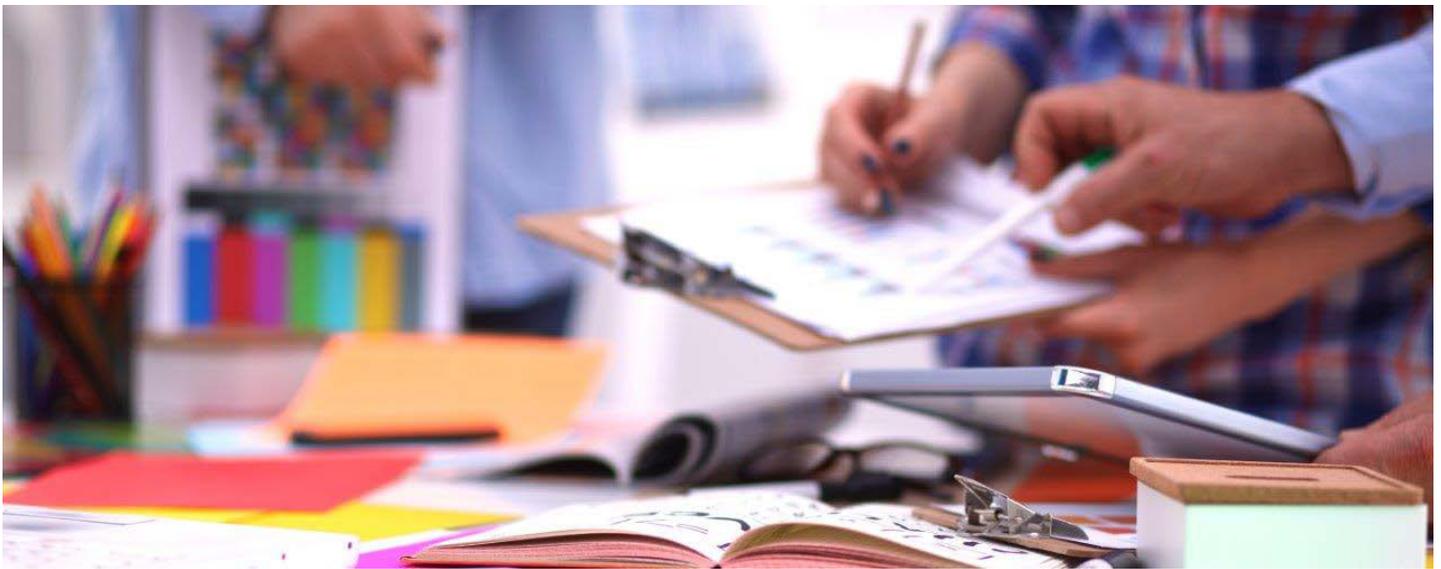


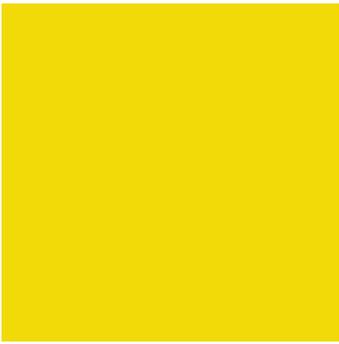
Handling Complaints



A short guide to handling complaints

This brochure contains key information about complaints handling.

For a more detailed guide to complaints, access the Complaints Toolkit at <http://socap.org.au/small-business-complaints-toolkit/>



“If you make customers unhappy in the physical world, they might each tell six friends. If you make customers unhappy on the internet, they can each tell 6,000 friends”

– Jeff Bezos, amazon.com

Complaints are important

Businesses are paying more attention to complaints handling. This is because:

- Good complaints processes can help businesses build their brand and improve their services (Sourdin, 2012)
- Badly handled complaints can cost time and money
- Poor complaint handling can mean that you end up in court or a tribunal
- A bad experience, followed by bad complaints handling can damage your business and your reputation
- Having good complaints processes also means that you will know earlier if there is a problem with your goods, services or people

Responding to complaints

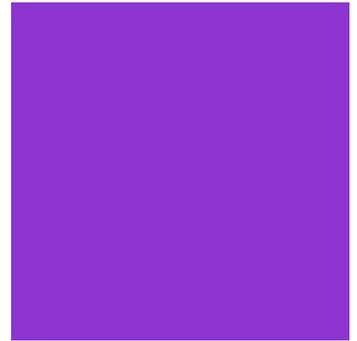


Top four customer expectations when making a complaint:

- The complaint will be dealt with quickly
- It will be taken seriously
- The other person will respond with empathy
- There will be an apology

Some tips for using social media for complaints handling:

1. **Be prepared:** when you set up your social media accounts, prepare rules and flow sheets for staff to ensure they all know how to respond to complaints.
2. **Make sure you listen carefully to the complaint and really understand their problem, before you respond.**
3. **Respond quickly, within a day.** This shows that your business really cares about its customers.
4. **Apologise first, by saying: 'I'm sorry for your bad experience,' followed by that person's first name. Make sure your tone is positive. Remember, that you can build loyalty and trust by responding to complaints with a positive message. (Sourdin, 2012) There have been many studies done on the effectiveness of apologies.**
5. **For guidance on how to make a meaningful apology when someone complains, see this link:**
http://www.spsso.org.uk/sites/spsso/files/communications_material/leaflets_buj/2011_March_SPSO%20Guidance%20on%20Apology.pdf
6. **Thank your customers for making the effort and bringing the problem or situation to your attention. Remember that each complaint is a chance to learn more about your business, fix problems, and make customers happy. You can also thank them by giving them something in return (for example, a voucher).**



Talking to customers and clients

Communication is key when responding to complaints. You can use the LEARNT six step process (below) to respond to complaints in person or in writing.

LEARNT process for dealing with complaints



Tips:

- Regularly check you social networking sites for complaints
- When writing a letter to acknowledge receipt of a complaint, make sure language is clear and polite and that it includes all the customer's issues, what you have done so far, any next steps or ongoing action and a timeframe for when they can expect to hear from you
- Consider whether the person making the complaint has difficulties and how to best meet their specific needs (eg if a person is deaf, work out the best way to contact them other than via telephone)
- If progress on a complaint is delayed, tell the complainant as soon as you can

Record Keeping

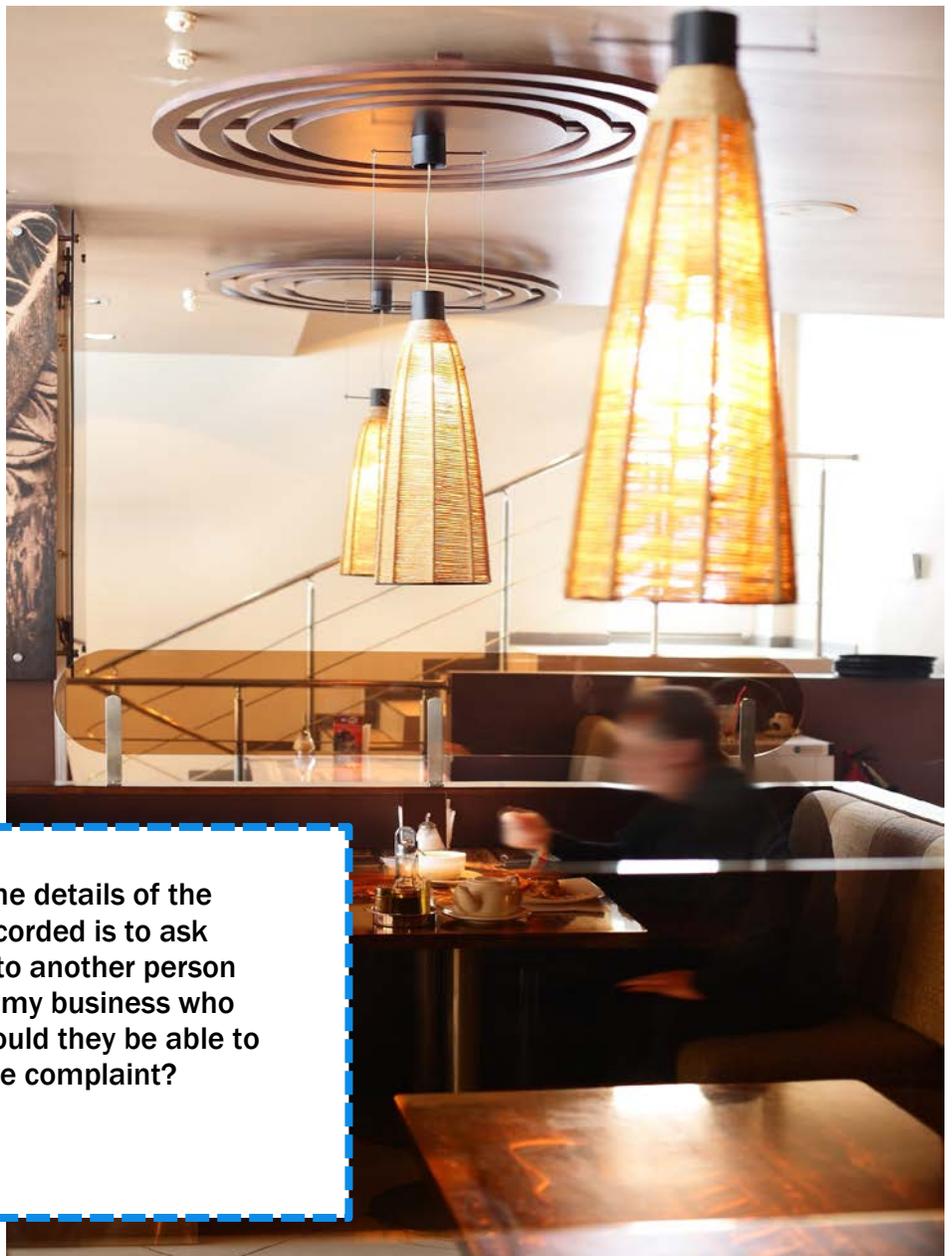
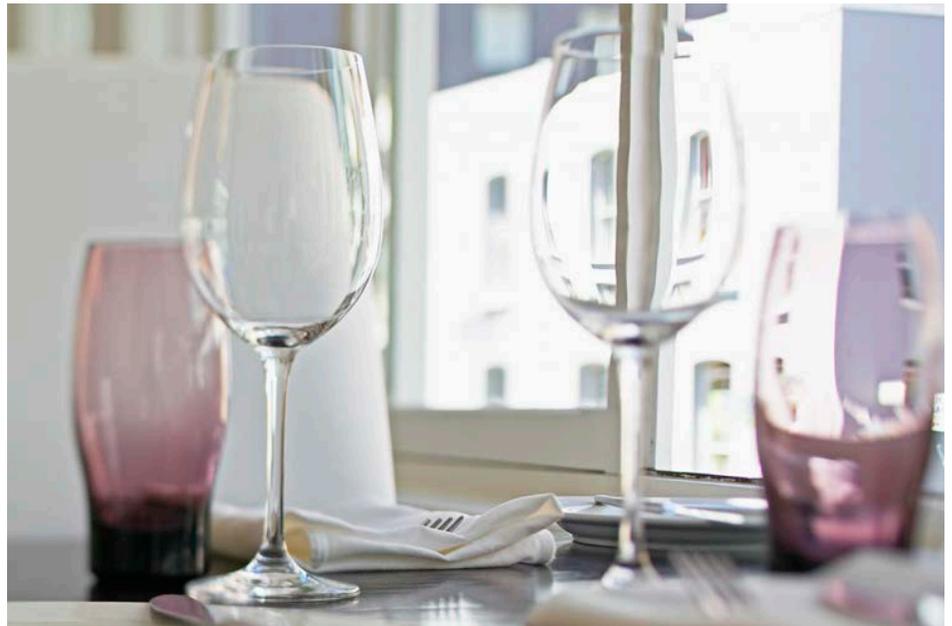
Your business should keep accurate and up to date records of all complaints, the action you have taken, the decisions made and the outcome (Standards Australia, 2014).

Your business' information collection about complaints should include:

- A process for identifying, gathering, maintaining, storing and disposing of records
- Recording each complaint and keeping these records
- Maintaining a record of the staff training that those who receive complaints have had
- Criteria for responding to requests for records and relating to publication of any records kept. (Standards Australia, 2014)

A good test to see whether the details of the complaint have been well recorded is to ask yourself: if I sent this record to another person who manages complaints in my business who knows nothing about this, would they be able to take over management of the complaint?

(Cook, 2012)





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For further information, see: www.psc.gov.au/grants/research-grants