

Complaints management – What’s the point?

We recently overheard a Director exclaim: Complaining Customers Cost Money, so get rid of them!

One client we met was proud to open the discussion by telling us that they were proud of reducing complaints by 40% - “How did you do that” we enquired, (hoping that they would tell us about how they listened to their customers and continually improved processes and procedures as a direct result etc etc)

“We took the contact telephone number off the product...”

kerching! (We thought!)

Seriously though, if you don’t listen to your customers, you know what they will do:

They tell their friends and family, the local paper, national press and media, Citizens Advice, Watchdogs, their solicitor....internet postings...the list goes on...

As painful as it may sometimes seem, complaints management is simply a business/professional challenge similar to all those other challenges you face.

And just like all those other challenges, you need to develop effective strategies. Research proves that effectively dealing with complaints increases customer loyalty.....so “What’s the point?”

To embrace simple, logical, practical best practice guidelines, as those available from BS 8600-1999 can easily help to transform your effectiveness.

BS8600 – complaint management principles include:

- **Encouragement** – of expression of dissatisfaction
- **Ease** – of access and communication
- **Fairness** – To customers and staff
- **Trained** and empowered - staff
- **Documented and visible** – To all
- **Ownership** – At the highest levels

And critically, your complaints procedure should stimulate measurable continual improvement!

And another crucial challenge....

A complaint is: **“An expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not”**. So, you will almost certainly have more “complaints” than you are aware of and recording (and potentially using to continually improve your organisation’s processes!)

So, now you know **what the point is**, a quite astonishingly brilliant business tool, from an often-unexpected source!

Martin Gilhooly has a sheer passion for customer service excellence and specialises in Complaints management training and consultancy and difficult (and aggressive) customer handling.

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