
**Quality management — Customer
satisfaction — Guidelines for
complaints handling in organizations**

*Management de la qualité — Satisfaction des clients — Lignes
directrices pour le traitement des réclamations dans les organismes*





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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 176, *Quality management and quality assurance*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Supporting technologies*.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 10002:2014), which has been technically revised.

The main changes compared with the previous edition are as follows:

- alignment with ISO 9000:2015;
- alignment with ISO 9001:2015;
- improved alignment with ISO 10001, ISO 10003 and ISO 10004.

Introduction

0.1 General

This document provides guidance for organizations to plan, design, develop, operate, maintain and improve an effective and efficient complaints-handling process for all types of commercial or non-commercial activities, including those related to electronic commerce. It is intended to benefit an organization and its customers, complainants, and other relevant interested parties.

The information obtained through the complaints-handling process can lead to improvements in products, services and processes and, where the complaints are properly handled, can improve the reputation of the organization, regardless of size, location and sector. In a global marketplace, the value of using an International Standard becomes more evident since it provides confidence in the consistent treatment of complaints.

An effective and efficient complaints-handling process reflects the needs and expectations of both the organizations supplying products and services and those who are the recipients of those products and services.

The handling of complaints through a process as described in this document can enhance customer satisfaction. Encouraging customer feedback, including complaints if customers are not satisfied, can offer opportunities to maintain or enhance customer loyalty and approval, and improve domestic and international competitiveness.

Implementation of the process described in this document can:

- provide a complainant with access to an open and responsive complaints-handling process;
- enhance the ability of the organization to resolve complaints in a consistent, systematic, and responsive manner, to the satisfaction of the complainant and the organization;
- enhance the ability of the organization to identify trends and eliminate causes of complaints, and improve the organization's operations;
- help the organization create a customer-focused approach to resolving complaints, and encourage personnel to improve their skills in working with customers;
- provide a basis for continual review and analysis of the complaints-handling process, the resolution of complaints, and process improvements made.

Organizations can use the complaints-handling process in conjunction with customer satisfaction codes of conduct and external dispute resolution processes.

The satisfaction of persons or organizations that could or do receive a product or a service from a public or a private organization is the focus of this document.

0.2 Relationship with ISO 9001 and ISO 9004

This document is compatible with ISO 9001 and ISO 9004, and supports the objectives of these two standards through the effective and efficient application of a complaints-handling process. This document can also be used independently of ISO 9001 and ISO 9004.

ISO 9001 specifies requirements for a quality management system. The process for complaints handling described in this document (ISO 10002) can be used as an element of a quality management system.

ISO 9004 provides guidance to achieve sustained success of an organization. The use of this document (ISO 10002) can enhance performance in the area of complaints handling and increase the satisfaction of customers and other relevant interested parties to facilitate the achievement of sustained success. It

can also facilitate the continual improvement of the quality of products, services and processes based on feedback from customers and other relevant interested parties.

NOTE Apart from customers and complainants, other relevant interested parties can include suppliers, industry associations and their members, consumer organizations, relevant government agencies, personnel, owners and others who are affected by the complaints-handling process.

0.3 Relationship with ISO 10001, ISO 10003 and ISO 10004

This document is compatible with ISO 10001, ISO 10003 and ISO 10004. These four documents can be used either independently or in conjunction with each other. When used together, this document, ISO 10001, ISO 10003 and ISO 10004 can be part of a broader and integrated framework for enhanced customer satisfaction through codes of conduct, complaints handling, dispute resolution and monitoring and measurement of customer satisfaction (see [Annex A](#)).

ISO 10001 contains guidance on codes of conduct for organizations related to customer satisfaction. Such codes of conduct can decrease the probability of problems arising and can eliminate causes of complaints and disputes which can decrease customer satisfaction.

ISO 10003 contains guidance on the resolution of disputes regarding product- and service-related complaints that could not be satisfactorily resolved internally. ISO 10003 can help to minimize customer dissatisfaction stemming from unresolved complaints.

ISO 10004 contains guidance on establishing effective processes for monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction. Its focus is on customers external to the organization. Guidelines given in ISO 10004 can support the establishment and implementation of a complaints-handling process. For example, the processes described in ISO 10004 can assist the organization in monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction with the complaints-handling process (see [8.3](#)). Likewise, information from a complaints-handling process can be used in monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction. For example, the frequency and type of complaints can be an indirect indicator of customer satisfaction (see ISO 10004:2018, 7.3.2).

Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations

1 Scope

This document gives guidelines for the process of complaints handling related to products and services within an organization, including planning, design, development, operation, maintenance and improvement. The complaints-handling process described is suitable for use as one of the processes of an overall quality management system.

NOTE Throughout this document, the terms “product” and “service” refer to the outputs of an organization that are intended for, or required by, a customer.

This document is intended for use by any organization regardless of its type or size, or the products and services it provides. It is also intended for use by organizations in all sectors. [Annex B](#) provides guidance specifically for small businesses.

This document addresses the following aspects of complaints handling:

- a) enhancing customer satisfaction by creating a customer-focused environment that is open to feedback (including complaints), resolving any complaints received, and enhancing the organization's ability to improve its products and services, including customer service;
- b) top management involvement and commitment through adequate acquisition and deployment of resources, including personnel training;
- c) recognizing and addressing the needs and expectations of complainants;
- d) providing complainants with an open, effective and easy-to-use complaints process;
- e) analysing and evaluating complaints in order to improve the quality of products and services, including customer service;
- f) auditing of the complaints-handling process;
- g) reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints-handling process.

This document does not apply to disputes referred for resolution outside the organization or for employment-related disputes.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 9000:2015, *Quality management systems — Fundamentals and vocabulary*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 9000 and the following apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>

— IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

3.1 complainant

person, *organization* (3.8) or their representative making a *complaint* (3.2)

[SOURCE: ISO 10001:2018, 3.2]

3.2 complaint

<customer satisfaction> expression of dissatisfaction made to an *organization* (3.8), related to its product or service, or the complaints-handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected

Note 1 to entry: Complaints can be made in relation to other processes where the organization interacts with the *customer* (3.3).

Note 2 to entry: Complaints can be made directly or indirectly to the organization.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.9.3, modified — Notes 1 and 2 to entry have been added.]

3.3 customer

person or *organization* (3.8) that could or does receive a product or a service that is intended for or required by this person or organization

EXAMPLE Consumer, client, end-user, retailer, receiver of product or service from an internal process, beneficiary and purchaser.

Note 1 to entry: A customer can be internal or external to the organization.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.2.4]

3.4 customer satisfaction

customer's (3.3) perception of the degree to which the customer's expectations have been fulfilled

Note 1 to entry: It can be that the customer's expectation is not known to the *organization* (3.8), or even to the customer in question, until the product or service is delivered. It can be necessary for achieving high customer satisfaction to fulfil an expectation of a customer even if it is neither stated nor generally implied or obligatory.

Note 2 to entry: *Complaints* (3.2) are a common indicator of low customer satisfaction but their absence does not necessarily imply high customer satisfaction.

Note 3 to entry: Even when customer requirements have been agreed with the customer and fulfilled, this does not necessarily ensure high customer satisfaction.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.9.2]

3.5 customer service

interaction of the *organization* (3.8) with the *customer* (3.3) throughout the life cycle of a product or a service

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.9.4]

3.6 feedback

<customer satisfaction> opinions, comments and expressions of interest in a product, a service or a complaints-handling process

Note 1 to entry: Feedback can be given in relation to other processes where the *organization* (3.8) interacts with the *customer* (3.3).

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.9.1, modified — Note 1 to entry has been added.]

3.7

interested party

stakeholder

person or *organization* (3.8) that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity

EXAMPLE *Customers* (3.3), owners, people in an organization, providers, bankers, regulators, unions, partners or society that can include competitors or opposing pressure groups.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.2.3, modified — Note 1 to entry has been deleted.]

3.8

organization

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, association, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2015, 3.2.1, modified — Note 2 to entry has been deleted.]

4 Guiding principles

4.1 General

Adherence to the guiding principles set out in 4.2 to 4.15 is recommended for effective and efficient handling of complaints.

4.2 Commitment

The organization should be actively committed to defining and implementing a complaints-handling process.

4.3 Capacity

Sufficient resources should be made available for and committed to complaints handling, and should be managed effectively and efficiently.

4.4 Transparency

The complaints-handling process should be communicated to customers, personnel and other relevant interested parties. Individual complainants should be provided with adequate information about the handling of their complaint.

4.5 Accessibility

A complaints-handling process should be easily accessible to all complainants. Information should be made available on the details of making and resolving complaints. The complaints-handling process and supporting information should be easy to understand and use. The information should be in clear language. Information and assistance in making a complaint should be made available (see [Annex C](#)), in whatever languages or formats that the products and services were offered or provided in, including alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, or audiotape, so that no complainants are disadvantaged.

4.6 Responsiveness

The organization should address the needs and expectations of customers with respect to complaints handling.

4.7 Objectivity

Each complaint should be addressed in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner through the complaints-handling process (see [Annex D](#)).

4.8 Charges

Access to the complaints-handling process should be free of charge to the complainant.

4.9 Information integrity

The organization should ensure that the information about its complaints handling is accurate and not misleading, and that data collected are relevant, correct, complete, meaningful and useful.

4.10 Confidentiality

Personally identifiable information concerning the complainant should be available where needed, but only for the purposes of addressing the complaint within the organization and should be actively protected from disclosure, unless the customer or complainant expressly consents to its disclosure or disclosure is required by law.

NOTE Personally identifiable information is information that when associated with an individual can be used to identify him or her, and is retrievable by the individual's name, address, email address, telephone number or similarly specific identifier. The precise meaning of the term differs around the world.

4.11 Customer-focused approach

The organization should adopt a customer-focused approach with respect to handling complaints and should be open to feedback.

4.12 Accountability

The organization should establish and maintain accountability for, and reporting on, the decisions and actions with respect to complaints handling.

4.13 Improvement

Increased effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints-handling process should be a permanent objective of the organization.

4.14 Competence

Organization personnel should have the personal attributes, skills, training, education and experience necessary to handle complaints.

4.15 Timeliness

Complaints should be handled as expeditiously as feasible given the nature of the complaint and of the process used.

5 Complaints-handling framework

5.1 Context of the organization

In planning, designing, developing, operating, maintaining and improving the complaints-handling process, the organization should consider its context by:

- identifying and addressing external and internal issues that are relevant to the organization's purpose and that affect its ability to achieve complaints-handling objectives;
- identifying the interested parties that are relevant to the complaints-handling process, and addressing the relevant needs and expectations of these interested parties;
- identifying the scope of the complaints-handling process, including its boundaries and applicability, and taking into account the external and internal issues and the needs of interested parties noted above.

5.2 Leadership and commitment

Top management should demonstrate leadership in, and the organization should be actively committed to, effective and efficient complaints handling. It is particularly important that the commitment is shown by, and promoted from, the organization's top management.

A strong leadership in, and commitment to, responding to complaints should allow both personnel and customers to contribute to the improvement of the organization's products, services and processes.

This leadership and commitment should be reflected in the definition, adoption and dissemination of policy and procedures for the resolution of complaints. Management leadership and commitment should be shown by the provision of adequate resources, including training.

5.3 Policy

Top management should establish an explicit customer-focused complaints-handling policy. The policy should be made available to, and known by, all personnel. The policy should also be made available to customers and other relevant interested parties. The policy should be supported by procedures and objectives for each function and personnel role included in the process.

When establishing the policy and objectives for the complaints-handling process, the following factors should be taken into account:

- identification of any applicable statutory and regulatory requirements;
- financial, operational, and organizational requirements;
- the input of customers, personnel, and other relevant interested parties.

The policies related to quality and complaints handling should be aligned.

5.4 Responsibility and authority

5.4.1 Top management should be responsible for:

- a) ensuring that the complaints-handling process and objectives are established within the organization;
- b) ensuring that the complaints-handling process is planned, designed, developed, operated, maintained and continually improved in accordance with the complaints-handling policy of the organization;

- c) identifying and allocating the management resources needed for an effective and efficient complaints-handling process;
- d) ensuring the promotion of awareness of the complaints-handling process and the need for a customer focus throughout the organization;
- e) ensuring that information about the complaints-handling process is communicated to customers, complainants, and, where applicable, other parties directly concerned in an easily accessible manner (see [Annex D](#));
- f) appointing a complaints-handling management representative and clearly defining their responsibilities and authority in addition to the responsibilities and authority set out in [5.4.2](#);
- g) ensuring that there is a process for rapid and effective notification to top management of any significant complaints;
- h) periodically reviewing the complaints-handling process to ensure that it is effectively and efficiently maintained and continually improved.

5.4.2 The complaints-handling management representative should be responsible for:

- a) establishing a process of performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting;
- b) reporting to top management on the complaints-handling process, with recommendations for improvement;
- c) maintaining the effective and efficient operation of the complaints-handling process, including the recruitment and training of appropriate personnel, technology requirements, documentation, setting and meeting target time limits and other requirements, and process reviews.

5.4.3 Other managers involved in the complaints-handling process should, as applicable within their area of responsibility, be responsible for:

- a) ensuring that the complaints-handling process is implemented;
- b) liaising with the complaints-handling management representative;
- c) ensuring the promotion of awareness of the complaints-handling process and of the need for a customer focus;
- d) ensuring that information about the complaints-handling process is easily accessible;
- e) reporting on actions and decisions with respect to complaints handling;
- f) ensuring that monitoring of the complaints-handling process is undertaken and recorded;
- g) ensuring that action is taken to correct a problem, prevent it happening in the future, and that the event is recorded;
- h) ensuring that complaints-handling data are available for the top management review.

5.4.4 All personnel in contact with customers and complainants should:

- be trained in complaints handling;
- comply with any complaints-handling reporting requirements determined by the organization;
- treat customers in a courteous manner and promptly respond to their complaints or direct them to the appropriate individual;
- show good interpersonal and good communication skills.

5.4.5 All personnel should:

- be aware of their roles, responsibilities and authorities in respect of complaints;
- be aware of what procedures to follow and what information to give to complainants;
- report complaints which have a significant impact on the organization.

6 Planning, design and development**6.1 General**

The organization should plan, design and develop an effective and efficient complaints-handling process in order to increase customer loyalty and satisfaction, and also to improve the quality of the products and services provided. This process should comprise a set of interrelated activities that function harmoniously and use various personnel, information, material, financial and infrastructure resources to conform to the complaints-handling policy and achieve the objectives. The organization should take into account the best practices of other organizations with regard to complaints handling. The organization should understand the expectations and perceptions of customers and other relevant interested parties related to complaint handling. When establishing and using a complaints-handling process, the organization should consider and address risks and opportunities that can arise. This involves:

- monitoring and evaluating processes and external and internal issues concerning risks and opportunities;
- identifying and assessing specific risks and opportunities;
- planning, designing, developing, implementing and reviewing corrective actions and improvements pertaining to identified and assessed risks and opportunities.

As defined in ISO 9000:2015, 3.7.9, risk is the effect of uncertainty, which can be negative or positive. In the context of complaints handling, an example of a negative effect is customer dissatisfaction resulting from insufficient resources to handle the volume or complexity of complaints received within the specified time limits, and an example of a positive effect is that the organization reconsiders the resources associated with complaint handling as a result of a review of the training provided to the personnel in contact with customers. These risks can be addressed by reviewing the allocation and deployment of resources leading to the provision of additional personnel, training or options for access to the complaints-handling process.

An opportunity is related to identification of a new possible way of realizing positive outcomes, which does not necessarily arise from the organization's existing risks. For example, the organization can identify a new product, service or process as a result of a customer suggestion provided in the course of handling a complaint.

6.2 Objectives

Top management should ensure that the complaints-handling objectives are established for, and communicated to, relevant functions and levels within the organization. These objectives should be measurable and consistent with the complaints-handling policy. These objectives should be set at regular intervals as detailed performance criteria.

6.3 Activities

Top management should ensure that the planning, design and development of the complaints-handling process is carried out in order to maintain and increase customer satisfaction. The complaints-handling

process can be linked to and aligned with other processes of the quality management system of the organization.

NOTE A flowchart showing the steps of handling individual complaints is provided in [Annex E](#).

6.4 Resources

In order to ensure that the complaints-handling process operates effectively and efficiently, top management should assess the needs for resources and provide them. These include resources such as personnel, training, procedures, documentation, specialist support, materials and equipment, computer hardware and software, and finances.

The selection, support and training of personnel involved in the complaints-handling process are particularly important factors.

7 Operation of complaints-handling process

7.1 Communication

Information concerning the complaints-handling process, such as brochures, pamphlets or electronic-based information, should be made readily available to customers, complainants and other relevant interested parties. Such information should be provided in clear language and, so far as is reasonable, in formats accessible to all, so that no complainants are disadvantaged. The following are examples of such information:

- where complaints can be made;
- how complaints can be made;
- information to be provided by the complainant (see [Annex C](#));
- the process for handling complaints;
- time periods associated with various stages in the process;
- the complainant's options for remedy, including external means (see [7.9](#));
- how the complainant can obtain feedback on the status of the complaint.

7.2 Receipt of complaints

Upon reporting of the initial complaint, the complaint should be recorded with supporting information and a unique identifier code. The record of the initial complaint should identify the remedy sought by the complainant and any other information necessary for the effective handling of the complaint including:

- a description of the complaint and relevant supporting data;
- the requested remedy;
- the products and services or related organization practices complained about;
- the due date for a response;
- data on people, department, branch, organization and market segment;
- immediate action taken (if any).

For further guidance, see [Annexes C](#) and [E](#).

7.3 Tracking of complaints

The complaint should be tracked from initial receipt through the entire process until the complainant is satisfied or the final decision is made. An up-to-date status should be made available to the complainant upon request and at regular intervals, at least at the time of pre-set deadlines. The complainants should be treated courteously and be kept informed of the progress of their complaint through the complaints-handling process.

7.4 Acknowledgement of complaints

Receipt of each complaint should be acknowledged to the complainant immediately (e.g. through post, phone or email).

7.5 Initial assessment of complaints

After receipt, each complaint should be initially assessed in terms of criteria, such as severity, safety implication, complexity, impact, and the need and possibility of immediate action. Complaints should be addressed promptly in accordance with their urgency. For example, significant health and safety issues should be processed immediately.

7.6 Investigation of complaints

Every reasonable effort should be made to investigate all the relevant circumstances and information surrounding a complaint. The level of investigation should be commensurate with the seriousness, frequency of occurrence and severity of the complaint.

7.7 Response to complaints

Following an appropriate investigation, the organization should offer a response (see [Annex G](#)), for example, correct the problem and prevent it happening in the future. If the complaint cannot be immediately resolved, then it should be dealt with in a manner intended to lead to its effective resolution as soon as possible (see [Annex H](#) regarding escalation).

7.8 Communicating the decision

The decision or any action taken regarding the complaint, which is relevant to the complainant or to the personnel involved, should be communicated to them as soon as the decision or action is taken.

7.9 Closing complaints

If the complainant accepts the proposed decision or action, then the decision or action should be carried out and recorded.

If the complainant rejects the proposed decision or action, then the complaint should remain open. This should be recorded and the complainant should be informed of alternative forms of internal and external recourse available (see [Annex H](#)).

The organization should continue to monitor the progress of the complaint until all reasonable internal and external options of recourse are exhausted or the complainant is satisfied.

8 Maintenance and improvement

8.1 Collection of information

The organization should record the performance of its complaints-handling process. The organization should establish and implement procedures for recording complaints and responses and for using these

records and managing them, while protecting any personal information and ensuring the confidentiality of complainants. Information collected should be relevant, correct, complete, meaningful and useful.

This should include:

- a) specifying steps for identifying, gathering, classifying, maintaining, storing and disposing of records;
- b) recording its handling of a complaint and maintaining these records, taking utmost care to preserve such items as electronic files and recording media, since records in these media can be lost as a result of mishandling or obsolescence;
- c) keeping records of the type of training and instruction that individuals involved in the complaints-handling process have received;
- d) specifying the organization's criteria for responding to requests for record presentation and record submissions made by a complainant or their agent; this can include time limits, what kind of information will be provided, to whom, or in what format;
- e) specifying how and when statistical non-personally identifiable complaints data are disclosed to the public.

8.2 Analysis and evaluation of complaints

All complaints should be classified and then analysed to identify systematic, recurring and single incident problems and trends, to help eliminate the underlying causes of complaints, and to identify opportunities for improvement or changes in processes, products and services offered.

8.3 Evaluation of the satisfaction with the complaints-handling process

There should be regular action taken to determine the levels of satisfaction of complainants with the complaints-handling process. This can take the form of random surveys of complainants and other techniques.

NOTE 1 One method of improving satisfaction with the complaints-handling process is to simulate a contact with a complainant and the organization.

NOTE 2 See ISO 10004 for guidance on monitoring and measuring customer satisfaction.

8.4 Monitoring of the complaints-handling process

Continual monitoring of the complaints-handling process, the resources required (including personnel), and the data to be collected should be undertaken.

The performance of the complaints-handling process should be measured against predetermined criteria (see [Annex I](#)).

8.5 Auditing of the complaints-handling process

The organization should regularly perform or provide for audits in order to evaluate the performance of the complaints-handling process. The audit should provide information on:

- process conformity to complaints-handling procedures;
- process suitability and effectiveness to achieve complaints-handling objectives.

The complaints-handling audit can be conducted as part of the quality management system audit, for example in accordance with ISO 19011. The audit results should be taken into account in the management review to identify problems and introduce improvements in the complaints-handling

process. The audit should be carried out by competent individuals independent of the activity being audited. Further guidance on auditing is provided in [Annex J](#).

8.6 Management review of the complaints-handling process

8.6.1 Top management of the organization should review the complaints-handling process on a regular basis in order to:

- ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency;
- identify and address instances of nonconformity with health, safety, environmental, customer, statutory, regulatory and other relevant requirements;
- identify and correct product and service deficiencies;
- identify and correct process deficiencies;
- assess risks and opportunities and the need for changes to the complaints-handling process and products and services offered;
- evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken in relation to risks and opportunities;
- evaluate potential changes to the complaints-handling policy and objectives.

8.6.2 The input to management review should include information on:

- external factors such as changes in statutory and regulatory requirements, competitive practices or technological innovations;
- internal factors such as changes in the policy, objectives, organizational structure, resources available, and products and services offered or provided;
- the overall performance of the complaints-handling process, including customer satisfaction surveys, and the results of the continual monitoring of the process;
- feedback on the complaints-handling process;
- the results of audits;
- risks and opportunities, including the related actions;
- effectiveness of the actions taken to address risks and opportunities;
- the status of corrective actions;
- follow up actions from previous management reviews;
- recommendations for improvement.

8.6.3 The output from the management review should include:

- decisions and actions related to improvement of the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints-handling process;
- proposals on product and service improvement;
- decisions and actions related to identified resource needs (e.g. training programmes).

Records from management review should be maintained and used to identify opportunities for improvement.

8.7 Continual improvement

The organization should continually improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the complaints-handling process. As a result, the organization can continually improve the quality of its products and services. This can be achieved through corrective actions, actions taken in relation to risks and opportunities, and innovative improvements. The organization should take action to eliminate the causes of existing and potential problems leading to complaints in order to prevent recurrence and occurrence, respectively. The organization should:

- explore, identify, and apply lessons learned and best practices in complaints handling;
- foster a customer-focused approach within the organization;
- encourage innovation in complaints-handling development;
- recognize exemplary complaints-handling behaviour.

Annex A (informative)

Interrelationship of ISO 10001, this document, ISO 10003 and ISO 10004

[Figure A.1](#) illustrates the organization's processes related to code of conduct, complaint handling, external dispute resolution, and customer satisfaction monitoring and measuring.

A complaint can be initiated by a customer or another complainant.

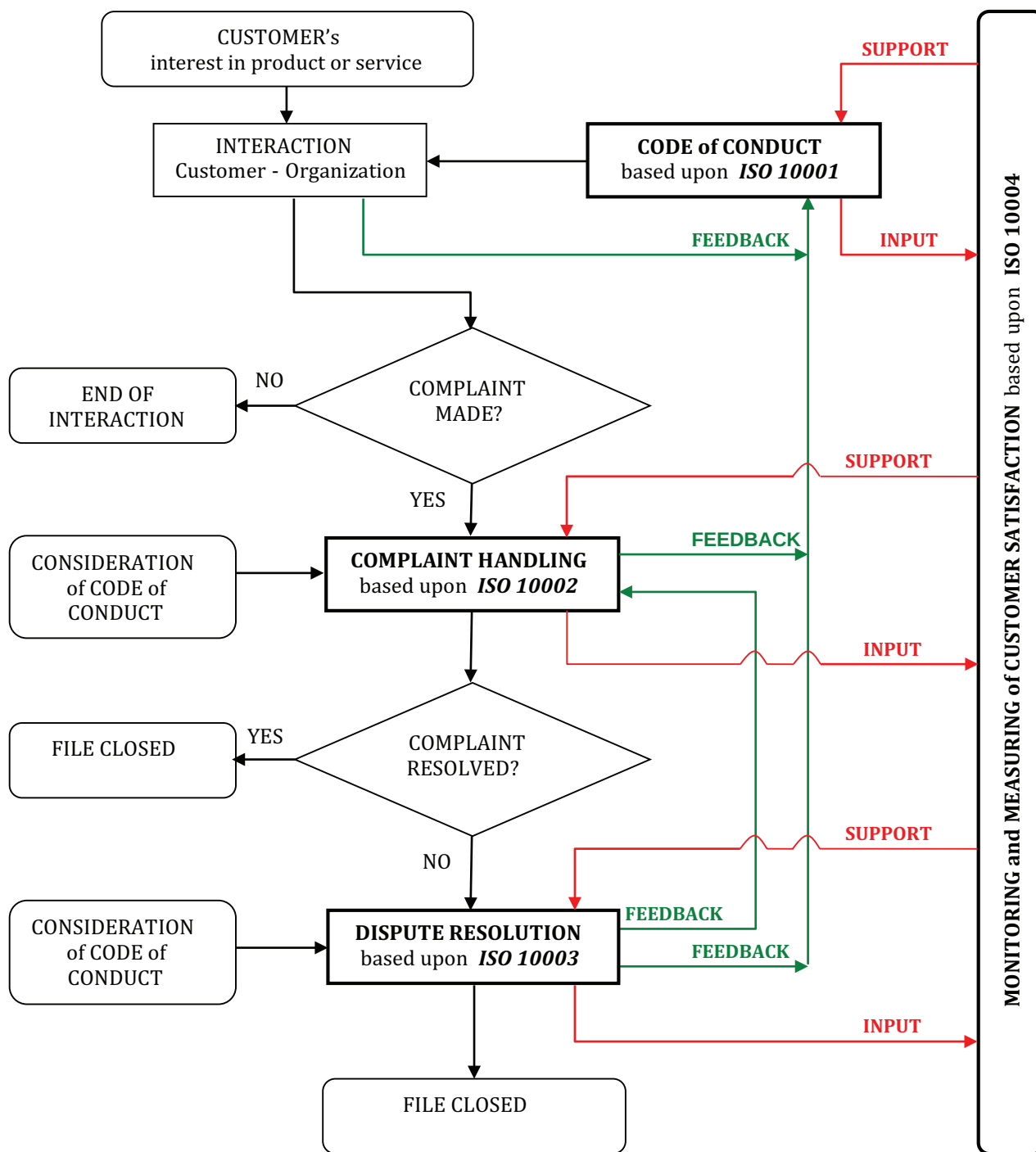


Figure A.1 — Interrelationship of ISO 10001, this document, ISO 10003 and ISO 10004

Annex B

(informative)

Guidance for small business

This document is designed for organizations of all sizes. However, it is recognized that many smaller businesses will have limited resources to dedicate to setting up and maintaining a complaints-handling process. This annex highlights key areas where they can focus their attention to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency from a simple process.

The steps below identify key areas, with suggestions for action in each.

- Be open to complaints: have a simple sign on show, or a paragraph on company invoices, saying (see [4.4](#)), for example: “Your satisfaction is important to us, please tell us if you are not satisfied, we'd like to put it right”.
- Collect and record complaints (see [Annexes C](#) and [F](#)).
- Acknowledge your receipt of the complaint to the complainant if it is not received in person (a phone call or email is sufficient) (see [7.4](#)).
- Assess the complaint for validity, possible impact and who is the best person to deal with it (see [7.5](#)).
- Resolve as soon as is practically possible, or further investigate the complaint and then make a decision about what to do about it and act promptly (see [7.7](#)).
- Give information to the customer about what you intend to do about the complaint, and evaluate the customer's response. Is it likely that the action will satisfy the customer? If yes, then move rapidly to take the action the customer reasonably expects, bearing in mind the best practices within your industry (see [7.8](#)).
- When all possible actions have been done in your view to resolve the complaint, tell the customer and record the outcome. If the complaint is still not resolved to the customer's satisfaction, explain your decision and offer any possible alternative actions (see [7.9](#)).
- Review complaints regularly: a brief periodical review and a more intensive annual review to establish if there are any trends, or obvious things you could change or put right to stop complaints occurring, improve customer service, or make customers more satisfied (see [Annex C](#) and the complaints tracking in item 6 of [Annex F](#)).

The above guidance is designed for easy implementation. It can be valuable to visit other similar businesses, perhaps not doing exactly the same, and see how they deal with customers' complaints. Valuable tips and techniques to apply can often be found.

Annex C (informative)

Form for complainant

The following is a sample form containing the principal information which can aid a complainant to provide the key details required by the organization to handle the complaint effectively and efficiently.

1 Details of complainant

Name/organization _____

Address _____

Postcode, town _____

Country _____

Phone _____

Fax _____

Email _____

Details of person acting on behalf of complainant (if applicable)

Details of person to be contacted (if different from above)

2 Product description / service description

Reference number (if known or applicable) _____

Description

3 Problem encountered

Date of occurrence _____

Description

4 Remedy requested

Yes ☐ No ☐

5 Date, signature

Date _____ Signature _____

6 Enclosure

List of enclosed documents

Annex D (informative)

Objectivity

D.1 General

The principles for objectivity in the complaints-handling process include the following.

- a) **Openness:** well publicized, accessible and understood by those involved in a complaint. The process should be clear and well publicized so that both personnel and complainants can follow them.
- b) **Impartiality:** avoiding any bias in dealing with the complainant, the person complained against, or the organization. The process should be designed to protect the person complained against from any biased treatment. Emphasis should be placed on solving the problem and not on assigning blame. If a complaint is made about personnel, the investigation should be carried out independently.
- c) **Confidentiality:** the process should be designed to protect the complainant's and customer's identity, as far as is reasonably possible. This aspect is very important to avoid deterring possible complaints from people who might be afraid that giving details could lead to inconvenience or discrimination.
- d) **Accessibility:** the organization should allow the complainant access to the complaints-handling process at any reasonable point or time. Information about the complaints process should be readily available in clear language and in formats accessible to all complainants. When a complaint affects different supply chain participants, a plan to coordinate a joint response should be made. The process should allow any information arising from the complaints to be known by any suppliers of the organization that are concerned by the complaint so that they are able to make improvements.
- e) **Completeness:** finding out the relevant facts, talking to people from both sides involved in the complaint to establish a common ground and verify explanations, whenever possible.
- f) **Equitability:** giving equal treatment to all people.
- g) **Sensitivity:** each case should be considered on its merits, paying due care to individual differences, and needs and expectations.

D.2 Objectivity for personnel

Complaints-handling procedures should ensure that those complained against are treated objectively. This implies:

- informing them immediately and completely on any complaint about their performance;
- giving them the opportunity to explain the circumstances and allowing them appropriate support;
- keeping them informed of the progress in the investigation of the complaint and the result.

It is vital that those against whom a complaint has been made are given full details of the complaint before they are interviewed. However, confidentiality should be observed.

Personnel should be reassured that they are supported by the process. Personnel should be encouraged to learn from the complaints-handling experience and to develop a better understanding of the complainant perspectives.

D.3 Separating complaints-handling procedures from disciplinary procedures

Complaints-handling procedures should be separated from disciplinary procedures.

D.4 Confidentiality

In addition to ensuring complainant confidentiality, the complaints-handling process should ensure confidentiality in the case of complaints against personnel. The details of such complaints should be known only by those directly concerned.

However, it is important that confidentiality is not used as an excuse to avoid dealing with a complaint.

D.5 Objectivity monitoring

Organizations should monitor the responses to complaints to ensure complaints are handled objectively.

Measures may include:

- a regular monitoring (e.g. monthly) of resolved complaint cases selected at random;
- surveys of complainants, asking them if they were treated in an objective manner.

Annex E (informative)

Complaints-handling flowchart

Figure E.1 illustrates the steps of handling individual complaints.

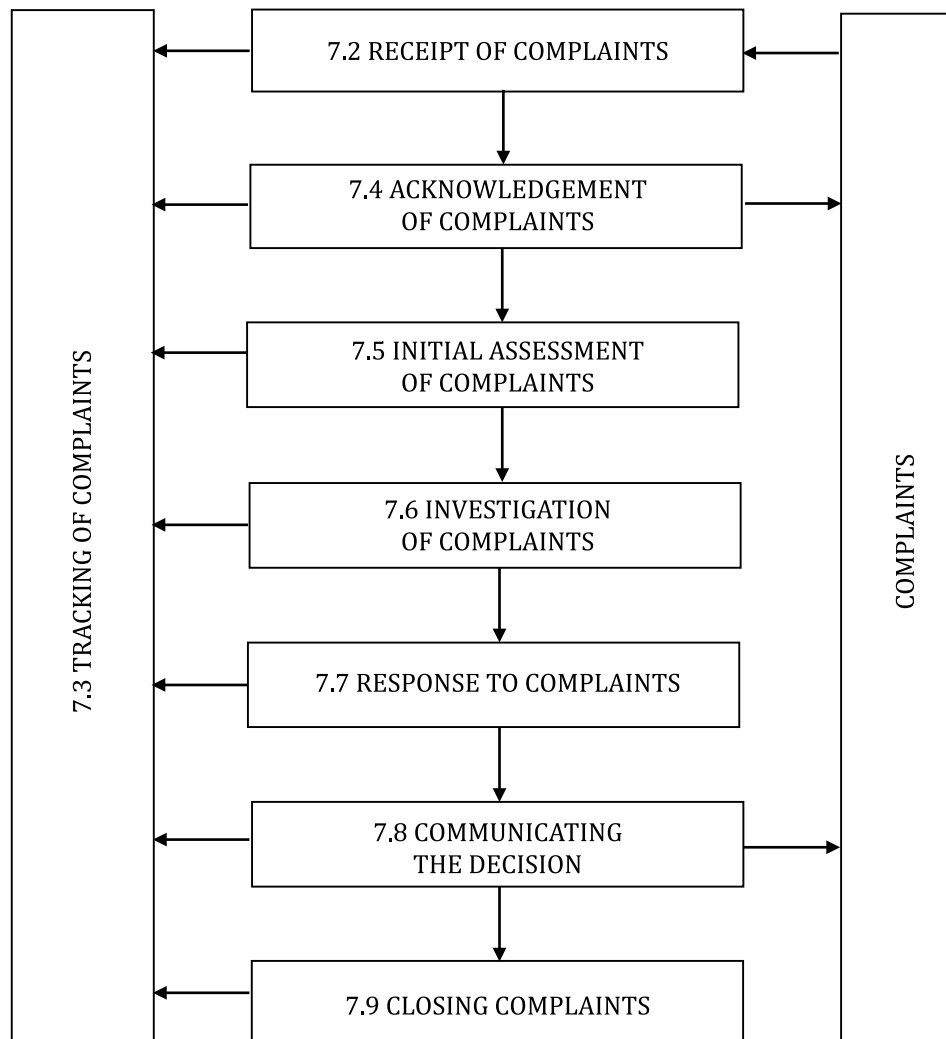


Figure E.1 — Complaints-handling flowchart

Annex F (informative)

Complaint follow-up form

The following is a sample form (for internal use only), containing the principal information which can aid the organization in following up on a complaint.

1 Details of complaint receipt

Date of complaint _____

Time of complaint _____

Name of recipient _____

Complaint medium Phone ☐ Email ☐ Internet ☐ Personal ☐
 Postal mail ☐ Others ☐

Unique identifier code _____

2 Details of complainant

See form for complainant

Reference number of complaint

Relevant data on complaint

Complaint referred by

3 Problem encountered

Date of problem

Recurrent problem Yes ☐ No ☐

Problem category

1 ☐ Product not delivered

2 ☐ Service not provided/partially provided

3 ☐ Delay in delivering product
 Duration of delay: _____

4 ☐ Delay in providing service
 Duration of delay: _____

5 ☐ Defective product

- 6 ☐ Poor service
 Details: _____

- 7 ☐ Product not in conformity with order
- 8 ☐ Products not ordered
- 9 ☐ Damage suffered
- 10 ☐ Refusal to honour the guarantee
- 11 ☐ Refusal to sell
- 12 ☐ Refusal to provide service
- 13 ☐ Commercial practices/sales methods
- 14 ☐ Incorrect information
- 15 ☐ Inadequate information
- 16 ☐ Payment arrangements
- 17 ☐ Price
- 18 ☐ Price increase
- 19 ☐ Supplementary charges
- 20 ☐ Unjustified costs/billing
- 21 ☐ Terms of contract
- 22 ☐ Coverage of contract
- 23 ☐ Assessment of damage
- 24 ☐ Refusal to pay compensation
- 25 ☐ Inadequate compensation
- 26 ☐ Modification of contract
- 27 ☐ Poor performance of contract
- 28 ☐ Cancellation/rescission of contract
- 29 ☐ Cancellation of service
- 30 ☐ Loan reimbursement
- 31 ☐ Interest demanded
- 32 ☐ Failure to honour commitments
- 33 ☐ Incorrect invoicing
- 34 ☐ Undue delay in dealing with a complaint

35 ☐ Other type of problem:

Additional information:

4 Complaint assessment

Evaluate the scope and severity of the actual and potential effects of the complaint:

Severity: -----

Complexity: -----

Impact: -----

Safety concern? Yes ☐ No ☐

Need for immediate action Yes ☐ No ☐

Availability of immediate action Yes ☐ No ☐

Likelihood of compensation Yes ☐ No ☐

5 Complaint resolution

Remedy requested Yes ☐ No ☐

Action to be taken

36 ☐ Delivery of the product

37 ☐ Repair/rework of the product

38 ☐ Exchange of the product

39 ☐ Cancellation of sale

40 ☐ Enforcement of the guarantee

41 ☐ Honouring of commitments

42 ☐ Conclusion of a contract

43 ☐ Cancellation/rescission of contract

- 44 ☐ Cancellation of invoice
- 45 ☐ Information
- 46 ☐ Correction of assessment of damage
- 47 ☐ Payment of an indemnification in the sum of: _____
- 48 ☐ Reimbursement of a down payment in the amount of: _____
- 49 ☐ Reimbursement of other payments effected in the amount of: _____
- 50 ☐ Price rebate in the amount of: _____
- 51 ☐ Payment facilities
- 52 ☐ Apology
- 53 ☐ Other action:
- _____
- _____

6 Complaint tracking

Action taken	Date	Name	Remarks
Complaint acknowledged to complainant			
Complaint assessment			
Investigation of complaint			
Resolution of complaint			
Information to complainant			
Correction			
Correction verified			
Complaint closed			

Annex G **(informative)**

Responses

The organization's policy on the provision of responses can include:

- refunds;
- replacement;
- repair/rework;
- substitutes;
- technical assistance;
- information;
- referral;
- financial assistance;
- other assistance;
- compensation;
- apology;
- goodwill gift or token;
- indication of changes in products, services, processes, policies, or procedures arising from complaints.

Issues to be considered can include:

- addressing all aspects of the complaint;
- following-up where appropriate;
- whether it is appropriate to offer remedies to others who might have suffered in the same way as the complainant but did not make a formal complaint;
- level of authority for the various responses;
- dissemination of the information to the relevant personnel.

Annex H (informative)

Escalation flowchart

[Figure H.1](#) is an escalation flowchart.

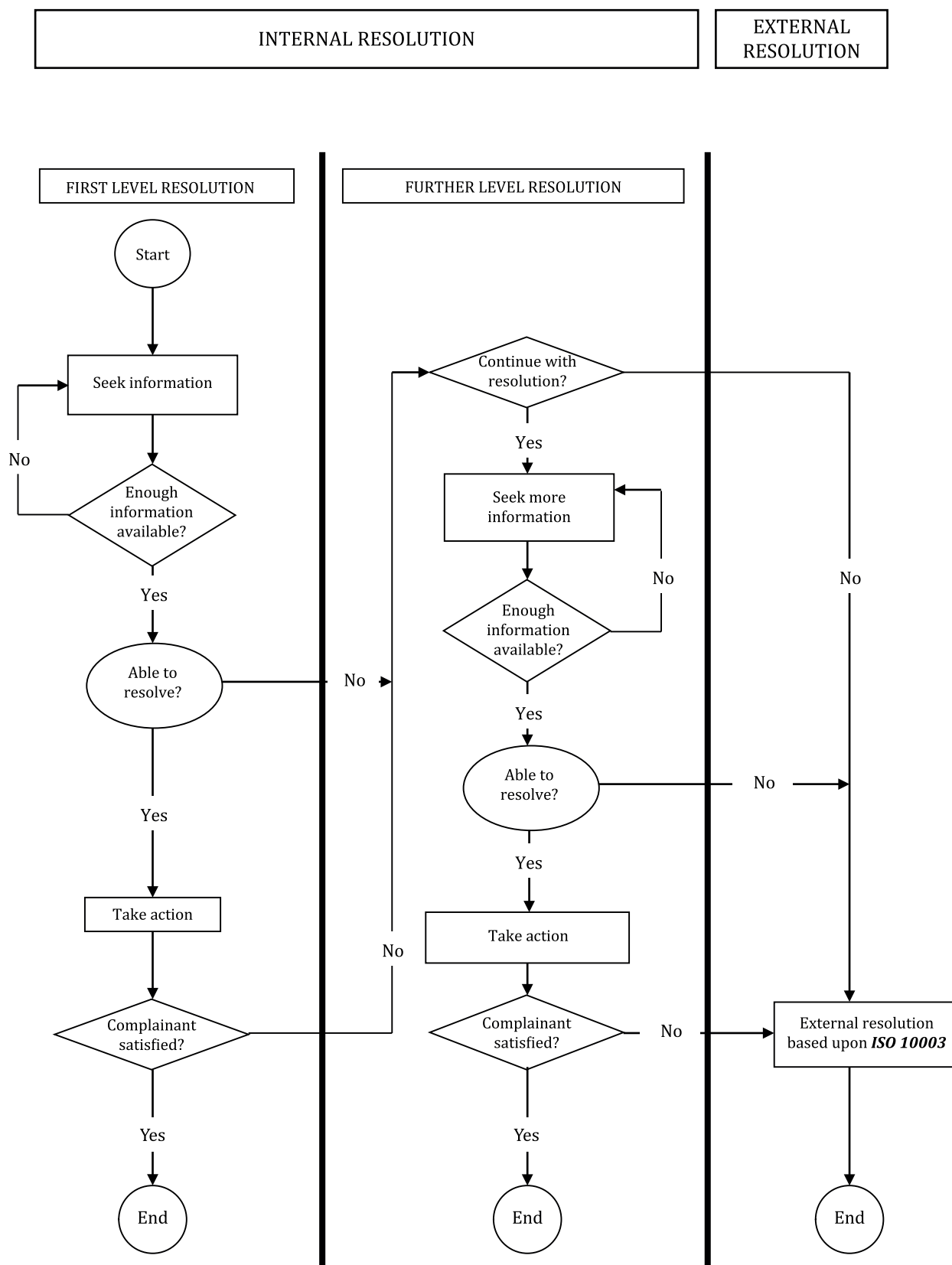


Figure H.1 — Escalation flowchart

Annex I **(informative)**

Continual monitoring

I.1 General

This annex is a generic guide for effective and efficient continual monitoring of the complaints-handling process. The approach adopted should be appropriate to the type and size of the organization.

I.2 Management responsibility

It is vital to ensure that those responsible for monitoring and reporting on the performance of the complaints-handling process and for taking corrective actions are competent for this role.

The following are some of the types of responsibilities that can be considered.

- a) Top management should:
 - define the monitoring objectives;
 - define the monitoring responsibilities;
 - conduct reviews of the monitoring process;
 - ensure that improvements are implemented.
- b) The complaints-handling management representative should:
 - establish a process of performance monitoring, evaluation, and reporting;
 - report to top management on the performance revealed during the complaints-handling process reviews, so that all necessary improvements can be made.
- c) Other managers involved in the complaints in the organization should ensure that:
 - adequate monitoring of the complaints-handling process is undertaken and recorded within their area of responsibility;
 - corrective action is taken and recorded within their area of responsibility;
 - adequate complaints-handling data are available for the top management review of the monitoring process within their area of responsibility.

I.3 Performance measurement and monitoring

I.3.1 General

The organization should assess and monitor the performance of the complaints-handling process using a set of predetermined criteria.

Organizational processes, products and services differ widely, as do the performance-monitoring criteria appropriate to them. Organizations should develop performance-monitoring criteria relevant to their particular circumstances. Examples are given in [I.3.2](#).

I.3.2 Performance-monitoring criteria

Examples of criteria that can be considered and included when monitoring the performance of the complaints-handling process include:

- whether a complaints-handling policy and objectives has been established, maintained, and made appropriately available;
- personnel perception of the top management commitment to complaints handling;
- whether responsibilities for complaints handling have been appropriately assigned;
- whether personnel in contact with customers are authorized to resolve complaints on the spot;
- whether discretionary limits concerning responses have been set for personnel in contact with customers;
- whether personnel specialized in complaints handling have been appointed;
- the proportion of personnel in contact with customers who are trained in complaints handling;
- the effectiveness and efficiency of complaints-handling training;
- the number of suggestions from personnel to improve complaints handling;
- attitude of personnel to complaints handling;
- frequency of complaints-handling audits or management reviews;
- time taken to implement recommendations from complaints-handling audits or management reviews;
- time taken to respond to complainants;
- degree of complainant satisfaction;
- effectiveness and efficiency of the processes required for corrective actions and actions taken in relation to risks and opportunities, when appropriate.

I.3.3 Monitoring data

The monitoring of data is important since it provides a direct indicator of complaints-handling performance. Monitoring data can include the number or proportions of:

- complaints received;
- complaints resolved at the point at which they are made,
- complaints incorrectly prioritized;
- complaints acknowledged after agreed time;
- complaints resolved after agreed time;
- complaints referred to external methods of resolution (see [7.9](#)) ;
- repeat complaints or recurrent problems that have not been complained about;
- improvements in procedures due to complaints.

Careful attention should be exercised in data interpretation because:

- objective data, such as response times, can show how well the process is working but might not provide information about complainant satisfaction;

- an increase in the number of complaints after the introduction of a new complaints-handling process can reflect an effective process rather than poor products and services.

Annex J **(informative)**

Audit

The organization should continually improve the effectiveness and efficiency of its complaints-handling process. For this reason, process performance and outcomes should be regularly monitored to identify and remove causes of existing and potential problems, as well as to uncover any opportunities for improvement. The main objective of a complaints-handling audit is to facilitate improvement by providing information on the performance of the complaints-handling process against stated criteria. Such criteria can include various policies, procedures and standards related to complaints handling.

When examining the performance of the complaints-handling process, the audit evaluates the extent to which the process conforms to the stated criteria, as well as the suitability of the process to achieve objectives.

For example, an audit can be implemented to assess:

- the conformity of complaints-handling procedures with the organization's policy and objectives;
- the extent to which complaints-handling procedures are being followed;
- the ability of the existing complaints-handling process to achieve objectives;
- strengths and weaknesses of the complaints-handling process;
- opportunities for improvement in the complaints-handling process and its outcomes.

The complaints-handling audit can be planned and conducted as part of the quality management system audit. For more information on management system auditing, organizations should consult ISO 19011.

Bibliography

- [1] ISO 9001:2015, *Quality management systems — Requirements*
- [2] ISO 9004, *Quality management — Quality of an organization — Guidance to achieve sustained success*
- [3] ISO 10001:2018, *Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for codes of conduct for organizations*
- [4] ISO 10003, *Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for dispute resolution external to organizations*
- [5] ISO 10004:2018, *Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for monitoring and measuring*
- [6] ISO 19011, *Guidelines for auditing management systems*

