

“Great news boss, I’ve managed to double our complaints volumes”!

Well, the boss did tell me to transform our complaints practice and make it world class!

Why is he going red in the face, and what’s that steam coming out of his ears?

The simple unavoidable fact is that to be aligned to best practice, most organisations would find that their **complaints volumes would increase dramatically** if they captures all such expressions by their customers.

So often we hear about complaints procedures which only capture “formal” complaints. We hear figures quoted which as such are **fundamentally flawed**, as they only represent the tip of the iceberg.

It doesn’t need massive IT investment, it doesn’t need huge amounts of additional keying into the PC to capture more of what your customers are telling you.

The chances are, each contact your customer has with you can be classified into several different groups.

As an example, imagine you worked for a Housing Association, serving several thousand clients.

It is likely that the clients will contact you about a wide range of issues. They will contact you in a number of ways, for example, through a customer service centre,

either by phone or face to face. They will have interaction with a number of different departments, including repair staff, rent advisors, field staff etc etc

Each contact can be grouped into "contact categories", for example:

- Requests
- Enquiries
- Queries
- Compliments
- Notifications
- Dissatisfaction expressions

So, in the Housing Association, the following would be easy to group:

Repair request, is a **request!**

A call to ask when the new window replacement programme is due to start, is an **enquiry**

A conversation exploring the detail of a housing application may be a **query**

Telling the organisation how well you have been looked after, is a **compliment**

Writing to advise a change of circumstances is a **notification**

Contact to mention that a service promised had not been delivered, or an application deadline had now passed without contact, or a member of staff had been abrupt.....

These are all dissatisfaction expressions, i.e.

COMPLAINTS

If each contact can be allocated a contact category, then over a day/week/month and year, you can start to see the real picture, by isolating and analysing the dissatisfaction contacts, because, **these are your complaints!**

It's relatively easy for this to be done in the customer service centre, and if this is the dominant channel of contact, then you can capture most of your contact data.

Ideally, you will strive to capture this intelligence from all customer "touch points", and this may be most practically done by holding feedback focus groups.

Add to this intelligence, the formal complaints, and you will probably have a good picture of what your customers are telling you.

You now have the stimulus for continual improvement, and its action plan time!

Providing a business case, to justify all the effort of capturing all this new data, may well be requested.

Simply, if each dissatisfaction contact could be prevented, just calculate the savings in call answering alone.

Most companies we work with have between 30% and 60% preventable calls, such calls are only received because something has gone wrong. The savings can be immense, and improvements in satisfaction impressive, leading to increased loyalty and profitability/reputation enhancements!

So, off you go, increase your complaints!

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