



REVIEW ARTICLE

Systematic Approach for Handling of Customer Complaints

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ABSTRACT

A complaint is an objection to something that is unfair, unacceptable, or otherwise not up to normal standards. Complaints may be about: Services, delivery, quality of product, communication, response time, documentation, billing, follow up etc. Unhappy customers are bad news for any company, and it only takes one of them to shatter a perfectly good day at work for everyone. A good complaint handling system in pharmaceutical companies gives an opportunity to improve the quality of the product. Complaint handling is Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) requirement, for that reason complaints concerning potentially defective products must be carefully reviewed. This review provides information on a systematic approach for handling complaints. Systematic handling of complaints maintains a good relationship between customer and company. A systematized approach to customer complaints handling: Increase levels of customer care, levels of customer satisfaction also monitoring of customer care, early identification of possible manufacturing problems.

KEYWORDS

Customer complaint, Customer satisfaction, Customer services

INTRODUCTION

Who is the customer? Customers could be internal or external. An internal customer is someone within your company who uses your product or services. And an external customer is an outside organization or individual that receives a product or service from company. If customer dissatisfied with your service, they will complain. Complaint is any communication, written or verbal, received directly from any customer, retailer, distributor, or representative of contract giver, regarding the quality attributes, labeling defects or any other matter such complaints shall be considered as market complaint. In pharmaceutical companies complaints may be related to quality of product,

Products identity, safety, effectiveness, performance, product packaging and labeling, etc. whatever matter it shows customer dissatisfaction, and complaint effects on companies reputation. Customer complaints are a fact of life in business, and dealing with them is an important part of maintaining customer satisfaction and company reputation. It finds that customer dissatisfaction through two mechanisms: Voice and Exit. If customer makes "Voice" they do complaints. "Exit" occurs when the customer stops using our products or services. To provide better customer service is a way of retaining the customer. Good customer service is important for ensuring that customers are satisfied.^{1,2}

Benefits of Complaint

- Customer complaint is one of the best opportunity to have foster customer loyalty

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- It can create a sales opportunity
- It gives the company an opportunity to improve the quality of the product
- It maintains committed relationship between the customer
- It is the regulatory obligation
- Implement Formal Complaint Program

When a company gathers and maintains data about complaints from customers, it is easier to implement a problem-solving process. A formal complaint handling process can improve customer satisfaction and result in increased customer loyalty. A formal program does not need to be complicated. A simple spreadsheet can easily track the type of complaint and the solution.

Types of Customer

At least five types of customers can be identified.³

1. The Meek Customer

Generally, will not complain. These types of customer will be most dangerous to company because they will most often complain to others. However, they will tell friends and relatives, may comment on a blog or web forum or may post the complaint on Facebook or other social networking site.

Your Response: Must work hard at soliciting comments and complaints and act appropriately to correct complaints.

2. The Aggressive Customer

Opposite of the Meek Customer. Readily complains, often loudly and at length.

Your Response: Listen completely, ask: “what else?” agree that a problem exists, and tell the customer what you can do for him or her. Don't focus on the negatives - focus on the possible.

What not to do: Be aggressive in return. This customer does not respond well to excuses or reasons why the product was unsatisfactory.

3. High Roller Customer

Expects the absolute best and is willing to pay for it. These are likely to complain in a reasonable manner, unless a hybrid of the Aggressive Customer. They are interested in results & what you are going to do to recover from the customer service breakdown.

Your Response: Always listen respectfully and actively question to fully determine cause.

4. Rip-Off Customer

The goal is not to get the complaint satisfied but rather to win by getting something the customer is not entitled to receive. A constant and repetitive “not good enough” response to efforts to satisfy this customer is a sure indicator of a rip-off artist.

Your Response: Remain unfailingly objective. Use accurate quantified data to back up your response. Be sure the adjustment is in keeping with what the organization would normally do under the circumstances. Consider asking “What can I do to make things right?” after the first “not good enough.”

5. Chronic Complainer Customer

Is never satisfied; feels there is always something wrong.

Your Response: Extreme patience is required. Listen carefully and never get angry. It is best to give sympathy, a sincere apology, and a promise to correct the situation.

Classification of Complaints

1. A-Type Complaints

Critical complaints in which product is required to be withdrawn from the market. Such as

- a. Adverse Drug Reaction.
- b. Major health hazard causing permanent deficiency or death.
- c. Purity & Safety.
- d. Potency.
- e. Product Stability

2. B-Type Complaints

Major complaints such as

- a. Problem with primary packaging of the product.
- b. Chemical / Physical attributes of the product.
- c. Extraneous contamination, mix-ups, etc.

3. C-Type Complaints

Minor complaints such as

- a. Problem related to labeling / coding of batch details.
- b. Shortages.
- c. Secondary packaging material problem, etc.

When You Receive a Complaint Think On Following Key Issues

1. Take every complaint seriously.
2. Never afford to snub a complainer.
3. The power of the internet and the media is such that you can never afford to snub a complainer even if you think it is a complete hoax. Sir Richard took this complaint very seriously and dealt with it personally.
4. Customer's perception is everything.
5. Customer perception is the way that customer usually view or feel about certain services and product. It can also be customer satisfaction which is the expectation of customer towards the product. Customers may switch supplier if they don't feel cared for.
6. Genuine complainers are looking for:
 - An apology
 - An explanation
 - A reassurance that this problem will not happen again
7. Build strong relationship with customer.
8. Take action quickly.

Rules of Complaints Handling for Organizations

Thank the Customer for Complaining

A complaint is a gift and you should consider yourself lucky that a customer is prepared to give up valuable time to help you improve your organization.

Train Your Staff and Management in Complaints Handling

Give them confidence to tackle the difficult customers and support in their actions. Excellent complaint handling isn't easy and can sometimes be stressful and feel unrewarding. Confirm its importance in providing great customer service.

Give Complaining Enough Priority and Authority

Staff should be aware that complaints are a top priority item for your operation, and ANYONE who deals with them must have sufficient authority to resolve them completely.

Ensure that You Can Process Complaints from All Sources

Nowadays there are 4 main ways to complain – in person, by telephone, by mail, by email/internet and your organization must be able to handle all of these efficiently.

Set up Process to Log and Analyze all Complaints and Share with Everyone

One can learn so much about problems with internal processes, training, specific employees/managers.

Say that you are Sorry that the Problem Has Happened

This is NOT an admission of guilt on your part, it's just good manners.

Examples of Poor Complaint Handling

- Not having any way for customers to make their complaints to you
- Not having a system to record complaints
- Failing to acknowledge there is a problem
- Not taking responsibility for the problem, and repeatedly giving the customer the run-around by making them deal with other staff

- Blaming the customer for the problem, or saying no-one else has complained
- Lack of knowledge of the problem
- Lack of knowledge of consumer law
- Taking too long to respond
- Having staff with no authority to make decisions to help the customer
- Offering no solution or offering a solution which is unlikely to resolve the problem
- Promising to contact the customer and not doing so

Responsibility

1. Production Head
2. Quality Assurance Head
3. Unit Head

Process for Complaint Handling

Manufacturers need to set up a designated unit and establish procedures for receiving, reviewing, and evaluating complaints. The procedures need to ensure that all complaints are processed in a uniform and timely manner, oral complaints are documented upon receipt, and complaints are evaluated promptly to determine whether they represent an event that must be reported to FDA.

Step I: Receiving

It is very important to have easy accessible channels with customers in order to receive the complaints. Customers are looking for their problem to be easy to report, acknowledged and dealt with quickly, sensitively, and fairly. Complaints may be lodged through a number of channels. There are 4 main channels to complain. Complainant can complain by using these channels: by person, telephone, letter, or by email/internet. A verbal complaint from a customer may be received over the telephone or in person by any employee; distributor. Verbal complaints include both face to face discussions and complaints received over the telephone.

All complaints shall be addressed to Quality Assurance Head. On receipt of complaint, QA

head shall document the details such as: name, address, phone number and e-mail of complainant. Product information such as: product name, batch number, manufacturing and expiry date, subject of complainant, amount of product etc.⁴

The company representative should request that the possibly defective product be sent to the company for further investigation.

Step II: Investigation

The QA unit is able to start the investigation, which can be divided in two phases:

Testing of Sample or Product Returned from the Customer

It consists of requesting the Quality Control (QC) laboratory to analyze both complaint samples and retained samples – the reserve samples representative of the lot manufactured. In QC laboratory analyst was done comparative testing of customer sample, which was already passed through distribution chain with the retained samples. If the customer did not send the complaint sample for analysis, the laboratory investigation will be carried out only with retained samples.

Review of the Documents

Production manager responsible for the checking all production record, packaging records and then send a written investigation report to QA head.

Complete Batch records must be verified by QA head in order to see if there was any nonconformance during the production that can explain or confirm the quality deviation.

After receiving the QC laboratory results and after performing the review of batch record investigation, the QA unit is able to finish the complaint investigation.

Step III: Corrective Actions

For all confirmed complaints, corrective actions must be implemented. These actions can range from a simple and quick training to some employees to a formal Corrective Action and Preventive Action (CAPA) handling. Corrective

action is one of the most important improvement activities. CAPA identifies actions needed to correct the causes of identified problems and seeks to eliminate permanently the causes of problems that have a negative impact on systems, processes and products. Corrective action involves finding the causes of some specific problem and then putting in place the necessary actions to avoid a reoccurrence. Preventive actions are aimed at preventing the occurrence of potential problems.⁵

Step IV: Feedback to Customers

The company must write a response letter to the complainant to explain the investigation approach taken, the results obtained and any implications, in case the quality problem was confirmed.

Customer complaints and returns are also extremely common customer service interactions. Providing good customer service for a customer with a return depends on two factors; your business's return policy and the way you and/or your staff interact with the customer during the return process.

CONCLUSION

All complaint shows customer is unsatisfied from your services. Product complaint handling is essential and critical component in the pharmaceutical company and having a good complaint handling system maintains a good relationship between customer and company. A systematic approach to customer complaints handling increase levels of customer care, levels of customer satisfaction also monitoring of customer care, early identification of possible manufacturing problems.

To get positive benefit from the complaint it is need to have right procedure to receive, investigate and resolve complaints. Customer complaints are important for a company because they help make the company better.

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