



QMS Quick Learning Activity

Customer Service-Handling and Complaints

ISO/IEC 17025:2005

Abbreviations and Acronyms

- **Feedback** - Information on performance received from a customer
- **Customer Service** - Cooperation with customer
- **Root Cause Analysis (RCA)** - Determination of the true reason why a problem occurred
- **Corrective Action (CA)** - Action to eliminate the cause of a detected nonconformity



Feedback

- The laboratory must seek feedback, both
 - Positive
 - Negative
- Possible ways include:
 - Annual customer satisfaction survey
 - “Tell us what you think” link to email
 - Talk to customers
 - Web page link



Photo credit: unbounce.com

- Why should you seek feedback?
 - Good customer service
 - Address complaints
 - Correct errors, if applicable
 - If necessary, perform root cause analysis



Customer Service



- The laboratory must be willing to cooperate with customers
 - To clarify requests
 - To monitor the laboratory's performance related to the work performed
 - To ensure confidentiality of customers
- Staff must use good communication skills with customers
 - Customers may have to be provided a guide in technical matters, such as opinions, results, interpretations, etc.
 - Inform the customer of delays or major deviations in the performance of tests



Customer Complaints

Internal & External

The laboratory needs to have a policy & procedure for resolution of complaints

- Does the person who receives the complaint document it?
- Management should review complaints and determine if the complaint has merit.
 - If so, take corrective action
 - If not, document and contact client
- If complaint is repeated, then it should be reviewed for corrective/preventive action.



Customer Complaints

- Keep records of the investigations and resolutions
 - Were they addressed?
 - How were they corrected?
 - Verify results are correct
 - Review the analytical data



Photo credit: shl.uiowa.edu



Why Listen to Customer Complaints?

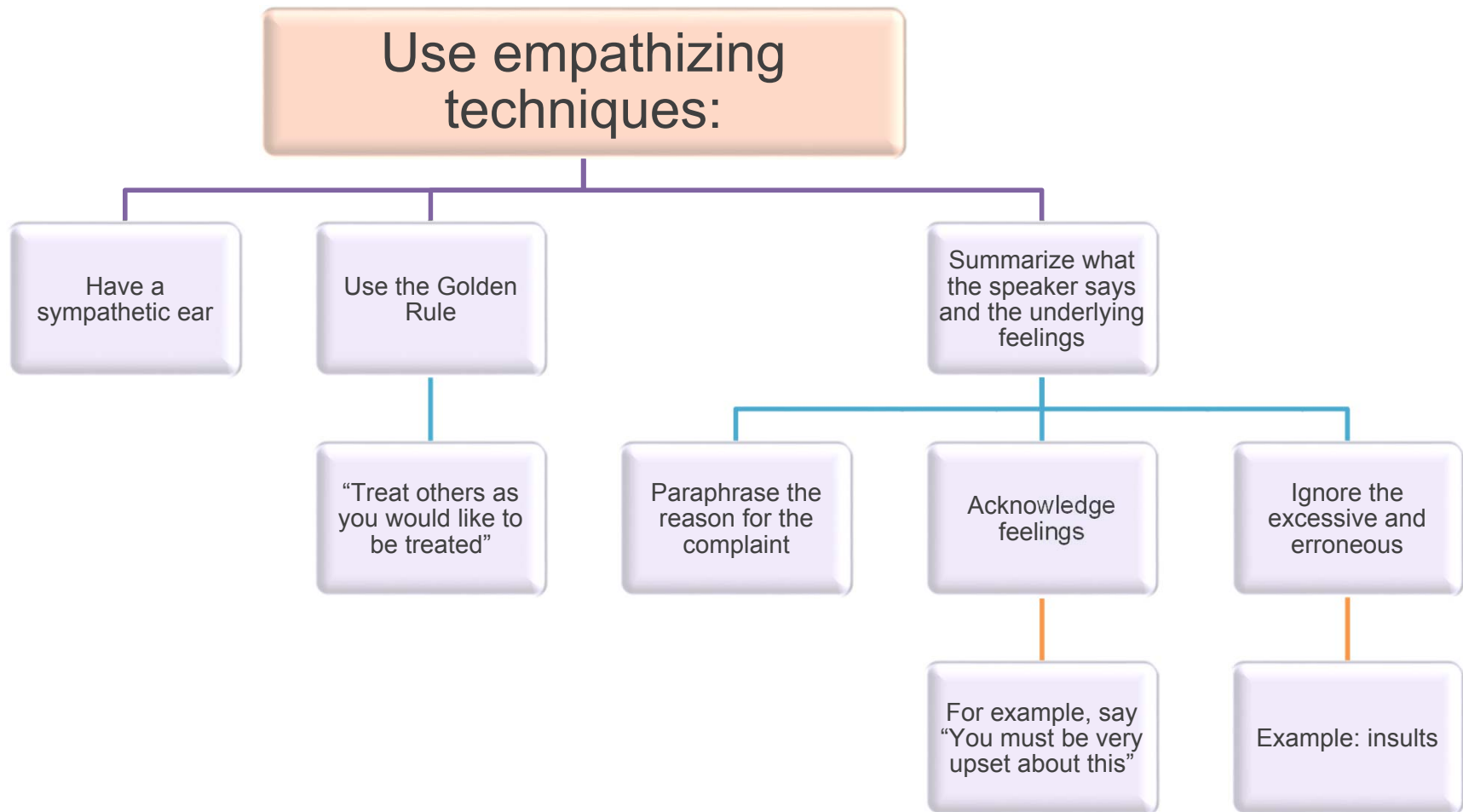
- Addressing complaints will help to find and solve any problems
- When a customer's complaints are addressed successfully, loyalty and foster goodwill are built; even dissatisfied customers may be able to be won back
- Research shows that normally only 1 in 26 people are likely to complain and as many customers do not think it is worthwhile
- Someone who has a good experience is likely to tell 3 other people, but someone who has a bad experience will tell, on average, 11 people



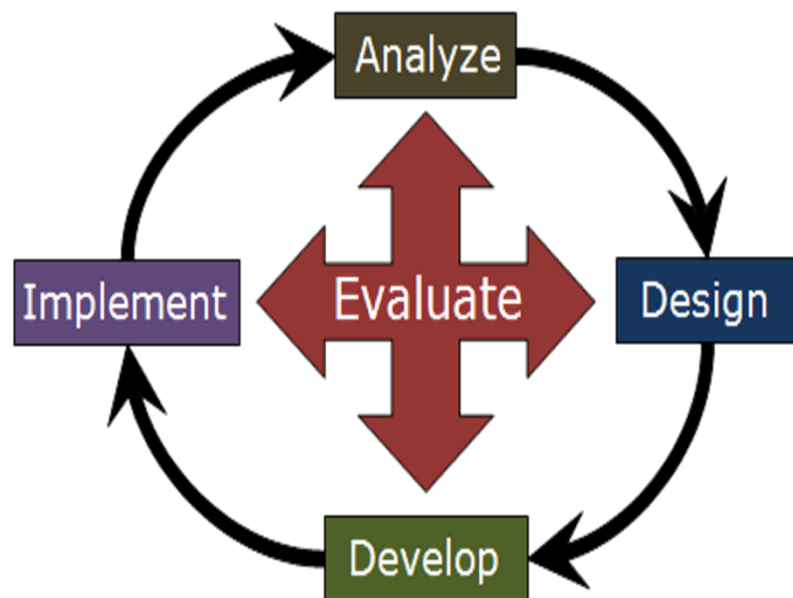
Photo credit: Mike Baldwin



How to Respond to Complaints



How to Respond to Complaints



- Find solutions to complaints while on the phone
 - Don't talk about what **can't be done**, but what **can be done**
 - If possible, offer alternatives
 - If something has gone wrong, don't argue about the problem, act to rectify it. Demonstrate to the customer concern about them and the desire to correct the situation as quickly as possible

If a root cause analysis is needed to be performed, some ideas to remember include:

- People are generally not the ultimate cause of problems
- People implement processes
- Most people do not come to work planning to sabotage their own work
- Do not waste time looking at surface issues
- Use passive voice to avoid “blame game”
- Examples:
 - “Bob didn’t complete the form AB correctly” (WRONG)
 - “Form AB lacked necessary review and approval” (CORRECT)



Photo credit: medicalsea.org



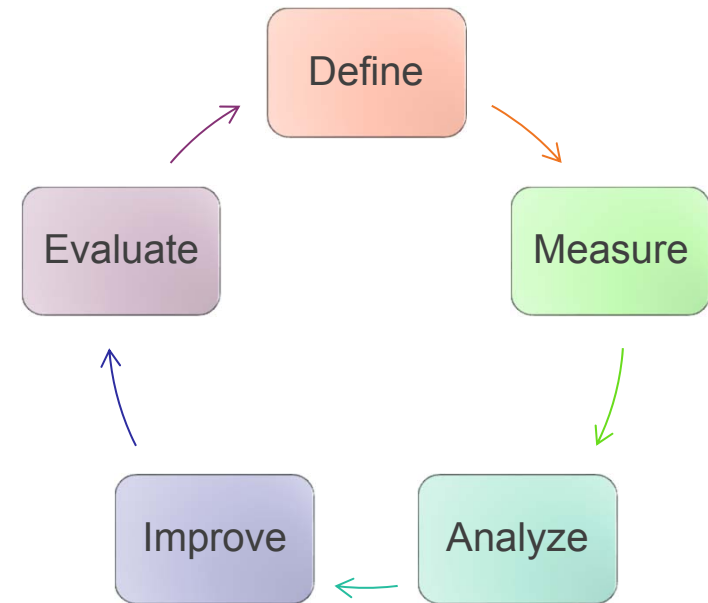
Correction vs. Corrective Action

- Correction
 - Action to eliminate a detected nonconformity
 - The immediate action taken to correct a problem, usually to allow data to be reported to a customer
 - Examples include:
 - making an adjustment
 - fixing a mistake
 - repeating analysis
- Corrective action
 - Action to eliminate the cause of a detected nonconformity
 - Must establish a root cause
 - Need to dig deeper to find out the “WHY”
 - Must address the root cause (prevents recurrence)



Determine the Root Cause

- What's the problem? (DEFINE & MEASURE)
- Sometimes “Why” is not the starting question
 - What is it?
 - When did it happen?
 - Where did it happen?
 - How were overall goals affected?
 - Keep it simple—make an outline
 - People see problems differently
- Why did it happen? (ANALYZE)
- What will be done? (IMPROVE)
- EVALUATE to ensure the problem has truly been solved (PREVENT)

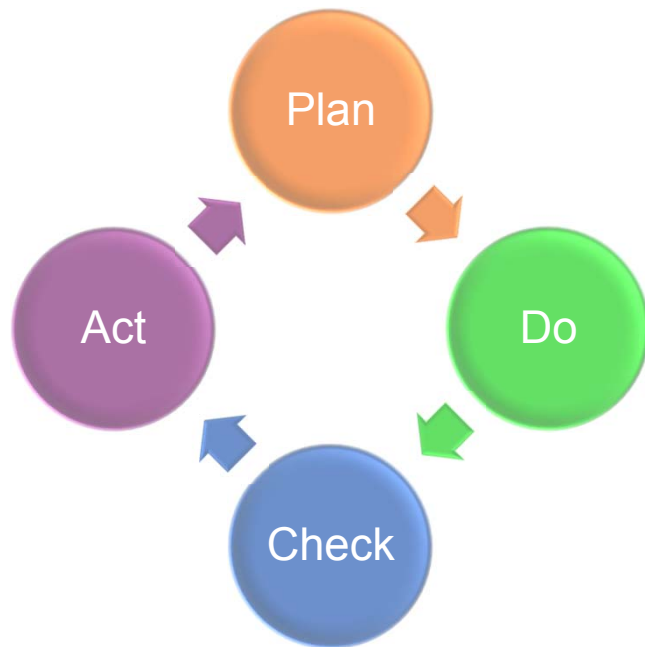


Potential Root Causes of Problems

- Customer requirements (e.g., delayed delivery of samples- “batching”)
- The samples (e.g., incorrect collection)
- Sample specifications
- Methods & procedures (most correct or most up-to-date utilized for testing?)
- Consumables not delivered on time
- Equipment & its calibration



Implement Solution & Monitor



- Implement the corrective action (CA)
- Monitor to ensure CA effective
 - Record findings and observations to see if the adjustment fixes the problem
 - If the problem happens again, select another variable from list
- Audit the area as soon as possible to confirm effectiveness
- Close the CA
- Report back to the customer, if applicable

Conclusion

- Customers usually only complain when things are very bad
- Complaints should be addressed immediately
- Treat customers empathetically
- Perform root cause analysis to understand the “why” of the problem
- When things go wrong—look at the system and/or process to see what may have caused the error—do not assign blame to people

“Take time to deliberate; but when the time for action arrives, stop thinking and go in.” Andrew Jackson



References

- ISO/IEC 17025:2005
 - <https://www.iso.org/standard/39883.html>

