



COMPLAINTS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Background

It is a requirement of ISO9001: 2008 and of our own operating procedure that we have a formal process for dealing with complaints.

What is a complaint?

The BSI defines it as " ... any expression of dissatisfaction by a customer with a product or service, however small, whether considered justified or not....".

Our policy is to deal with all expressions of dissatisfaction openly, quickly and responsively.

In many cases, expressions of dissatisfaction are made (often orally) during the normal course of managing and operating a project for a client. These will usually be resolved by the relevant project manager and documented through e-mails and contact reports.

In some cases, however, the nature of the dissatisfaction may be more significant, the problem may have wider consequences for our business or we receive a formal written expression of dissatisfaction. In these instances we have a more formal process for resolving, recording, and reviewing such issues.

The decision whether to treat a problem as a formal complaint is the responsibility for the senior manager in the area of the business affected by the issue in question.

Some things to take into account when deciding to treat an issue as a formal complaint are:

- The degree of impact (e.g. financial, reputation, continuation of the project) of the cause of dissatisfaction (the greater the impact the greater the benefit of dealing with it as a complaint)
- Whether the cause was a failure of the process (which may need reviewing and changing)
- Whether the cause was a failure in the training of staff.

All written complaints from clients should be dealt with using this formal process.

What is the process for handling complaints?

Where a complaint has been identified our process requires it to be:

1. Formally recorded and notified to the Client Satisfaction Manager.
2. Properly investigated and reviewed by the responsible manager to understand the causes of the complaint.
3. Corrective and preventive actions identified including who will be responsible for implementing them.
4. An appropriate response sent to the client in writing (including an explanation of the agreed preventive action).
5. Signed off by relevant Account Director and Director.
6. Copies of relevant supporting documentation to be kept on the job file and a copy given to the Client Satisfaction Manager for a central complaints file.

Complaints are analysed and reviewed quarterly at the Client Satisfaction review meeting and then twice a year by the Directors at the Quality Management review meeting.

Why should we invest the time and effort in managing complaints in this way?

There are several benefits to handling complaints in this way.

- It demonstrates commitment to quality and continuous improvement to the client
- More resources are provided to help you deal with the issue
- More likely to lead to process improvements which have wider benefit to the business
- Can help identify particular trends over time

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