

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Effective Consumer Complaints

We've all purchased products or services that don't live up to expectations or that are in some way damaged or inferior. Yet how many of us bother to complain to anyone except our friends and family?

Quality companies will actually want you to complain if their goods or services don't live up to expectations. They place great importance on word of mouth, and with good reason. Traditional wisdom says that a happy customer may pass on the word to one person, but an unhappy customer will likely spread the word to ten.

Give Them a Chance

Remember that attitude is everything when complaining. At all times, be courteous and unemotional but firm, and your complaints will usually reap the rewards you are after. Here are some great tips to get you started:

- Start with the salesperson that sold you the product or service. Explain the problem. Be courteous and considerate and get their name. Blame does not usually lie with the salesperson and you want them on your side.
- If you receive no satisfaction from the salesperson, or if your complaint is about the salesperson, call the company's customer service department. Remain calm and courteous. Ask the person on the phone for their name before you begin discussing your complaint. Again, explain the problem. And again, remember that the person you are speaking to is not the person at fault.
- Keep track of what transpires. Keep a file with receipts, warranties, names of people you have spoken to, dates the conversations took place and brief summaries of the conversations.

Go Higher Up

If your initial complaints receive no satisfaction, it's time to start going higher.

- Call the company's head office for the name of the director of Customer Service. Get the exact spelling of their name and their address.
- Write a letter. Start with factual information about your complaint. Give the date when the product or service was purchased, the store or outlet where the purchase was made and any relevant product names, models or service descriptions.
- Describe the problem briefly and the efforts you have made to get the issue resolved. Be brief and factual. Give dates when complaints were made, names of people spoken to and results, or lack thereof.
- State what you would like. Is a full or partial refund the objective? A credit? A product exchange? A service visit to correct a problem?
- Request a response within two weeks. Give a telephone number where you can be reached during the day, plus your email and mailing address.

Go to the Top

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 It's time to pull in the big guns.

- Call to get the name, precise title and address of the company president.
- Write a letter to the president. If you have previously been a loyal customer, be sure to mention this. Repeat customers are costly for companies to acquire. They have no desire to lose any.
- Remain unemotional and professional. Base the letter on the same details that were in your first letter, and recount how you have previously written to the company with no satisfactory response. Give names of all people you have spoken or written to, along with dates. State that you expect to receive a response within three weeks.
- Copy this letter to the director of Customer Service that you previously approached.
- Send the letter to the president by registered mail. Keep copies of all correspondence.
- If you continue to receive no satisfaction, decide whether it is worth the cost of getting a lawyer to send a letter to the company.
- Small Claims Court is another option.

Next time you're dissatisfied, let the company know! When you complain in a civilized and professional manner you not only get results, but help the company avoid similar mistakes in the future.