

WHY RECORDING COMPLAINTS IS NOT THE SAME AS MANAGING COMPLAINTS. WHITE PAPER



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DON'T JUST FIX IT, SORT IT!

Why recording complaints is not the same as managing complaints.

Many organisations initially adopt a spreadsheet system for recording complaints. Sometime CRM Systems are also used to record a complaint. But we contend that complaints are "special" and that an ordinary CRM cannot handle them.

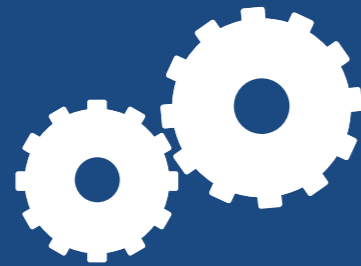
There is much more to handling complaints than coming to a mutually satisfactory closure of the issue. It is not even just about compliance with rules and regulations, though of course that is important too. A complaint is an opportunity to learn how to do business better. And we believe that you can't make the most of that opportunity by using an ordinary CRM.

Why not?

Well, take a look at the five levels (so to speak) involved in managing complaints;



1. RECORDING COMPLAINTS



2. PROMPTING ACTION



3. TRACKING PROGRESS



4. MONITORING SERVICE



5. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS



1. RECORDING COMPLAINTS

The point of recording complaints is to make sure every complaint has been dealt with. Management will also benefit from having a record of complaint numbers and issue types, and a regulator may insist you provide this information.

A spreadsheet will be fine for recording complaints - up to a point. It will enable you to keep a record of what complaints have been received, what the outcome was and who handled it etc.

But the spreadsheet will not issue reminders and alerts, it cannot prompt action and it is not able to automatically guide staff along a pre-defined process. It cannot keep all the relevant correspondence and documentation attached to each case so it is easy to find again from the one system. And it will not keep an audit trail of every action taken at every step in the process, in case you need to review this at some point.

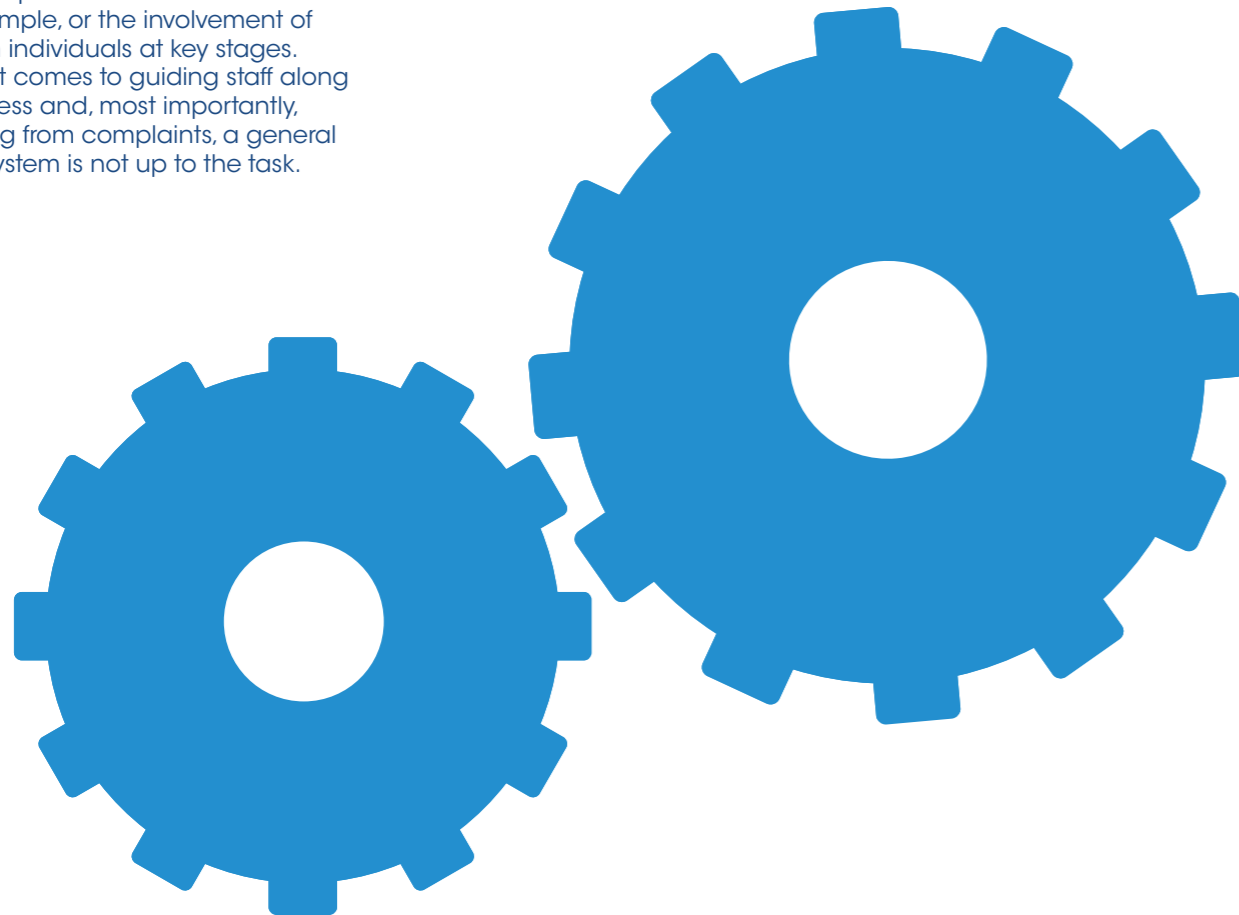
2. PROMPTING ACTION

The next stage in managing complaints is to make use of a reminder system, so that you keep on top of the complaint.

A CRM can be useful here, if dealing with simple complaints. Perhaps a quick apology or cash remedy is all that is needed and you want to keep a record of what action has been taken with regards to a client. A CRM can address some of this; you can record activity with a client, create tasks and other reminders to prompt action, and you can keep a note of emails, meetings and phone calls with that contact or organisation.

However, because CRM systems are contact and organisation based, they are limited when it comes to handling complaints. A CRM system will not take into account the type of complaint or issue and ensure the procedure appropriate to that issue type is followed. Some case types require quicker escalation than others for example, or the involvement of certain individuals at key stages. When it comes to guiding staff along a process and, most importantly, learning from complaints, a general CRM system is not up to the task.

One of our clients handled 10,970 complaints between April and September 2013. That is a lot to keep track of. But over 99% of these were dealt with in a single working day using a specialist complaints management system.



3. TRACKING PROGRESS

For more in-depth handling of complaints, and certainly with serious issues that require investigation, a system that can keep track of complaints as they go through your process can help staff to know exactly what needs to be done when and by whom. For example:

- Someone dealing with a complaint can have a lot to coordinate: correspondence; evidence; documentation; stakeholders meetings; responses; reports. They will also have to deal with outside factors - an external stakeholder not supplying some necessary information, perhaps, or information coming in multiple formats from various sources, or fulfilling KPIs and deadlines for regulatory or business purposes.

Anything that can help the complaints handler keep track of where they are with their workload can improve their productivity.

A workflow based system will help here, issuing alerts and reminders to relevant staff automatically at key stages in the process, so everyone knows what they have to do when. Without workflow this has to be done manually, and when you have more than one person handling complaints, things can go missing.

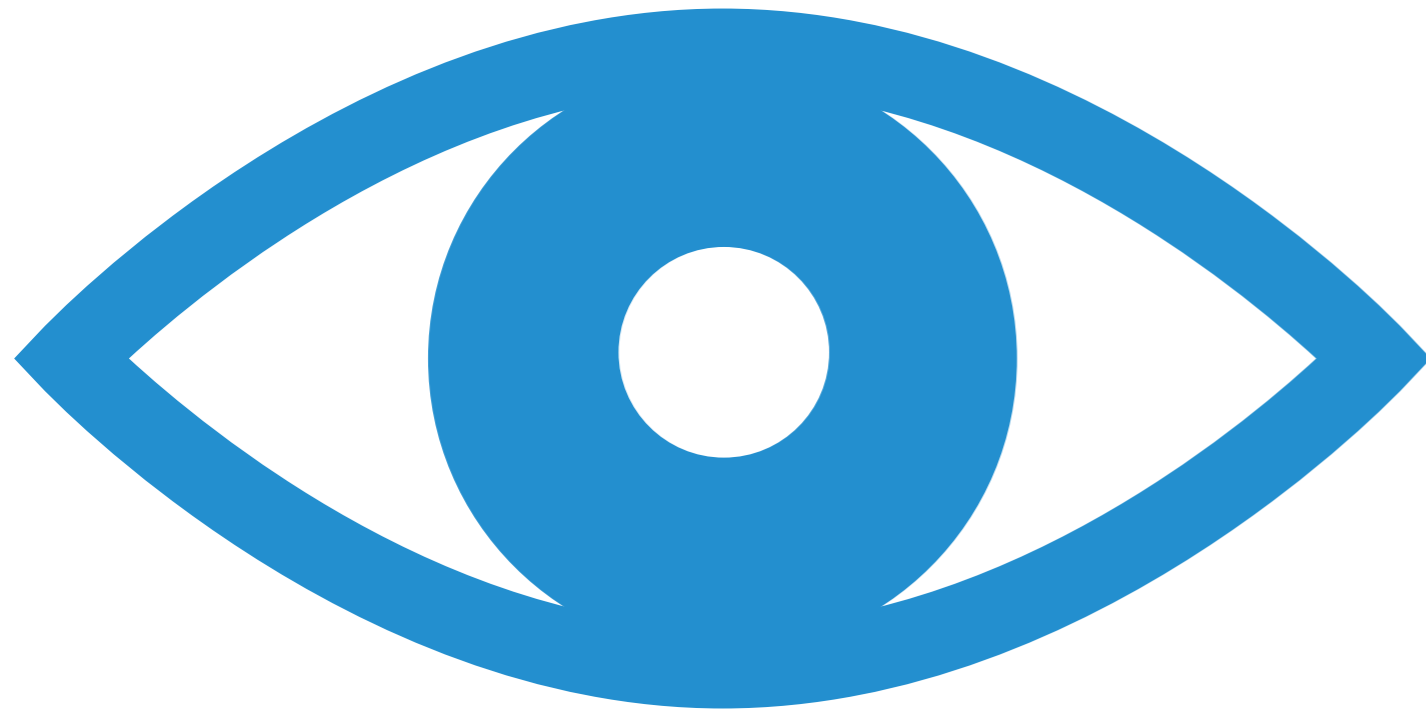
- Complaints often involve multi-stage escalation. Workflow based solutions can model the various steps complaints take through business procedures and staff can be guided as to next steps according to case type. Case type is important because different issues may need different escalation procedures, timescales and priorities.

Modelling processes in this way ensures every customer journey is handled quickly, fairly and consistently, no matter what their issue is or who they first approach.

A case-centric approach pulls everything to do with a case together in one place and then uses workflow to move that case along in the most efficient way.

- Finally, complaints can contain multiple issues and multiple stakeholders, and a contact and/or organisation based approach cannot handle this. Nor can a contact-based approach make use of cases that are related to other or earlier complaints.

This is where categorisation features can help, making it easier to form a "knowledge base", for example to highlight a cluster of complaints emanating from one area of the business, individual or geographic location, or to enable staff to access earlier precedent cases that can help them with their current case.



4. MONITORING SERVICE

The fourth level of handling complaints relates to management, rather than front line staff.

Managers need to be kept informed. They need to know if any case has stalled or if there are any bottlenecks in the process. They need to know if a staff member is off sick or a member of staff is overloaded and re-allocation of cases is required. They also need to know if KPIs are being met, and to have data to hand for any regulatory reports.

Specialist complaints management systems like Workpro are designed to provide a sophisticated level of reporting, from real-time performance monitoring, to monthly, annual or ad hoc reporting, giving managers an overview of all complaints related activity.

They can also greatly assist with meeting regulatory complaint reporting obligations. All the requisite information and categorisations are already contained in the system, enabling the latest reports to be easily generated and filed to the regulatory authority.

5. DON'T JUST FIX IT, SORT IT! LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

But where a specialised complaints solution really proves its worth is in learning from complaints. And this is how you ensure great customer service, better customer retention and gain a competitive edge.

To do this you will need to analyse the causes of complaints and the possible benefits of process or product improvements to eliminate them. And to do this properly you will need to capture as much information about the subject matter/categorisations and resolution outcomes as possible.

A case-centric solution will provide you with a wealth of information on the types of issues your organisation is seeing. This will allow you to identify systemic failures or trends and correct them.

We are not saying you should throw out your CRM system. We are saying that complaints are a special case and that you can have the best of both worlds. Workpro, for example, can be implemented to work alongside your CRM system. We have done the hard work for you!

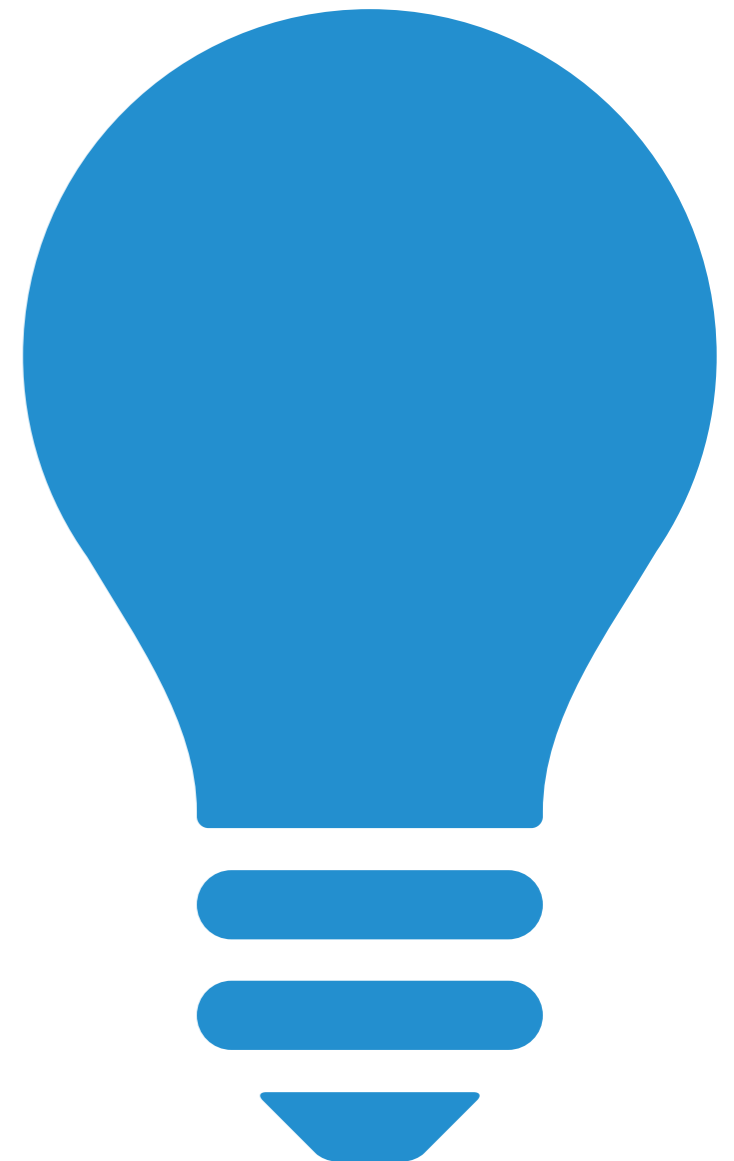
Contact us

Workpro Complaints is a complaints and enquiry management system which stores all complaint related information in a central secure and easy to use system. Many customer service organisations, including some of the largest UK Ombudsman schemes rely on Workpro to record, manage, track and to learn from a variety of cases - from complaints and enquiries to more complex investigations.

For more information or to arrange a free demo contact us on:

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