
**Quality management — Customer
satisfaction — Guidelines for complaints
handling in organizations**

*Management de la qualité — Satisfaction des clients — Lignes
directrices pour le traitement des réclamations dans les organismes*

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Published in Switzerland

Contents

	Page
1 Scope	1
2 Normative references	1
3 Terms and definitions	1
4 Guiding principles	2
4.1 General	2
4.2 Visibility	3
4.3 Accessibility	3
4.4 Responsiveness	3
4.5 Objectivity	3
4.6 Charges	3
4.7 Confidentiality	3
4.8 Customer-focused approach	3
4.9 Accountability	3
4.10 Continual improvement	3
5 Complaints-handling framework	4
5.1 Commitment	4
5.2 Policy	4
5.3 Responsibility and authority	4
6 Planning and design	5
6.1 General	5
6.2 Objectives	5
6.3 Activities	6
6.4 Resources	6
7 Operation of complaints-handling process	6
7.1 Communication	6
7.2 Receipt of complaint	6
7.3 Tracking of complaint	7
7.4 Acknowledgement of complaint	7
7.5 Initial assessment of complaint	7
7.6 Investigation of complaints	7
7.7 Response to complaints	7
7.8 Communicating the decision	7
7.9 Closing the complaint	7
8 Maintenance and improvement	7
8.1 Collection of information	7
8.2 Analysis and evaluation of complaints	8
8.3 Satisfaction with the complaints-handling process	8
8.4 Monitoring of the complaints-handling process	8
8.5 Auditing of the complaints-handling process	8

8.6 Management review of the complaints-handling process	9
8.7 Continual improvement	9
Annex A (informative) Guidance for small businesses	10
Annex B (informative) Form for complainant	11
Annex C (informative) Objectivity	12
Annex D (informative) Complaint follow-up form	14
Annex E (informative) Responses	17
Annex F (informative) Escalation flowchart	18
Annex G (informative) Continual monitoring	20
Annex H (informative) Audit	22
Bibliography	23

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 10002 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 176, *Quality management and quality assurance*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Supporting technologies*.

NOTE ISO 10002 was circulated for vote as DIS 10018.

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Introduction

0.1 General

This International Standard provides guidance for the design and implementation of an effective and efficient complaints-handling process for all types of commercial or non-commercial activities, including those related to electronic commerce. It is intended to benefit an organization and its customers, complainants and other interested parties.

The information obtained through the complaints-handling process can lead to improvements in products and processes and, where the complaints are properly handled, can improve the reputation of the organization, regardless of size, location and sector. In a global marketplace, the value of an International Standard becomes more evident since it provides confidence in the consistent treatment of complaints.

An effective and efficient complaints-handling process reflects the needs of both the organizations supplying products and those who are the recipients of those products.

NOTE Throughout the text of this International Standard, wherever the term "product" is used, it can also mean "service".

The handling of complaints through a process as described in this International Standard can enhance customer satisfaction. Encouraging customer feedback, including complaints if customers are not satisfied, can offer opportunities to maintain or enhance customer loyalty and approval, and improve domestic and international competitiveness.

Implementation of the process described in this International Standard can

- provide a complainant with access to an open and responsive complaints-handling process,
- enhance the ability of the organization to resolve complaints in a consistent, systematic and responsive manner, to the satisfaction of the complainant and the organization,
- enhance the ability of an organization to identify trends and eliminate causes of complaints, and improve the organization's operations,
- help an organization create a customer-focused approach to resolving complaints, and encourage personnel to improve their skills in working with customers, and
- provide a basis for continual review and analysis of the complaints-handling process, the resolution of complaints, and process improvements made

Organizations may wish to use the complaints-handling process in conjunction with customer satisfaction codes of conduct and external dispute resolution processes.

0.2 Relationship with ISO 9001:2000 and ISO 9004:2000

This International Standard is compatible with ISO 9001 and ISO 9004 and supports the objectives of these two standards through the effective and efficient application of a complaints-handling process. It can also be used independently of them.

ISO 9001 specifies requirements for a quality management system that can be used for internal application by organizations, or for certification, or for contractual purposes. The process for complaints handling described in this International Standard can be used as an element of a quality management system.

This International Standard is not intended for certification or for contractual purposes.

ISO 9004 provides guidance on continual improvement of performance. The use of ISO 10002 can further enhance performance in the area of complaints handling and increase the satisfaction of customers and other interested parties. It can also facilitate the continual improvement of the quality of products based on feedback from customers and other interested parties.

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Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations

1 Scope

This International Standard provides guidance on the process of complaints handling related to products within an organization, including planning, design, operation, maintenance and improvement. The complaints-handling process described is suitable for use as one of the processes of an overall quality management system.

This International Standard is not applicable to disputes referred for resolution outside the organization or for employment-related disputes.

It is also intended for use by organizations of all sizes and in all sectors. Annex A provides guidance specifically for small businesses.

This International Standard addresses the following aspects of complaints handling:

- a) enhancing customer satisfaction by creating a customer-focused environment that is open to feedback (including complaints), resolving any complaints received, and enhancing the organization's ability to improve its product and customer service;
- b) top management involvement and commitment through adequate acquisition and deployment of resources, including personnel training;
- c) recognizing and addressing the needs and expectations of complainants;
- d) providing complainants with an open, effective and easy-to-use complaints process;
- e) analysing and evaluating complaints in order to improve the product and customer service quality;
- f) auditing of the complaints-handling process;
- g) reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints-handling process.

This International Standard is not intended to change any rights or obligations provided by applicable statutory or regulatory requirements.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 9000:2000, *Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 9000 and the following apply.

NOTE In ISO 9000:2000, definition 3.4.2, "product" is defined as the "result of a process" which encompasses four generic product categories: services, software, hardware, and processed materials. Throughout the text of this International Standard, wherever the term "product" is used, it can also mean "service".

ISO 10002:2004(E)

3.1

complainant

person, organization or its representative, making a complaint

3.2

complaint

expression of dissatisfaction made to an organization, related to its products, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected

3.3

customer

organization or person that receives a product

EXAMPLE Consumer, client, end-user, retainer, beneficiary and purchaser.

[ISO 9000:2000, definition 3.3.5]

3.4

customer satisfaction

customer's perception of the degree to which the customer's requirements have been fulfilled

NOTE Adapted from ISO 9000:2000, definition 3.1.4. The Notes have been deleted.

3.5

customer service

interaction of the organization with the customer throughout the life cycle of a product

3.6

feedback

opinions, comments and expressions of interest in the products or the complaints-handling process

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3.7

interested party

person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organization

NOTE Adapted from ISO 9000:2000, definition 3.3.7. The Example and Note have been deleted.

3.8

objective

-complaints-handling something sought, or aimed for, related to complaints handling

3.9

policy

-complaints-handling overall intentions and direction of the organization related to complaints handling, as formally expressed by top management

3.10

process

set of interrelated or interacting activities which transforms inputs into outputs

NOTE Adapted from ISO 9000:2000, definition 3.4.1. The Notes have been deleted.

4 Guiding principles

4.1 General

Adherence to the guiding principles set out in 4.2 to 4.10 is recommended for effective handling of complaints.

4.2 Visibility

Information about how and where to complain should be well publicized to customers, personnel and other interested parties.

4.3 Accessibility

A complaints-handling process should be easily accessible to all complainants. Information should be made available on the details of making and resolving complaints. The complaints-handling process and supporting information should be easy to understand and use. The information should be in clear language. Information and assistance in making a complaint should be made available (see Annex B), in whatever languages or formats that the products were offered or provided in, including alternative formats, such as large print, Braille or audiotape, so that no complainants are disadvantaged.

4.4 Responsiveness

Receipt of each complaint should be acknowledged to the complainant immediately. Complaints should be addressed promptly in accordance with their urgency. For example, significant health and safety issues should be processed immediately. The complainants should be treated courteously and be kept informed of the progress of their complaint through the complaints-handling process.

4.5 Objectivity

Each complaint should be addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner through the complaints-handling process (see Annex C).

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4.6 Charges

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Access to the complaints-handling process should be free of charge to the complainant.

4.7 Confidentiality

Personally identifiable information concerning the complainant should be available where needed, but only for the purposes of addressing the complaint within the organization and should be actively protected from disclosure, unless the customer or complainant expressly consents to its disclosure.

4.8 Customer-focused approach

The organization should adopt a customer-focused approach, should be open to feedback including complaints, and should show commitment to resolving complaints by its actions.

4.9 Accountability

The organization should ensure that accountability for and reporting on the actions and decisions of the organization with respect to complaints handling is clearly established.

4.10 Continual improvement

The continual improvement of the complaints-handling process and the quality of products should be a permanent objective of the organization.

5 Complaints-handling framework

5.1 Commitment

The organization should be actively committed to effective and efficient complaints handling. It is particularly important that this is shown by, and promoted from, the organization's top management.

A strong commitment to responding to complaints should allow both personnel and customers to contribute to the improvement of the organization's products and processes.

This commitment should be reflected in the definition, adoption and dissemination of policy and procedures for the resolution of complaints. Management commitment should be shown by the provision of adequate resources, including training.

5.2 Policy

Top management should establish an explicit customer-focused complaints-handling policy. The policy should be made available to, and known by, all personnel. The policy should also be made available to customers and other interested parties. The policy should be supported by procedures and objectives for each function and personnel role included in the process.

When establishing the policy and objectives for the complaints-handling process, the following factors should be taken into account:

- any relevant statutory and regulatory requirements;
- financial, operational and organizational requirements;
- the input of customers, personnel and other interested parties.

The policies related to quality and complaints handling should be aligned.

5.3 Responsibility and authority

5.3.1 Top management should be responsible for the following:

- a) ensuring that the complaints-handling process and objectives are established within the organization;
- b) ensuring that the complaints-handling process is planned, designed, implemented, maintained and continually improved in accordance with the complaints-handling policy of the organization;
- c) identifying and allocating the management resources needed for an effective and an efficient complaints-handling process;
- d) ensuring the promotion of awareness of the complaints-handling process and the need for a customer focus throughout the organization;
- e) ensuring that information about the complaints-handling process is communicated to customers, complainants, and, where applicable, other parties directly concerned in an easily accessible manner (see Annex C);
- f) appointing a complaints-handling management representative and clearly defining his or her responsibilities and authority in addition to the responsibilities and authority set out in 5.3.2;
- g) ensuring that there is a process for rapid and effective notification to top management of any significant complaints;
- h) periodically reviewing the complaints-handling process to ensure that it is effectively and efficiently maintained and continually improved.