

A Logical Way to Register Consumer Complaint & Obtain Redressal

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In today's times, we know that with every passing day, costs only keeps increasing while earnings continue shrinking. In the present scenario, consumer product manufacturers and service providers are in a lookout for opportunities to increase profit margins either fair or foul. On the other hand, consumers are in a constant looking to save money or at least make efforts to get the full value for the money spent. This difference in business perception between providers and users, expectantly and eventually leads, to a bitter understanding and spiteful collusions between them.

When a consumer is not satisfied with any product or service promised for the money spent to acquire it, then they have no option but to complaint. However, before lodging a complaint, it is imperative to understand rather well, as to whether we have firstly a valid complaint and secondly a reasonable acceptable solution to the matter. Only when we have a positive answer to the above two questions, we should take the following strategic steps to resolve the complaint and find a satisfactory resolution.

Complaints generally start with specific expectations of the outcome but eventually end up in getting an altogether different one. The first and foremost method to redress a complaint is to contact the providers' customer service department and explain to them concisely and calmly the entire problem on hand. If in case, the customer care department does not do what we expect or want them to do, try to report the reasons all over to the next higher authority in the hierarchy. Talking to a superior authority usually works. If it does not, then it is time to escalate matters to a still higher superior and look at other tactics to use. The following are the logical steps that we can follow to achieve our objective.

CALLING CUSTOMER CARE CALL CENTRE

First begin with a telephonic call to the customer service call centre and explain to them concisely and calmly the entire problem at hand. Proactively suggest that the situation has an easily solvable solution, clearly stating the expectations from them. It is better to figure out all the possible options our self and list it out in advance on paper while calling them up for discussions. This helps in setting the agenda, tone, and expectations, establishing the various parameters right from the start, saving everyone's time and effort. Nowadays call centers handle complaints for big organizations. Call centers work on commissions and incentives. The faster the call centers representative completes the call the larger is the pay packet and commissions they receive. Call centers are a high stress environment work place due to which we may sometimes need to keep reminding and complaining to get our work done the way we want.

CONTACTING CUSTOMER SERVICE PERSONNEL

In some cases, threatening the company to move out to their competition works in resolving the problem. Sometimes it is also helpful to cite examples, giving instances of their competitions offer for moving out, asking to justify as to why we should continue to do business with

them. A business study claims that 5% extra clients increases the profit by an average of 44% whereas, in contrast the cost of replacing one customer is five times the cost of keeping one happy. Most companies know this, with some of them even appointing special divisions to retain existing clients even if they have to dangle extra credits and freebees to some of their clients from moving over.

FOLLOW UP WITH CUSTOMER SERVICE CHIEF

The job of the chief executive customer service professional in any organization is to resolve consumer related problems coming their way. Their basic purpose is to keep customers happy so that they will not bother busy top executives or complaint to consumer bodies/forums or regulatory agencies or publicize the issue in the local press.

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE CEO'S OFFICE

Most large organizations have a wall of customer service personnel's surrounding their top high-ranking officials. Search for the corporate office address and the name of the CEO. Call the main telephone operator and ask for the CEO's office. Most likely, the CEO's assistance or personal secretary will attend to the call to listen to the problem and will most probably hand over the issue to an elite group of customer service personnel who have super problem resolving powers. At this stage, being patient without losing temper will easily resolve most problems, faster than going to a consumer court that will only be consuming time, effort, and money.

FLOODING EMAIL ID's OF ALL TOP EXECUTIVES

Find out the top executives Email ID by searching on line, or from the press releases of the company annual reports, investor relations sections, company websites, professional bodies where they are corporate members, through financial websites like stock exchange, or any other professional or social avenue. On can also try guessing the Email ID address format if you are able to get a sample Email ID of an employee. The next step is to flood the Emails ID's targeting all the top executives with the complaint along with the expectations. A top executive surely knows that their company will not be able to survive if customers are unhappy and do not stand with them. If we are able to convince the top person with our problem, without a doubt the problem will be resolved, at the earliest.

USING ADVERSE PUBLICITY TO ADVANTAGE

Telephone call and Emails generally work, but if it does not then it is better to publicize our problem all over the place, especially in the neighborhood of the vendor or shop where we availed our product or service. Simple flyers, newspaper advertisements, and effective use of the web and online posts, the social media, consumer forum blogs, now very popular with the newer generation can work wonders. Ideally, it will be better to threaten the top executive with our intentions to do all these when we write the letter or Email and most likely, we will get a suitable response. The simple logic here is that no company can afford to get the

negative publicity that will eventually make them lose business from thousands of customers for making one person unsatisfied and unhappy.

APPROACHING EXPERTS

Approach consumer bodies and government instituted consumer help lines to aid in registering the complaint as sometimes, complaints can extend long and consume too much time and effort to obtain suitable redressal. Several consumer organizations are more than willing to help consumers resolve their genuine grievances. Consumer bodies, however, expect consumers to approach them with their issues only after they have first complained to the relevant goods or service providers and have been unable to resolve their issues within a reasonable frame of time. Consumer organizations will intervene on our behalf with the relevant goods or service providers and help in agreeably resolving the issues on hand.

Consumer Guidance Society of India (CGSI), the foremost consumer organization in India also manages the Maharashtra Government instituted Toll Free Consumer Helpline: 1800-222262; & Email: mah.helpline@gmail.com to guide consumers resolve their complaints with goods and service providers amicably. CGSI, in fact, resolves over 80% of complaints by communicating the issue with the providers alone and if necessary mediates with the stakeholders for a suitable settlement. CGSI advise consumers with genuine complaints to approach consumer courts for litigation as the very last resort.

CONSUMER COURTS

The primary objective of setting up consumer courts by the government was to provide speedy settlements of consumer issues, records, however, prove otherwise. Consumer courts are flooded with a large number of consumer complaints. Inordinate delays, adjournments are the norm and cases take several years for resolution. A consumer by law can always fight a case individually, however practically we generally see lawyers battle the case on behalf of the consumers, making the overall situation as good or bad as a general regular court.

CONCLUSION

Business houses have the right to make profits in order to survive. Similarly, consumers have the legitimate right to expect goods and services promised by business houses and advertisements; and if it is not to their expectations, have a right to a complaint and seek redressal. Complaining and getting justice helps, all of us to improve the manner, we treat each other. Taking appropriate action helps in improving the overall goods and services quality in the country.

One point, however, to note is that consumer bodies only cannot protect all the consumers from irresponsible profiteers, or even resolve all their related complaints. Consumers alone can take the fight forward and safeguard the legitimate consumer protection rights granted by the Indian constitution.

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT COOKING OIL?

Dr. Sitaram Dixit – Chairman CGSI

Cooking oil is a significant ingredient in almost all our dishes and selecting the right one for use is vital for our health. The following are some simple oil basics that can help us select the right oil. All oils have fatty acids like saturated (SFA), poly-unsaturated (PUFA), and mono-unsaturated (MUFA).

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research, ideal oil is one, which has SFA : MUFA : PUFA ratio of 27-33% : 33-40% : 27-33%. While purchasing oil we should ensure that the oil has low saturated fats (less than 2 g for every 10 g), zero or no trans fats and higher amounts of MUFA and PUFA as this combination is the best suitable for a healthy human heart. Unfortunately, packs do not mention this.

All oils have a specific smoke point, namely the temperature beyond which the oil starts to produce harmful chemicals. Oils with high smoke points can withstand high temperatures and are suitable for deep frying, stir frying, searing, etc. On the other hand, oils with a low smoke point are good for sautéing, steaming, as a salad dressing. Examples of oil with high smoke point are – coconut oil, sunflower, soybean, rice bran, peanut, sesame, mustard, safflower, and palmolein.

It is important to note that safflower, sunflower, and soybean contain more polyunsaturated fatty acids, which can form polymers, and acryl amides that are carcinogenic if one uses the oil for **repeated deep-frying**. Rice bran oil contains oryzanol and palmolein has natural Vitamin E. Olive oil comes in various varieties like virgin, extra virgin, but has a medium to low smoke point. It is better to use it as a salad dressing or for sautéing not for frying.

A healthy way to incorporate oil in our food is by using oil blends that provide all essential fatty acids. Alternately, we can also use two oils separately or rotate our oil every two months. **It is better to remember, that oil does not add taste to our food, it is the spices and other ingredients. Use oils moderately to be healthy without ailment.**

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