



QMS Quick Learning Activity

Customer Service, Feedback, and Complaints

ISO/IEC 17025:2017

Abbreviations and Acronyms

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



Feedback



Photo credit: unbounce.com

- 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

- Why should you seek feedback?
 - Good customer service
 - Address complaints
 - Identify and manage risks and opportunities
 - Correct errors, if applicable
- If necessary, perform cause analysis

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Customer Service



- The laboratory must be willing to cooperate with customers to:
 - Clarify requests
 - Monitor the laboratory's performance related to the work performed
 - 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 deviations in the performance of tests.



Customer Complaints – Internal and External

The laboratory needs to have a documented process for receiving, evaluating, and making decisions on complaints.

- Does the person who receives the complaint document it? All complaints must be logged.
- The laboratory ensures the competency of staff who review complaints and determines 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 reported test results are correct
 - Review the analytical data
 - Perform a follow-up audit
- Actions are reviewed, approved, and communicated to the customer by staff not involved with the original laboratory activities
- Complaints and feedback provide inputs to the laboratory's process for managing risks and opportunities, and they are evaluated during management review.
- The customer is informed of the process (and its end).



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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

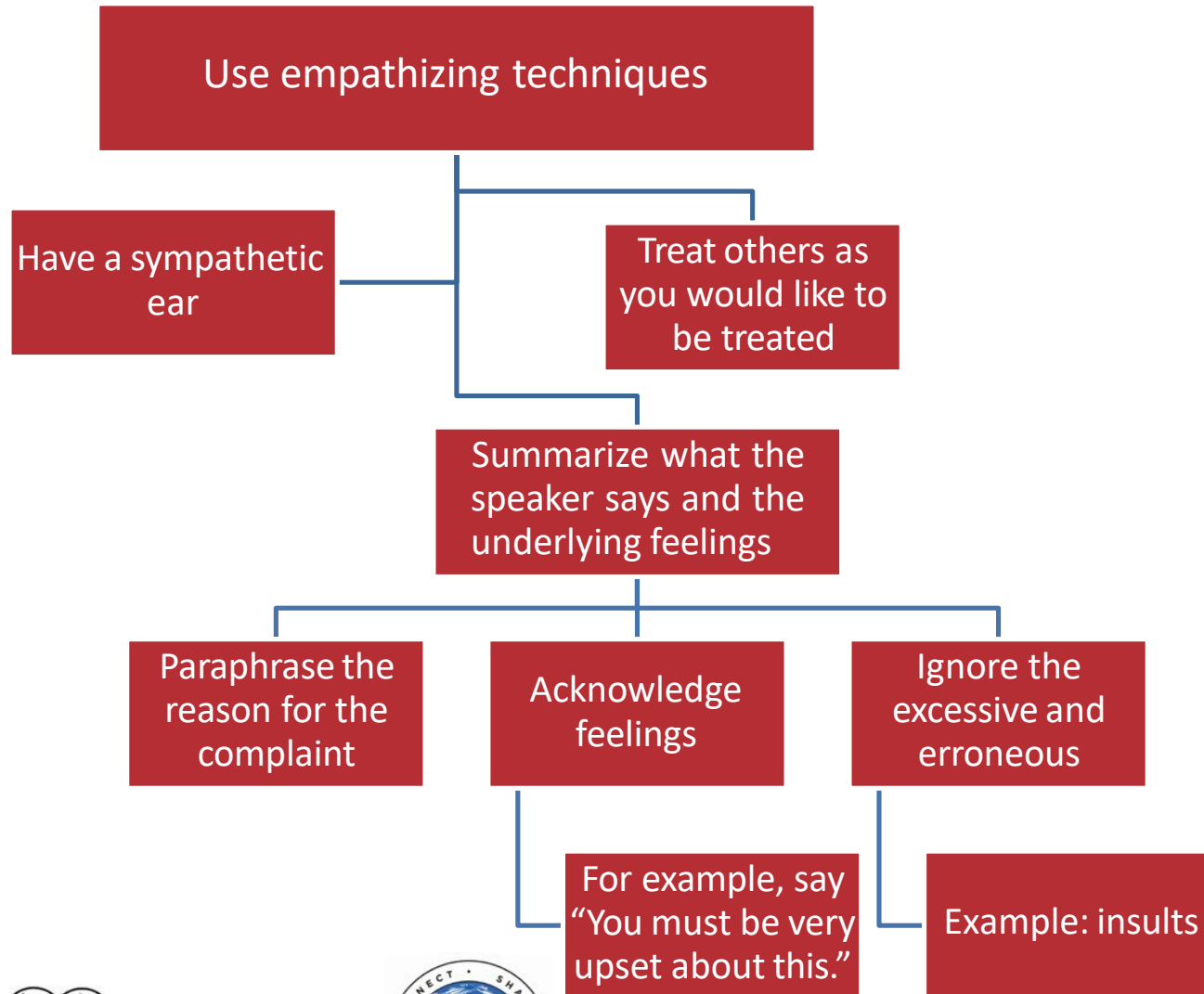


Photo credit: Mike Baldwin



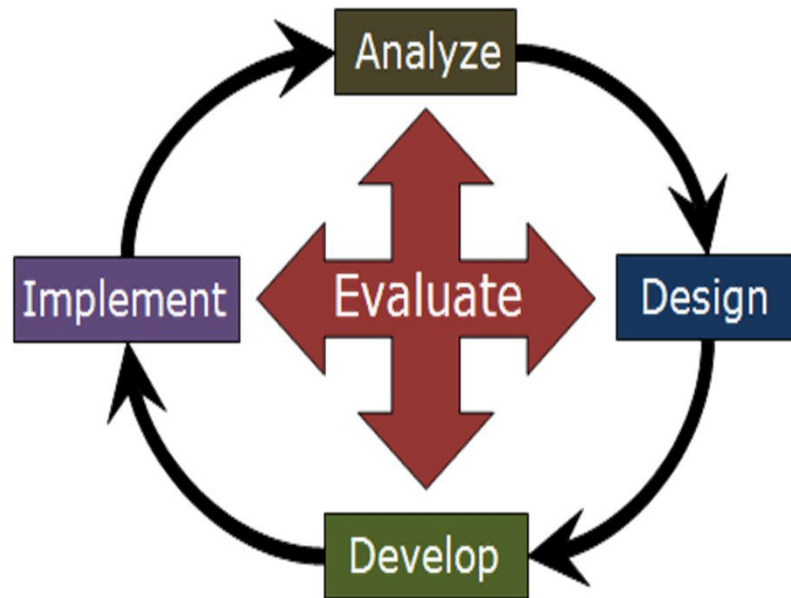
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How to Respond to Complaints



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How to Respond to Complaints



- Find solutions to complaints while on the phone with the customer.
 - 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 cause analysis is needed, 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



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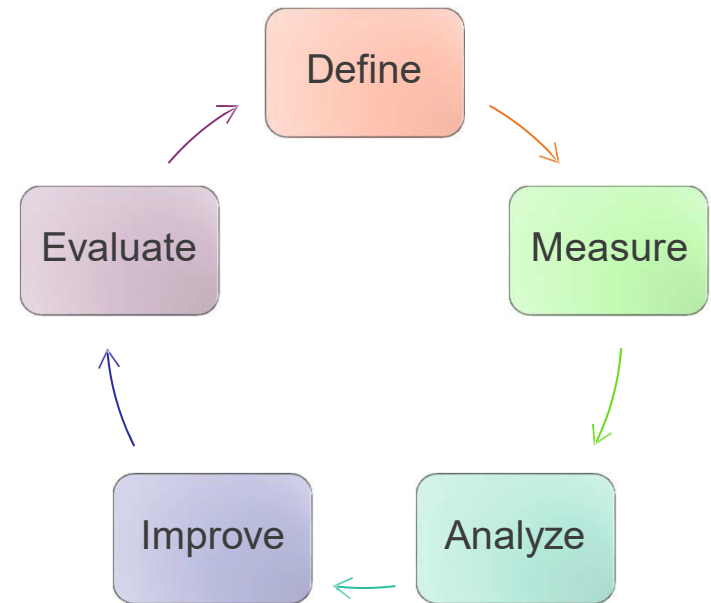
Correction vs. Corrective Action

- 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(s) of a detected nonconformity
 - Must address the cause(s) to prevent recurrence



Determine the Cause(s)

- 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 Causes of Problems

- Customer requirements (e.g., delayed delivery of samples, “batching”)
- Sample
 - Representivity
 - Integrity
- 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
- Monitor to ensure corrective action is 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 corrective action
- 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 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



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References

- ISO/IEC 17025:2017
 - <https://www.iso.org/standard/66912.html>

