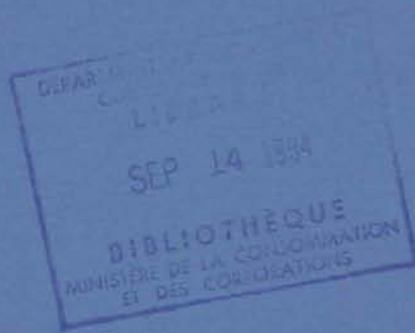


COMPLAINT HANDLING CHECKLIST



Consumer Services

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada

May 1984

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COMPLAINT HANDLING CHECKLIST

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WHAT

THE COMPLAINT HANDLING CHECKLIST has been designed to enable you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your complaint management system. It consists of 36 statements that describe the major attributes of a well designed complaint handling system. The checklist has been produced as a self-diagnostic tool that allows you to compare your company's performance with the "ideal".

HOW

A rating scale from 1 to 5 allows you to compare your company's performance with each statement. However, because of the specific structure and size of your organization, 1 or 2 statements may not apply to your firm. You need not assign a rating to those points in the checklist; your score will be adjusted accordingly. To obtain a comprehensive assessment of your complaint handling system however, you should respond to as many statements as possible.

The checklist's 36 statements appear in 6 different sections:

- 1) Policies and Procedures
- 2) Accessibility and Responsiveness of the System
- 3) Organization of Your Complaint Handling System
- 4) Staffing and Training
- 5) Collecting and Using Complaint Data
- 6) Evaluation and Planning.

By totalling your points for each section and comparing them with the total possible score for each section (determined by the number of questions answered, multiplied by 5) you will be able to determine which aspects of your complaint management system require review and possible revision.

The last page of the checklist allows you to calculate your overall rating in percentage terms, by entering and adding the totals noted for each section. To interpret your score, you may refer to the grid that follows.

WHO

THE COMPLAINT HANDLING CHECKLIST should be completed by the member of management responsible for overseeing the company's complaint management system (depending on the company, this may be the chief of consumer relations, marketing, or credit) with the possible assistance of a staff member knowledgeable about the day-to-day operation of the system.

For small companies, the CHECKLIST may be completed by the store manager or owner.

SOME
TERMS

For your information, the definitions of five terms that are used in the checklist follow:

Complaint logging in - The physical exercise of noting all complaints received by the company.

Complaint acknowledging - The acknowledgement by the company to the complainant that the complaint has been received.

Complaint handling policy - A general statement regarding the company's commitment to customer satisfaction and the importance of treating complaints fairly and consistently.

Complaint handling procedures - Specific guidelines regarding the manner in which complaints should be handled by the staff of the company.

Complaint - Any problem expressed by the customer concerning dissatisfaction with a product or service - from refunds and exchanges, that may be handled directly by sales personnel, to more complex problems that may be referred to supervisors or more senior levels of management.

COMPLAINT HANDLING CHECKLIST

RATING SCALE

- 1 Company performance does not correspond to the statement at all.
- 2 To correspond to the statement a major improvement in company performance is in order.
- 3 To correspond to the statement a moderate improvement in company performance is in order.
- 4 To correspond to the statement a slight improvement in company performance is in order.
- 5 The statement exactly describes company performance.

Evaluate your score from 1 to 5 and write it in the following squares
If the question does not apply, leave the space blank.

I. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

You have developed procedures for your complaint handling system that:

- 1. Include specific guidelines to be followed for receiving complaints
- 2. Specify the types of complaints that must be referred to a superior, head office, another department, manufacturer, service outlet etc.
- 3. Include specific guidelines to be followed for resolving complaints.
- 4. Set time limits for the resolution of complaints.
- 5. Identify those staff members charged with the responsibility for handling complaints.
- 6. Your complaint handling procedures are written and communicated to all relevant personnel.
- 7. You have established a company policy that reflects a strong commitment to consumer satisfaction.
- 8. Your company policy is written, and communicated to employees throughout the company.

Add up the points from this section and indicate your score here _____

Multiply by 5 the number of questions you have answered to obtain the total possible score for this section. Enter the total possible score here. _____

Evaluate your score from 1 to 5 and write it in the following squares.
If the question does not apply, leave the space blank.
Please use the rating scale that appears on page 1.

II. ACCESSIBILITY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF THE SYSTEM

In cases where a complaint cannot be handled immediately and in person, you have a system in place for communicating with customers promptly and personally (by phone or personalized letter):

1. To acknowledge the receipt of written complaints
2. To inform customers about the resolution of their complaints
3. To determine whether the customer is satisfied with the resolution of a complaint
4. To provide customers with progress reports in cases where their complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable period of time
5. You encourage customers that are dissatisfied with the initial resolution of a complaint to appeal to a higher authority within the company.
6. You make use of existing third party agencies (Better Business Bureau, Retail Association) to arbitrate, conciliate or mediate disputes that cannot be satisfactorily dealt with in-house.
7. Responsibility and authority for complaint processing and review is assigned to one individual (or department) who is accessible to consumers at all times during store hours.
8. You make it as easy as possible for customers to lodge complaints by telling them where, how and to whom to complain (eg. via posted signs, advertising, etc.).

Add up the point from this section and indicate your score here _____

Multiply by 5 the number of questions you have answered to obtain the total possible score for this section. Enter the total possible score here. _____

Evaluate your score from 1 to 5 and write it in the following squares.
If the question does not apply, leave the space blank.
Please use the rating scale that appears on page 1.

III. ORGANIZATION OF YOUR COMPLAINT HANDLING SYSTEM

1. A member of top management oversees the complaint handling system and has significant decision making influence within the company (eg. to advise on company policy or to discontinue a product line in response to complaints)
2. Staff members responsible for handling complaints provide input into complaint management policy (eg. offering suggestions for action to prevent recurring problems)
3. Your complaint management system is coordinated with manufacturers, suppliers and service outlets to ensure that complaints are resolved satisfactorily and information concerning complaint trends shared.
4. If complaints must be handled by different divisions within your company, or referred to manufacturers' service outlets, they are coordinated and followed up by complaint handling staff.

Add up the points from this section and indicate your score here. _____

Multiply by 5 the number of questions you have answered to obtain the total possible score for this section. Enter the total possible score here. _____

IV STAFFING AND TRAINING: Section A is intended for businesses with complaint handling departments. If you do not have a complaint handling department, answer the questions in Section B instead.

Evaluate your score from 1 to 5 and write it in the following squares. If the question does not apply, leave the space blank. Please use the rating scale that appears on page 1.

Section A

- 1. Complaint handling staff are carefully selected in terms of their experience and patience.
- 2. Complaint handling staff have equal stature with other professionals in the company.
- 3. Complaint handling staff receive training in:
 - a) complaint handling procedures and consumer protection laws
 - b) communication skills and corporate operating policies

Add up the points from this section and indicate your score here. _____

Multiply by 5 the number of questions you have answered to obtain the total possible score for this section. Enter the total possible score here. _____

Evaluate your score from 1 to 5 and write it in the following squares. If the question does not apply, leave the space blank. Please use the rating scale that appears on page 1.

Section B

- 1. Sales personnel are either properly trained to handle complaints or able to refer customers to someone who can help.
- 2. Where sales staff handle complaints, they are recognized and awarded for commendable complaint handling performance as well as for their performance in sales.
- 3. Staff members with the responsibility for handling complaints receive training in:
 - a) complaint handling procedures and consumer protection laws
 - b) communication skills and corporate operating policies

Add up the points from this section and indicate your score here. _____

Multiply by 5 the number of questions you have answered to obtain the total possible score for this section. Enter the total possible score here. _____

Evaluate your score from 1 to 5 and write it in the following squares.
If the question does not apply, leave the space blank.
Please use the rating scale that appears on page 1.

V. COLLECTING AND USING COMPLAINT DATA

- 1. Standardized complaint forms are developed in order to collect all necessary information from the customer the first time the customer complains.
- 2. You have a record-keeping system in place for monitoring the status of all complaints (eg. resolved, referred, in progress).
- 3. Complaints are "logged in" according to clearly defined categories that allow for quick analysis of complaint trends.
- 4. You use your complaint statistics to periodically prepare reports on complaint trends that are forwarded to all divisions of company management.

Complaint trend reports are used by management to:

- 5. Identify and prevent emerging problems
- 6. Serve as a basis for quality control of products and services.

Add up the points from this section and indicate your score here _____

Multiply by 5 the number of questions you have answered to obtain the total possible score for this section. Enter the total possible score here. _____

Evaluate your score from 1 to 5 and write it in the following squares.
If the question does not apply, leave the space blank.
Please use the rating scale that appears on page 1.

VI. EVALUATION AND PLANNING

You periodically review your complaint management system by:

1. Examining your complaint records to determine the percentage of satisfactorily resolved complaints
2. Examining your complaint records to determine the timing and quality of responses to consumers
3. Observing the in-person, telephone and letter writing performance of your complaint handling staff.
4. Surveying your customers concerning their satisfaction with your complaint handling system.

You use this review data to:

5. Make improvements in your complaint management system.
6. Formulate plans for dealing with future complaint-handling needs including an appropriate budget and sufficient staffing, based on projected workload and performance standards.

Add up the points from this section and indicate your score here. _____ →

Multiply by 5 the number of questions you have answered to obtain the total possible score for this section. Enter the total possible score here. _____ →

TO CALCULATE YOUR OVERALL RATING:

1. Add up your sectional scores and place the total in Box #1
2. Add up the total possible scores for each of the six sections and place the total in Box #2
3. Divide the total in Box #1 by the total in Box #2 and multiply by 100. This will give you your overall rating in percentage terms.

	I Policies & Procedures	II Accessibility & Responsiveness of the system	III Organization of Your Complaint Handling System	IV Staffing & Training	V Collecting & Using Complaint Date	VI Evaluation & Planning
Sectional Score	+	+	+	+	+	+
Total Possible Score	+	+	+	+	+	+

Total Sectional Score

Total Possible Score

Overall Rating

Box #1

÷

Box #2

x 100 =

%

INTERPRETING YOUR SCORE:

- If you scored:
- 80% - 100%: Your complaint handling system appears to be comprehensive & effective.
 - 60% - 80%: Your complaint handling system appears to be reasonably comprehensive. However, some elements may require re-evaluation with your staff/management and possible adjustment.
 - less than : Its appears that your complaint handling policies need to be thoroughly re-examined. Senior management should probably give it priority attention. It may be affecting your competitive position.
60%

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DATE DUE
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