether negative or positive.

Ideally this information will be easy to find in an IT system so prioritisation is automatic. Investigation followed by a clear and empathetic reply is a key activity to providing satisfaction to a customer who may have a negative perspective.

The contact should be reviewed carefully for all points raised. Prioritise the contact according to possible market damage – e.g: if a third party consumer group or newspaper is mentioned, a solicitor has been involved, the customer is a shareholder, it is a major customer.

Ideally there should be a list of key descriptions of complaint / customer type or complaint source which will require prioritisation and or escalation for fast response and notification to senior management.

Decide when escalation to senior staff is needed – e.g: when to disengage from any further negotiation with the customer. This may be if the customer does not accept your proposed resolution despite using your empowerment ability or asking the customer what you can do for them.

For investigation, use the information sources available to establish any error. Decide if further information is needed from another source not available to you. Determine the type and communication channel of response most suitable to the contact – eg: this may not be the method used to contact you.

If writing a response – always ensure the style of response, tone, spelling and grammar is relevant to the customer and checked before issuing.

There should be training examples for handling customer feedback by contact description and how to interpret and answer the customer. Training courses on improved tone of voice / profiling the customer and other plain language support for responding to customers should be available.

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## KEY MESSAGES

- Have an easy method of identifying service level agreements and priorities for response.
- Have clear guidelines on which contact should be escalated, who to and when.
- Have clear guidelines on how to research the contact for further information.
- Ensure training is provided on understanding how to respond to a customer in the right manner.



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## 3 CUSTOMER CONTACT: RE-CONTACT FROM THE CUSTOMER

### Why is this important?

So the management know the true time it takes to resolve the customer contact from receipt to resolution.

So the customer is handled correctly from the outset, but if they need to contact again then their information from the first contact is taken completely into account and they do not have the need to repeat themselves from scratch.

If the customer has been disappointed with the response and decides to re-contact you – either back through the same route or escalated to more senior management or a third party – the logging of this must show clearly that it is a re-opened case.

Ensure that supervisors and /or managers are aware of all re-contacts for any re-training needs for the agent who handled the original case.

A re-contact should be escalated for correct handling to ensure there is no further dissatisfaction for the customer.

In all cases ensure that there is a balance of explanation / disappointment and recovery which reduces the need for any re-contact by the customer.

Remember that it is cheaper to solve the complaint quickly rather than create a long term escalation issue which will cause more cost to the business than the original refund would have been.

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## KEY MESSAGES

- Ideally the first time response should be the only response.
- If another response is needed there will be further cost to the business, both in monetary terms as well as market damage.
- Any contact which was not resolved to the satisfaction of the customer extends the response time and must be recorded accurately for productivity reporting.



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## 4 REPORTING OUT TO THE BUSINESS

### Why is this important?

Customer feedback once collected needs to get out to where it is most relevant to help prevent more negative feedback of the same type and inform areas of the information they need for continuous improvement.

Often the customer feedback is collected in various areas of the business but not collated or reported back to the right areas. Customer service complaints are often found reported to the finance area only and the information never reaches the operations or the marketing area where the improvements can be made to prevent further complaints.

The comment is often heard – ‘Oh! I didn’t know this before now and it is easy to put right!’ End result is reduced cost to the business because the complaint is not repeated and therefore doesn’t need to be handled by another person, or the product is improved in the design stage and more are purchased.

How and what to report is very important and depends on the business but these rules generally will apply to all. If the descriptions were bought into at the design stage by including the operational area concerned, are recorded against - then the other parts of the business will be asking for their feedback too.

Compare to previous years for trends. Perhaps use rolling averages if necessary but you don’t need to make the reporting too technical but it should be easy to identify strengths and weaknesses – perhaps use traffic lights for easy identification.

### A high level summary – explained in easy terms – for example:

Due to good empowerment at the customer facing points - 1 in 5 customers were helped immediately and didn’t need to re-contact the customer service at Head office.

1 in 10 customers commented about this subject and 1 in 30 needed a refund of some sorts.

1000 customers reported a design fault about this item. Which is 20% of the total purchases.

In the month of April, total refunds were x% of sales, of which 90% was for this reason.

There is an increasing trend over the past 6 months from customers telling us \*\*\* is not acceptable to them.

It is also recommended to include what action took place to improve these statistics (and that depends on how good your root cause actions are). Don’t forget to say the positive items as well and include some customer verbatim comments for real impact!

Then the detail to back up the summary and these reports should be by department, shop and by product – for example:

20 customers gave negative comment about insufficient stock of \*\*\* at \*\*\* shop.



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## 4 REPORTING OUT TO THE BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

The marketing brochure issued about \*\*\* on \*\*\* date received 50 comments about incorrect email address.

40% of the sales at \*\*\* shop gave positive comments about \*\*\* product.

3 comments were received about this member of staff at this shop giving excellent personal service.

20% of customers who bought this product complained about being overcharged.

### **Support the factual information with an action request and feedback to you – for example:**

Include a template of root cause actions against each report so the areas can tell you what they did to stop repeat errors/improve the service/additional training as relevant. This should then be sent back to you to help you report on the summary report out to the senior management.

### **Take the reporting out to the areas yourself or follow up with action meetings on site:**

Best practise reporting is to personalise the report with the business areas. Due to the fact that there is so much management information – by making it relevant and easy to use will ensure that the teams want to read it and use it. They will also usually suggest improvements on your reporting style to them.

### **Celebrate any improvement:**

If you have a company magazine or intranet – make a splash each time you send a report not only to report the facts and numbers but also to congratulate actions and people.

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## KEY MESSAGES

- Relevant reporting to the relevant audiences in language the reader understands, will buy into and use.
- Keep the report regular and timely.
- It should be that the audience is asking for the reports in advance of them being produced because they are so important to the business.



# CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDE TO BEST PRACTISE PROCESSES

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## 5 IDENTIFYING THE ROOT CAUSE

### **Why is this important?**

So the staff and management have an opportunity to put local errors and processes right to continually improve their own service performance.

So the customer can trust that their feedback has been positively used and will be happy to report their findings/perspectives on future service delivery again.

In the case of complaint recording and reporting, the objective of root cause corrective action is to reduce customer risk. This is the amount of business that is at risk as a result of less than perfect service in the eyes of the customer.

Typically, this is caused by issues within a company's control and therefore is entirely preventable. Therefore is it important that the root cause of the problems should be identified through reporting to the right areas and steps taken to eliminate errors on a regular basis as part of a business habit. This will help to ensure that you retain customers.

To ensure that root cause actions are correctly identified, the contact must be recorded on receipt and accurately coded into the system database. Relevant reporting both in detail and summary reports are necessary for departments/areas and senior management to understand and seek to find the root of the cause of the negative feedback to make a change.

For positive feedback it is also important to identify where, what and who delivered that experience for the customer to maximise future opportunities.

Finding the actual root cause of that feedback is not easy. It could be local error, process, procedure or company decision to 'do business that way'. Or it could be a training need or customer perspective.

Often it is necessary to track back or across the organisation and include more than one area of the business to make a difference and change or improve the actual root cause.

### **Local actions:**

Analysing the detailed reporting locally, specific actions should be decided to reduce the errors and the number of contacts by 'doing the job right first time'.

It is essential that the information produced is presented to the different areas of the business in a format that is easy to read and understand and applicable to the department or area it is presented to.

Each department/area should recommend ideas to change the way they currently operate to reduce the complaints/queries whilst improving process systems.

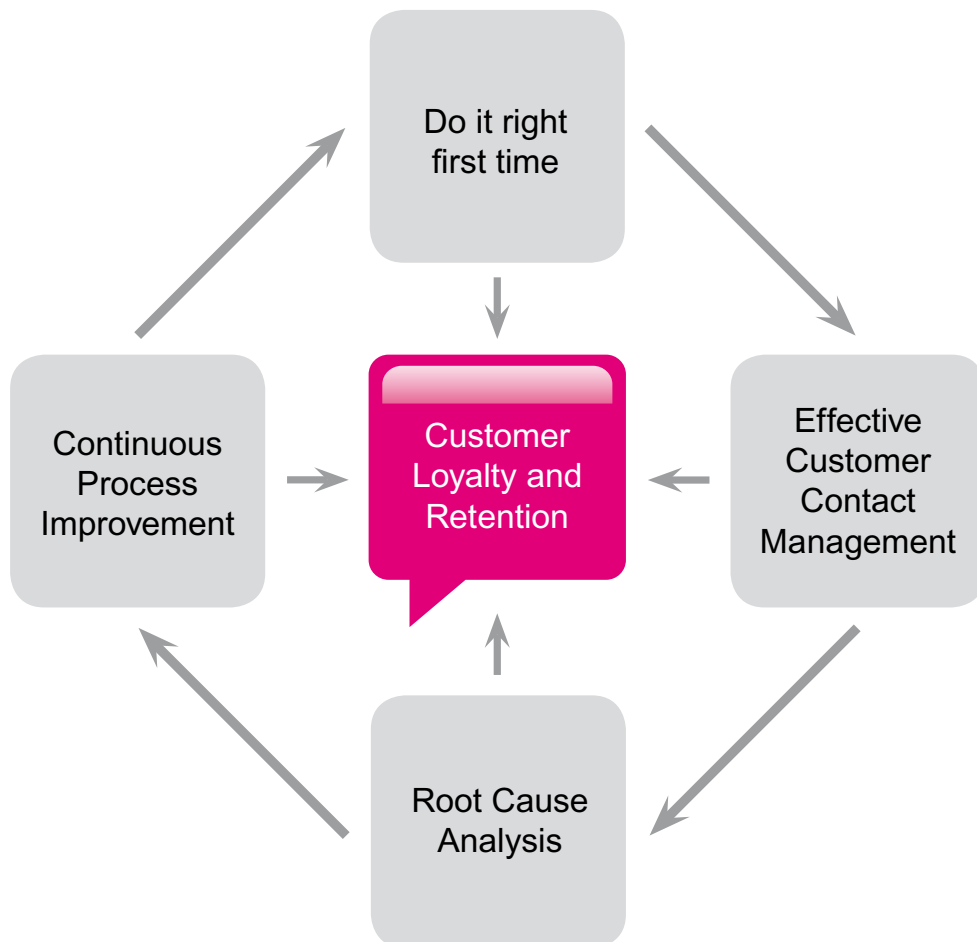
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## 5 IDENTIFYING THE ROOT CAUSE (CONTINUED)

The key is to identify the breakdowns in the cycle of service that cause the most risk and to focus resources on those areas. The overall objective is to set up a closed loop self-correcting process.

### Head Office or Central actions:

Summarised reporting showing trends and complaint descriptions will help identify key stations or subject matter for each area. These high level reports will assist Head Office/senior management to find root causes, identify product weaknesses and make decisions on improving or changing processes or procedures.



## KEY MESSAGES

- The right information recorded will enable accurate reporting to help identification, analysis and diagnostics to improve service delivery.
- Working locally, centrally and across the organisation will be necessary to deliver successful continuous improvement.



# CUSTOMER SERVICE GUIDE TO BEST PRACTISE PROCESSES

## 6 SUMMARY OF PROCESSES EXAMPLE

### Closed Feedback loop – as per ISO 10002 – easy steps for continuous improvement

The purpose of having a customer service policy is to satisfy the customer at all points of their journey.

Central and local procedures, training and closed feedback loop analysis with diagnostics to help your staff to provide the best service delivery.

By proactively using the customer feedback you can continuously change and improve your procedures, the way you communicate, interact and recover any service failure with your customers.

The programme should encompass work in all departments where the customer touches your business throughout the customer journey with you.

Customer voice should be encouraged and feedback sought via various channels – eg: Customer Opinion surveys.

Any service delivery failure in the customers' eyes, received anywhere in the organisation, should be centrally recorded and fed back to the root cause areas.

Information for the customer and staff on 'how to' with systems in place to collect and record customer feedback, queries or complaints at all points of interface with your company.	Company culture which supports staff empowerment, customer service delivery ethos and continuous improvement.	Procedures, training and performance review to deliver quality, speed of investigation and reply to the customer, plus escalation or external support when required.	Collation of customer feedback, reporting, monitoring, root cause investigation and correction of internal errors.	Senior management review of key areas of customer dissatisfaction for wide reaching implications and overall business improvements.
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## KEY MESSAGES

- Ensure simplicity in a customer service policy.
- Ensure clarity in messages to the customer and staff - so everyone understands the purpose of the policy.

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## 7 THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

### Why is this important?

To provide consistent and validated data on all feedback into the business.

Have one source and one format for capturing customer feedback across the organisation.

Have one place for the 'voice of the customer' that the business can focus around.

Technology can enable companies to automate the complaints procedure and provide a centralised view of complaints and feedback across the business.

But it also provides a much bigger picture when it comes to business benefits. It can help your organisation engage with your customers better, allow you to be more responsive to their needs, identify opportunities and enable root cause analysis to drive business improvements.

Until recently specialist software applications for managing customer feedback was only something that enterprise organisations adopted - the bigger the company, the greater the need for managing customer complaints and feedback more effectively.

However, today's technology has made it possible for organisations of all sizes to adopt a specialist approach to managing customer feedback - without the associated enterprise price tag.

But big or small, there are common functions and features that are critical when considering what and how to implement a specialist approach to feedback management in your organisation.

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## KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Make sure it's simple and easy to use** – no technical knowledge required or people won't use it.
- **Minimal reliance on IT** – system must be self administering -reduce the impact and need for specialist IT support.
- **Accessible** – easy to deploy and access across your business.
- **Flexibility** – self configurable - capable of adapting to your business , your customers, changes to meet your needs.
- **Scalable** – grows as your business evolves – start small and expand as and when you need to – only pay for what you need.
- **Strong reporting capability** – obvious – if you're capturing feedback – you need to report it or what's the point.
- **Cost effective** – doesn't need to be a big IT project or spend – the next generation of business applications are based on the SaaS model of delivery (Software as a service).
- **Auditable** – provides evidence of actions and steps taken in capturing, managing and resolving complaints – a complete audit trail – who, what, when, how.
- **Image based** – ability to store all correspondence associated with a case – emails, letters, photos etc.



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## NOTES



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## NOTES



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If your company is receiving 30+ complaints or customer comments per month, then managemycomplaints.com provides a dedicated service to manage your feedback that can deliver tangible business benefits.

-  **Free trial**  
Try before you buy for 30 days
-  **Cost effective**  
Less than £2 a day
-  **Fast set up**  
No specialist IT knowledge required
-  **Easy to use**  
Intuitive workflow and functionality
-  **Flexible configuration**  
Customise in line with your processes
-  **On-demand access**  
24/7 access from any PC with internet access
-  **Scalable service**  
Standalone or departmental solution
-  **No hidden costs**  
Support and software upgrades included

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