



Handling client complaints

*Getting negative feedback is not the end of the world.
Getting no feedback at all is far worse.*



6 steps to handling client complaints

Date: Wednesday November 20, 2024

Heaven forbid it should actually happen to you, but do you know what you would or should do if a client makes a complaint about you or your firm?

First off, it is only natural – fight or flight – for you to go on the defensive as soon as someone complains about you/your service(s). But that would be your first mistake!

Instead, stay calm and follow these prompts on how to best manage a client complaint.

Acknowledge the complaint

Regardless of whether you agree that the client has a valid complaint or not, acknowledge their complaint and let them know you are dealing with this in a respectful manner.

Listen carefully

Allow the client to express their concerns without interruption. Interrupting the client in full rage will only increase their displeasure, even if this means you have to take the full force of a storm you know is not your doing.

Ask questions

Ask questions to try and get to the root of what the complaint is really about. Sometimes

clients complain about one thing when the real cause of the complaint is actually something else. So, make sure you ask open-ended questions that will help you determine what the real issue is.

Act fast

Do not listen to a client complain and then take 3 weeks to get back to them about it! Action an investigation into the complaint quickly and respond as soon as you can – providing regular progress updates along the way.

Empathise

Put yourself in the client's shoes and acknowledge how they must be feeling about the issue. Make sure your team is able to see the situation from the client's side of the fence, not just theirs!

Take responsibility

Apologise for how the situation may have arisen and offer solutions to the issue. Once resolved, ask if the solution is satisfactory to maintaining a [trusted relationship](#).

Keep in mind that getting negative feedback from your client is not the end of the world – getting no feedback at all is far worse.

Why? Because when you get negative feedback, it opens the door to a line of communication that should help you fix the problem and [maintain an ongoing relationship with the client](#).

Getting no feedback from a dissatisfied client results in you never hearing from them again AND not knowing why that is the case.

The takeaway

You need to promote a feedback-friendly culture in your firm if you want to understand why clients are both happy and unhappy with the service you are providing.

If all else fails, put a copy of Starbucks's 'LATTE Rule' in the staff canteen:

Listen to the customer;

Acknowledge the problem;

Take action and solve the problem;

Thank the customer;

Explain what you did.

The information contained in this article is of general nature and should not be construed as legal advice. If you require further information, advice or assistance for your specific circumstances, please contact us.