

Doing it by the numbers...

A structured approach to complaint resolution

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Mike Bird 25 April 2017

“OIA timescales

“When staff are fatigued and under pressure, how do you balance rigour of your complaints investigation with the limited time allowed by the OIA (where you are faced with multiple issues involving different areas of your HEI)?

Is the answer cultural?”

"Is the answer cultural?"

No

The push of pressure

vs

The need for speed

Classic fears...

- ...blame
- ...setting unwanted precedents
- ...OIA reversals
- ...judicial review
- ...having to prove that cases have been handled well
- ...cost challenges

Classic approaches...

- Increase investigators' skills in content knowledge and customer care
- Create (complex) procedures to try to handle everything
- Buy / build case management tools
- Manage quality retrospectively through review / panels / audit
- Give difficult cases only to a 'trusted few'

Classic problems

- Lack of consistency
- Hard to scale / flex
- Delay
- Cases that drown in information
- Black-boxing
- Customer unhappiness
- High baseline stress levels for staff

Sheer heart attack

When it matters...

When time is tight...

We do it by the numbers

**We don't think
about
how we think**

**What do
customers want?**

Complainants typically want these things

- 1. To be acknowledged**
- 2. To be validated**
- 3. To get an explanation**
- 4. To receive redress**
- 5. (To have someone's head on a platter)**
- 6. To add value**

Manage complaints through questions

Stage 1: Have we heard the complaint?

Stage 2: Did something go wrong?

Stage 3: Why did it go wrong?

Stage 4: What should we do
to make it right?

Stage 5: How can we make
things better for others?

Stage 6: Have we done everything
we can (to address this complaint)?

Stage 1

Have we heard the complaint?

Stage 2

Did something go wrong?

Stage 3

Why did it go wrong?

Answering why...

1. Isolate the core problem
2. What was the proximate (direct) cause?
3. What were the circumstantial cause(s)?
4. What were the behavioural cause(s)?
5. What other problems are there?
Repeat.
6. How can we be sure our explanations are correct?

Stage 4

**What should we do to
make it right?**

Stage 5

**How can we make things
better for others?**

Add value

1. Eliminate the proximate cause
2. Adjust relevant circumstantial cause(s)
3. Adjust work environment to reduce behavioural causes
4. What caused the causes?
5. What else needs to be fixed the same way?

Stage 6

**Have we done everything
we can?**

Manage stages by questions

- Know which question we need to answer at each stage
- Determine the kinds of information we need to answer it
- Establish a checklist for each stage
- Manage / report by stages

Issues

- It can be hard to separate issues (especially downstream)
- Rigorous diagnosis is hard and requires structure
- Extra effort is needed in customer care
- Need explicit and robust policies for managing political / public / legal borderline issues

The stage questions

Stage 1: Have we heard the complaint?

Stage 2: Did something go wrong?

Stage 3: Why did it go wrong?

Stage 4: What should we do to
make it right?

Stage 5: How can we make
things better for others?

Stage 6: Have we done everything
we can (to address this complaint)?

Outcomes

- Greater consistency
- Faster, clearer resolution
- Fewer escalations
- Easier management
- Greater case portability
- Better auditability
- Better communication
- Happier customers

Results from elsewhere

- Complaint delays reduced by 1600 years/year
- Average complaint close time reduced from 26 days to 3
- Fewer escalations
- Greater resolution acceptance
- Capacity released to drive improvement

**What questions
do you have?**

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