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Complaint handling in organizations – Specification

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Foreword

Publishing information

This British Standard is published by BSI Standards Limited, under licence from The British Standards Institution, and came into effect on 30 June 2015. It was prepared by Subcommittee SVS/0/4, *Complaints handling*, under the authority of Technical Committee SVS/0, *Customer service – Fundamental principles*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

Use of this document

It has been assumed in the preparation of this British Standard that the execution of its provisions will be entrusted to appropriately qualified and experienced people, for whose use it has been produced.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its requirements are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is "shall".

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Requirements in this standard are drafted in accordance with *Rules for the structure and drafting of UK standards*, subclause J.1.1, which states, "Requirements should be expressed using wording such as: 'When tested as described in Annex A, the product shall ...'". This means that only those products that are capable of passing the specified test will be deemed to conform to this standard.

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

Introduction

This British Standard provides a specification for the design and implementation of an effective and efficient complaint-handling process for all types of commercial or non-commercial activities. It is intended to benefit an organization and its customers, complainants and other interested parties.

The effective management of complaints enables an organization to identify any problems that customers might be experiencing from its products and/or services. The information subsequently obtained can be used to provide remedial action to put things right for affected customers and also lead to improvements in products services and processes. Also, if complaints are properly handled and managed, an organization can improve its reputation, regardless of size, location and sector.

An effective and efficient complaint-handling process reflects the needs of both the organizations supplying products and services and those who are the recipients of those products and services.

The handling of complaints through a process as described in this British Standard can enhance customer satisfaction. Encouraging customer feedback, including complaints if customers are not satisfied, can offer opportunities to maintain or enhance customer loyalty and approval (see BS 8477), and improve domestic and international competitiveness.

Implementation of the process described in this British Standard can:

- provide a complainant with access to an open and effective complaint-handling process;
- enhance the handling of complaints from vulnerable or disadvantaged complainants, including children;
- encourage feedback from those who do not currently complain;
- provide a high quality and consistent response to complaints made through all channels, e.g. social media, webchat and other emerging channels (including those posted on third party review sites);
- enhance the ability of the organization to identify and resolve complaints in a consistent, systematic and responsive manner, to the satisfaction of the complainant and the organization;
- enhance the ability of an organization to identify trends and eliminate causes of complaints, and improve the organization's operations;
- help an organization create a customer-focused approach to resolving complaints, and encourage personnel to improve their skills in working with customers; and
- provide a basis for continual review of the complaint-handling process to meet any changes in organizational requirements, consumer expectations and external factors such as regulatory changes.

Findings from the complaint-handling and any alternative dispute resolution processes can be used in conjunction with other feedback from customers, personnel and benchmarking studies, to drive further improvements in customer satisfaction.

1 Scope

This British Standard specifies requirements for a complaint-handling process, including planning, design, operation, maintenance and improvement. The complaint-handling process is suitable for use as one of the processes of an overall quality management system.

This British Standard specifies the following aspects of handling and managing complaints:

- a) enhancing customer satisfaction by creating a customer-focused environment that is open to feedback (including complaints), resolving any complaints identified, and enhancing the organization's ability to improve its customer service;
- b) involving top management and commitment through adequate acquisition and deployment of resources, including personnel training;
- c) recognizing and addressing the needs and expectations of complainants;
- d) providing complainants with an open, effective and easy-to-use complaints process;
- e) analysing and evaluating complaints to improve products, services and customer service quality;
- f) auditing of the complaint-handling process;
- g) reviewing and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaint-handling process;
- h) publicizing anonymized learning that has been implemented from complaints and other feedback.

This British Standard covers complaints made through any contact channel and is intended for use by organizations of all sizes and in all sectors. It includes complaints from any customer or user of the service, including businesses.

This British Standard does not apply to disputes that are referred for resolution outside the organization or for employment-related disputes.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this British Standard, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1 alternative dispute resolution

external service provided for settling disputes, between an organization and its complainants, as an alternative to taking action in the civil courts

2.2 complainant

person, organization, or its representative, making a complaint

[SOURCE: BS ISO 10002:2014, 3.1]

2.3 complaint

expression of dissatisfaction made to an organization, related to its products, services, practices, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or a resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected

[SOURCE: BS ISO 10002:2014, 3.2, modified]

NOTE Organizations may also want to consider for insight purposes any general comments left on social media sites where a response is not expected.

2.4 customer

organization or person that receives a product or service

EXAMPLE Consumer, client, end-user, retailer, beneficiary, and purchaser.

[SOURCE: BS EN ISO 9000:2005, 3.3.5, modified – Note has been deleted]