

Basic Steps for Effective Complaint Management

1 - Designate a Location to Receive Complaint

Consumers need to know where and how to file complaints or make inquiries.

Select a place to receive complaints that is visible and accessible to consumers.

Publicize the complaint system to encourage consumers to voice their dissatisfaction and to make the good intentions of the company apparent.

2 - Develop a System for Record-keeping

Prepare forms for recording, categorizing and filing complaint records. Design the system to perform functions such as the following:

- communicating complaint data to top management;
- permitting swift identification and response when complaints need to be reported to other departments or companies in the distribution network, or to law enforcement or regulatory agencies;
- providing market research through complaint trends; and
- enabling management to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the complaint management system

3 - Process and Record Complaints

- Log in the complaint and any relevant data.
- Categorize it for resolution and record-keeping. Categories must be clearly defined and exclusive of one another. Assign the complaint to one person for handling.
- Forward the complaint to another level of authority, if appropriate.

4 - Acknowledge Complaint

Consumers do not register complaints with only a casual interest in their disposition. Complaining involves some inconvenience and, possibly, expense. Loyal customers with strong feelings are often involved. Personalize the response. Talk to the customer, if possible, by phone or in person. Use letters when necessary, but avoid impersonal form letters. Take extra time, if needed, to help consumers with special needs, such as language barriers.

5 - Investigate and Analyze the Complaint

- Be fair.
- Get both sides of the story.
- Keep records in the complaint file of all meetings, conversations or findings.

6 - Resolve the Problem as per Policy

- Resolve the Problem in a Manner Consistent with Company Policy
- Forward the complaint to the appropriate level of authority for resolution.
- Keep the consumer informed through progress reports.
- Notify the consumer promptly of a proposed settlement.

7 - Follow-Up

- Find out if the consumer is satisfied with the resolution. Was it carried out? Refer the complaint to a third-party dispute-resolution mechanism, if necessary.
- Cooperate with the third-party

8 - Prepare and File a Report

- Prepare and File a Report on the Disposition of the Complaint, and Periodically Analyze and Summarize Complaints
- Circulate complaint statistics and action proposals to appropriate departments.
- Develop an action plan for complaint prevention.
- Make sure the consumer viewpoint is given appropriate consideration in company decision making