Guidance f

Introduction

It goes without saying that not business. We would all like to time. The reality, however, is will choose to complain about possible to turn them into som of a complaint benefit the cus business.

These Guidance Notes look fur and providing some useful ide References are also made the Complaints Handling Process Guidance Notes are not designated they do explain the principles adopted when using them.

1. Why Customers Complain

Customers complain for a vacovered by specific statutory example, goods must be fit for from minor defects, safe to use implied terms, a customer has alesperson selling those good perspective the customer has customer's rights are enshring handling their grievance properson.

Some examples, then, of reas

- Goods are not fit for purpose
- Promises are broken
- Poor customer service
- · Rude staff
- · Incompetent staff
- Difficulty in contacting you
- Inconsistency when the cust to another)
- Lack of understanding towar
- Not receptive to complaints

There are many more, but so business life and should be d This applies even if the cust mantra, "the customer is alway your starting point.

2. Why Don't Customers Cor

The previous section would proposed in the complain. Here's a clue: it is

Complaints

nints about themselves or their 00% satisfaction, 100% of the ether valid or not - a customer ole to stop complaints, but it is does the successful handling of significant value to your

plaints, considering their value, them and to learn from them. mer Complaints Policies and Simply-Docs. Whilst these tructions for those documents, the practices which should be

ne of those reasons may be Sale of Goods Act 1979, for y appearance and finish, free goods fail to meet any of these s. If, on the other hand, the nhelpful manner, from a legal cases, however, whether the common sense and decency,

t wish to complain are:

eing passed from one person

plaints are a common fact of ided or worse - shrugged off. risk of repeating a stale old ain why this should always be

ed "Why Customers Want To ct! In many cases, customers

opt not to complain because attention. Many businesses fa a complaint. Others simply fol as usual.

The root cause of this in mar invest sufficient time and reso in particular may consider it ur procedure. How, after all, ca two employees? It is not, ho most. What is important is the complaints effectively. As is handling documents, a busine procedures in place to man procedure designed for a so businesses with potentially the is the same.

3. Complaints Are Good - En

Nobody likes to hear bad thin feels harsh and unfair or it rer deal with. A complaint migh customer (whether or not the perhaps incurring a cost that positive attitude about compla Complaints are free (or cheap)

3.1 Complaints as Information

An oft-cited sum is that it costs keep an existing one. We see the value of complaints handling

Even a customer who doesn't may come back because it's their friends? Perhaps not. Prothat fall on the lower side of a vor abrasive may go unnoticed (whether a literal one or a method fine, right? Not necessal feedback, you can gather a great protection.

Customer X might have have they referred their your staff to be disintered items often out of stock. and expressing their grie is met with little more that

By making it clear that from them, and by m complaints, Customer X only by way of an apofriendly and engaged

business in question will pay inderstand methods of making discount voucher and carry on

the fact that businesses don't dling. Some small businesses re in place a full fat complaints department if you only have odies on the task that matters istomers know how to handle ly-Docs' range of complaints hould put suitable policies and tarting point is a policy and o variants designed for large the essence of both, however,

about their business. It either npleasant that we'd rather not of your way to compensate a some form of compensation), ncur. The key to fostering a is to change your viewpoint.

new customer than it does to the this and, keeping it in mind,

vith you particularly satisfying would they recommend you to er service, goods and services as that customers find irritating eep coming through the door spending money, things must your customers to give you nation.

om you for five years, but? No, because they find roducts to be limited with the because it's convenient tioned disinterested staff

and are eager to learn tomers to make those uch. By responding, not g your staff to be more our shelves are better stocked, Customer X will They will also be more convenient competitor co

Thus, by letting customers knowerly flattering - you can imply loyal, and will be more likely to

3.2 Failure to Respond in the

Not only does effective com customers and foster goodwil social media and the rise in disgruntled customers had a them. Now, however, a sing taking your name and reputa internet a powerful advertising you don't keep your custome managing customer feedback

4. Key Rules for Complaints

We have thus far established useful complaints handling printroduction, the principles fro what a good complaints handli

Visibility

Information about how a to customers, personnel

Accessibility

A complaints-handling complainants. Informat making and resolving cosupporting information information should be in making a complaint sho formats that the prodalternative formats, such complainants are disadv

Responsiveness

Receipt of each complainmediately. Complain with their urgency. The be kept informed of complaints-handling syst

Objectivity

Each complaint should unbiased manner throug

Charges

f and Z in your direction.

you if another equally

ley have to say - even if it isn't ep your customers happy and lase in the process.

e your business, please your ct you. Before the advent of slike Money Saving Expert, iellow customers to take with eet can spread far and wide, or for worse! Not only is the also be turned against you if arn to the use of the web in

ave a visible, welcoming and turn to *how*. By way of an Institution demonstrate clearly

hould be well publicised ies.

asily accessible to all ailable of the details of ts-handling process and erstand and use. The nation and assistance in whatever languages or provided in, including or audiotape, so that no

aged to the complainant promptly in accordance treated courteously and complaint through the

equitable, objective and g process.



Access to the complaint the complainant.

Confidentiality

Personally identifiable in available where needed complaint within the org disclosure, unless the cu disclosure

Consumer-Focused Ap

The organisation should open to receiving fe commitment to resolving

Accountability

The organisation should the actions and decision handling is clearly estable

Continual Improvemen

The continual improvem quality of products shoul

(Source: BS ISO 10002:2004)

4.1 Have a clear and welcom

Ensure that your customers kr welcome. They should not complaint. At all times the o procedure and should never be

4.2 Have a clear procedure to

Your internal procedures should Having a formal complaints complaints are handled in a customer's expectations) and,

4.3 Ensure that the right staf

Depending on the size of your you may have an entire depar sit on the scale, ensuring that Ensure that complaints handli training such as mock compla forgotten. Periodic refreshe principles and important points

4.4 Make it easy to contact y

This rule extends beyond con that exist only online, can be communicate by email, but oth methods of communication as easy to find them. Burying a pof questions on a web page, to Consumer Contracts Regulat

uld be free of charge to

e complainant should be oses of addressing the actively protected from expressly consents to its

sed approach, should be ts, and should show

lity for and reporting on the respect to complaints

andling process and the ve of the organisation.

vhether positive or negative, is at the prospect of making a and your complaints handling re being a pest.

r-facing policy at every stage. place helps to ensure that blicy (and, by extension, the nly and fairly.

andling complaints yourself or ask. Regardless of where you its are suitably trained is vital. ese rules, consider on-the-job tly, ensure that things are not a sessions help to keep the ninds and actions.

businesses, especially those e customers may be happy to man being. Provide as many mers and, above all, make it umber behind an endless tree In point of fact, following the g a premium rate telephone



number from the rooftops is no must not be required to pay f traders for anything connec complaints. There may, of cou to have an 0845 number for th to the spirit of good complaints

4.5 Ensure that complaints a Aka "don't sweep them under followed by a timely and effid customer is not further frustra The time limits included in the blank for you to fill in, but on complaints are not forgotten or

4.6 Start with the assumption Even if the customer's compla courteous. The customer like probably has better things to to...

4.7 Be courteous at all times The process should always be to your attention. Even if you that the customer does not Conclude proceedings by aga offer your apologies for any in and would secretly like to give nothing but may just make the business.

4.8 Make sure you have all the Customers should be encoura their complaint as possible; important. Communication is If you need more information,

4.9 Keep in touch throughou Informing the customer of you however, if the complaint "ca (and perhaps most important informed.

4.10 Ensure that your respon It is important for your busine complaint is reasonable. Ensu and that it actually corrects heading. It may be tempting an apology, but this risks eith other end of the scale - being disadvantage. Taking the time of great importance.

4.11 The golden rule: Learn

llations require that customers te telephone call when calling vices purchased - including nts who are not customers but vone else runs rather contrary

ealt with quickly

go away". A quick response, s will help to ensure that the tential damage on either side. mplates from Simply-Docs are lowed, helping to ensure that

ight and proceed from there ortant to remain objective and as a legitimate grievance and st for fun. Which brings us on

mer for bringing the complaint

ide as much detail concerning s something that you deem complaints handling process.

haps be taking things too far, ore information is needed, or e a delay, keep the customer

bnate

r that your response to their ke in response is proportionate is also important under this e customer a gift voucher and hey should receive or - at the consequently putting you at a and your response to them is Providing appropriate redress important is ensuring that the to keep records of complaints your business. Even if the ca customer's fault (perhaps they buy the right tool for the job) mistakes in the future. Do rewording? Perhaps staff necreviewing to ensure more clar poor quality products in which them or find a way out of it to cases, even those where you can be taken to avoid the sam process therefore does not appropriate compensation.

5. Top Level Committment a

Good practices should start at adoption and implementation procedures should always bego delegating such tasks. It should to handle customer complaint escalated complaints are hand least should be - in the best including staff, customers and

It is also important to ensure t and left to their own devices. procedures, not only complareviewed at regular intervals i correctly and - most important

Once polices and procedures for the training of staff in the important to ensure that stastandpoint, but equal emphasi handling. These guidance not As we have stressed through negative - not as a cause for I bona fide improvements to yo goodwill.

6. Picking Your Complaints

What to look for in complaints with customer complaints sho ability to truly understand the very sorry to hear that" from a that" is quite another. For a truthe latter should always be to complaint is not personal and customer and your business.

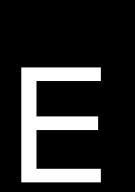
f great importance, but more en again. It is vital, therefore, at all appropriate levels within ely turns out to have been the choosing a product and didn't you can take to avoid similar rature or your website need ms and conditions may need that suppliers are selling you renegotiate your contract with ier. In a significant number of ill be some kind of action that ture. The complaints handling receiving an apology and

ay down in any business. The aints handling policies and lanagement should be wary of responsibility of management 1gh it is recommended that 1), but management are - or at 1 your business as a whole, ices sold.

res are not simply set in place is to all business policies and and procedures should be ether or not they are working proved upon.

nt must also take responsibility nd procedures. Not only is it complaints from a technical e principles behind complaints ul starting point in this respect. complaints are seen not as a a positive opportunity to make ery least to cement customer

harged with the task of dealing bjectivity and empathy. The ery important. Reading, "I am ining, "I am very sorry to hear al complaints handling system, be able to appreciate that a found that benefits both the



Excellent communication ski handlers must be able to communication may be expressing an staff (however appropriate or in ensuring that the matter is hall relevant information is obscourse, stop with the custome changes may be necessary to communication skills help to need in order to implement customer has complained at complaints, whether written or about, why it was made, what

7. Actively Inviting Feedback

Complaints provide a valuable from being the only means customers may wish to compla more neutral comments that m hints and tips on how something

As we noted above, the intercomplaints and gives disgrunt discontent. Once again, how benefit. Websites such as *tru* ability to rate and review your list of positive ratings and re opportunity should again be customer feels that they are varied upon it, they will likely c deaf ears, they may go elsewh be applied to positive feedbac up. Respond each time, compliments and want to fix the

Final Thoughts

In this guide we have endead handling processes and polic Customer feedback - whether both in terms of fostering worthwhile improvements to attitude towards complaints. personally a complaint is like avoided. After all - whether it you a big favour.

st and foremost, complaints a range of customers, some of rards your business and your night be). This is vital not only aress, but also in ensuring that

Communication doesn't, of solved, as is observed above, n arising in the future. Good t receive the information they es. Simply knowing that a is not enough - accounts of learly what the complaint was by it was done.

used properly, but they are far feedback. Whereas some ffer praise. Others might have ints but may offer some useful ould be changed or improved.

hide away from dealing with ulpit from which to voice their ed as a powerful tool for your nply-Docs) give customers the course, is to gather a pleasing ive feedback is received, the rectify the situation. If your listened to their grievance and mer. If their complaints fall on a valued. A similar rule should good or bad, do not let it pile know you appreciate their

t only the value of complaints of the complaints themselves. an extremely useful resource, a terms of making genuine, by lies in adopting a positive ller the business, the more is a temptation that must be or not - the customer is doing