
Development of service standards — Recommendations for addressing consumer issues

*Élaboration des normes de service — Recommandations pour
répondre aux attentes des consommateurs*

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (www.iso.org/patents) or the IEC list of patent declarations received (<http://patents.iec.ch>).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by the ISO Committee on Consumer Policy (COPOLCO).

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO/IEC Guide 76:2008), which has been technically revised.

The main changes compared to the previous edition are as follows:

- addition of consumer principles based on Consumers International's eight fundamental consumer rights;
- addition of basic elements of customer service and service provisions;
- integration of customer service and service provision elements with consumer principles within a table;
- updating of bibliographical references;
- addition of a “what, who/to whom, where, when, and how” approach to developing a service standard;
- simplification of the text to facilitate its use.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

0.1 Consumers are a key stakeholder group in the standards development process. This document gives writers of service standards the opportunity to understand the consumer perspective, even when a consumer representative cannot participate directly in the development process. It is intended for use by all those involved in the preparation and revision of all service standards.

0.2 Standards are increasingly being developed to cover services. This reflects the increasing importance of services to the economies of both developed and developing countries. Consumers are the end users of many services. Delivering services that address key consumer issues is essential to a successful business.

0.3 Taking the needs of consumers into account is likely to lead to a reduction in customer complaints and the business costs incurred because of poor service.

0.4 Consumers are individuals with different needs and characteristics. This document enables standards writers to prepare service standards that take the needs of all consumers into account, regardless of their circumstances or ability, including those who have different needs (e.g. children, older people, those with a disability, those from different ethnic and cultural heritages or those who can be in a vulnerable situation due to illness, bereavement or other personal circumstances).

NOTE The future ISO 22458 will cover inclusive service.

0.5 Consumers are individuals with different needs and characteristics, but collectively they are all world citizens. Standards developed in accordance with this document can help businesses to address public concerns at a global level, including ethical and environmental issues.

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Development of service standards — Recommendations for addressing consumer issues

1 Scope

This document provides guidance on how to meet the needs of consumers in the development of service standards. This document can be used by anyone involved in the development of service standards and can be applied to any service.

This document is relevant to the full range of services, whether or not a formal contract is entered into or purchase price paid. It also has relevance for public or charitable services, e.g. education, health and care provision, where a financial transaction has not necessarily taken place.

This document relates to the provision of services and therefore does not include specific reference to management systems or professional competence requirements.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions (standards.iteh.ai)

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1

access

usability of a product, *service* (3.11), environment or facility by people with the widest range of capabilities

3.2

accessible format

different presentation of information, which can make *services* (3.11) accessible to those with disabilities

3.3

complaint

<customer satisfaction> expression of dissatisfaction made to an organization, related to its product or *service* (3.11), or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.9.3]

3.4

contract

agreement by which one or more parties are obligated towards one or several other parties to provide a *service* (3.11)

Note 1 to entry: A contract can be binding, whether verbal or written.

3.5

consumer

individual member of the general public who is the end user of *services* (3.11) or service-related goods (e.g. a smart speaker)

Note 1 to entry: For the purposes of this document, use of the term “consumer” includes a range of potential and existing service users, e.g.

- those thinking about using or purchasing a service;
- those who have purchased a one-off service;
- those in a short- or long-term service *contract* (3.4);
- end-users of a service paying directly for the service;
- end users of a service not paying for the service.

Note 2 to entry: The end user might not be the *customer* (3.6) who purchased the service, e.g. persons having a meal at a restaurant that is paid for either by one person in this group or by a different person.

3.6

customer

organization or individual member of the general public purchasing or using *services* (3.11) for commercial, private or public purposes

Note 1 to entry: The customer has a direct interaction with the *service provider* (3.12). The customer can be the purchaser of the service, or in a *contract* (3.4) with the service provider. The customer is not necessarily the end user of a service.

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.3, modified — The words “purchasing property, products or services” have been replaced with “purchasing or using” and Note 1 to entry has been added.]

3.7

customer satisfaction

customer's (3.6) perception of the degree to which the *service provider* (3.12) has fulfilled the customer's requirements and expectations

Note 1 to entry: *Complaints* (3.3) are a common indicator of low customer satisfaction, but their absence does not necessarily imply high customer satisfaction.

Note 2 to entry: Even when customer requirements have been agreed with the customer and fulfilled, this does not necessarily ensure high customer satisfaction.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.9.2, modified — The words “the customer's expectations have been fulfilled” have been replaced by “the service provider has fulfilled the customer's requirements and expectations” and the original Note 1 to entry has been removed.]

3.8

customer service

interaction of an organization with the *customer* (3.6) throughout the phases of service provision and after sales *service* (3.11)

[SOURCE: ISO 10002:2018, 3.5, modified — The article “the” has been replaced with “an” before “organization” and the words “throughout the life cycle of a product or a service” have been replaced with “throughout the phases of service provision and after sales service”.]

3.9

consumer representative

individual or organization with the training and experience to advocate and represent the views of *consumers* (3.5), in order to protect consumer interests

3.10**feedback**

opinions, comments and expressions of interest in the *service* (3.11) or the complaints-handling process

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.9.1, modified — The phrase "product," before "service" has been removed.]

3.11**service**

activity, or set of activities, provided for the benefit, or to meet the needs, of a *consumer* (3.5)

Note 1 to entry: Services are generally intangible and often mutable.

Note 2 to entry: A service can be:

- stand-alone, or bundled with a product;
- provided by an organization or an individual;
- a short term, one-off or repeated interaction (e.g. a hotel or restaurant), or part of an ongoing, long term relationship [e.g. a mobile phone *contract* (3.4), mortgage or insurance policy];
- provided free of charge or against payment (in advance, in arrears, in instalments), either directly [e.g. to the *service provider* (3.12)] or indirectly (e.g. in the case of education, health or care services provided by a local authority).

Note 3 to entry: Due to the variety and complexity of some services, a different definition of a "service" can apply in some standards depending on the particular circumstances of the service being provided.

Note 4 to entry: The individual or organization acting as the service provider might offer more than a single service.

3.12**service provider**

entity that offers one or more *services* (3.11)

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Note 1 to entry: The entity can be an individual or an organization.

3.13**safeguard**

take precautions to prevent or reduce the impact of a failure in some aspect of service provision

3.14**consumer vulnerability**

state in which an individual can be placed at a disadvantage, or at risk of detriment, during his/her interaction with a *service provider* (3.12) due to the presence of personal, situational and market environment factors

Note 1 to entry: Anyone can be vulnerable at any time. Vulnerability can be temporary or permanent.

Note 2 to entry: Factors that contribute to consumer vulnerability can be personal (e.g. health, illness, injuries, disability, impairment) or situational (e.g. job loss, bereavement, low level of literacy).

Note 3 to entry: An organization's processes and procedures can reduce or exacerbate consumer vulnerability.

Note 4 to entry: A *consumer* (3.5) when vulnerable can:

- be at higher risk of experiencing negative outcomes when interacting with service providers;
- have limited ability to maximise his/her wellbeing;
- have difficulty in obtaining or assimilating information;
- be less able to buy, choose or access suitable *services* (3.11);
- be more susceptible to certain marketing practices.

3.15 personnel staff

persons responsible for delivering a *service* (3.11) on behalf of the *service provider* (3.12)

Note 1 to entry: Personnel can include volunteers, subcontractors and agents, as well as paid employees.

4 Using this document

4.1 Consumer interests in services

This document provides an overview of how consumer interests should be identified and taken into account in the development of standards for services.

4.2 Structure

This document outlines the process standards writers should follow to ensure that consumer interests are considered at all relevant stages of their work:

- [Clause 5](#) outlines a process for standards writers to use to address the key areas of consumer interest, including the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities. It also gives guidance on how to ensure consumer interests are considered in the process of making a standard.
- [Clause 6](#) identifies the key consumer issues to be addressed at all stages where there is an interaction between the service provider and the consumer.
- [Clause 7](#) describes how to apply the consumer principles to key elements of service.

4.3 Benefits of using this document ISO/IEC Guide 76:2020

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The application of this document can have widespread benefits for service standards writers, entities using those standards and the consumers that use those services, as outlined in [Table 1](#).

Table 1 — Benefits of using this document

To standards writers	To industry	To consumers
<input type="checkbox"/> Consumer insight — checklist of key consumer issues to include	<input type="checkbox"/> Give consumers what they want and need	<input type="checkbox"/> Better quality services — higher levels of satisfaction
<input type="checkbox"/> Expert advice — in line with best practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Keep existing customers and win new ones	<input type="checkbox"/> Safer, more accessible services
<input type="checkbox"/> Provides a template for writing standards — saves time and effort!	<input type="checkbox"/> More efficient processes — save money	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased transparency, e.g. costs, terms and conditions
<input type="checkbox"/> Holistic approach, e.g. reminding of relevant standards, legislation and key horizontal issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoid common problems and reduce complaints	<input type="checkbox"/> More effective redress systems
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure consistency	<input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced credibility and brand reputation	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased confidence and trust in service providers
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide mechanism for continuous improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain and enhance customer satisfaction	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased expectation that the services will meet the service provider's value proposition

5 Before starting work on a standard

When drafting a service standard, it is important to ensure that the document deals with all relevant aspects of the service. Before starting work, it can be helpful to think about the following questions:

- a) **What** does the service consist of?

This describes the core elements of the service provision and what is on offer to consumers. A service that offers something a consumer wants or needs is the main reason for consumers to consider using the service.

b) **Who** is the service provider?

The service provider is the individual or organization ultimately responsible for delivering the service to consumers. The service provider is responsible for complying with the agreed service level, regardless of whether other intermediaries have participated in the process.

c) **To whom** is the service provided?

The consumers receiving the service are those whose needs and expectations the service intends to fulfil. It is very important that their profile is clearly identified. The consumers can be individuals or a group, a person or an organization with legal entity. There can be consecutive service episodes with the service provider's objective being to satisfy all of them.

It can be necessary to narrow the range of consumers to whom the service is addressed. If there are consumers (e.g. children) to whom the service is not addressed, this should be indicated in the scope. Once the target group of consumers has been identified, research should be conducted to identify their needs and expectations. It is particularly important that research is done to identify the specific needs of consumers when vulnerable.

d) **Where** is the service provided?

The place, physical or virtual, where the service is provided. Is the natural, built or online environment safe and accessible? Will equipment need to be provided? If so, the safety and accessibility of the equipment will need to be addressed.

e) **When** is the service provided?

The moment or period of time when service provision is carried out. The beginning and termination of a service do not necessarily take place at a specific moment in time and can vary from one service sector to another. Service can be provided in the form of a single event (e.g. parcel delivery) or as a continuous provision (e.g. telephone line); it can be composed of just one single core service (e.g. selling ice cream) or several (e.g. accommodation) and can also include levels or options (e.g. premium or standard service).

f) **How** is the service provided?

The way in which the service is provided, including the methodology, sequence or process. Are personnel involved in the provision of the service? At what points of the service do personnel interact with consumers?

The process outlined in [Table 2](#) is intended to help ensure that key consumer issues are identified and addressed when developing a new service standard or at each revision of an existing one.

NOTE This process is based on one in ISO/IEC Guide 71.