



## What's in a Complaint? Pt.2

Last week, we introduced the idea of a complaints management system (CMS) and its role in improving your bottom line. This week, we will discuss the importance of publicizing your CMS and we detail the eight steps to managing complaints effectively.

### Why should I publicize my CMS?

To be successful, a CMS must be visible and to be effective, a CMS must also be easily accessible. Customers and staff alike will not log a complaint if the process takes half an hour. It is also important when publicizing a CMS to tell customers what are their responsibilities. This would ensure that people are not complaining about the wrong thing.

### Eight Basic steps for Effective Complaints Management

1. **Designate a location to receive complaints:**

Customers need to know where to go to make complaints, this must be clearly defined.

2. **Develop a system for record-keeping:**

If you are using a paper based system, forms must be created for recording, categorizing and filing complaints.

3. **Process and record complaints:**

Log all complaints with relevant data. It is always best to identify one person to handle a complaint. This makes for easy reference.

4. **Acknowledge complaints:**

It is always a good idea to acknowledge the complainant. People like to feel that their needs are being addressed so we must give the complainant our full attention.

5. **Investigate and analyze complaints:**

Carefully analyze the complaint, do not jump to conclusions and try to remain as unbiased as possible.

6. **Resolve the problem in a manner consistent with company policy:**

Always ensure that company guidelines are observed when resolving issues. It is never a good idea to circumvent company policy when trying to seek redress for a customer. This may sometimes back fire.

7. **Follow-up:**

After a complaint has been resolved, follow up with the customer to ensure that he/she is satisfied with the outcome. A simple phone call will do the trick and will show the customer you really care.

8. **Prepare and file a report on the complaint, and periodically analyze and summarize complaints:**

The information captured by the CMS is no good to anyone if it remains there. The information provided can result in an action plan for complaints resolution. It can also indicate possible problem areas and provide solutions. Remember, if you solve your customer's problems, they will remain your customers and that's the bottomline.