

The Standard

CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



Version 2.0



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Introduction

The Customer Service Excellence Standard V2 (CSE Standard) is a Strategic Framework for Transforming Customer Experience. It is designed to transform customer service by embedding professional, high-level service concepts across all sectors. This unique improvement tool empowers organisations and their staff to put their customers at the heart of everything they do.

By embracing this Standard, organisations can expect to see enhanced customer satisfaction, increased loyalty, and improved staff morale. Moreover, its versatility enables seamless application across the public, commercial, and third sectors, making it an invaluable resource for any organisation aiming to excel in customer service.

Three Levels of Organisational Impact

1
2
3

Continuous Improvement Catalyst

Evaluate and benchmark service capability to uncover opportunities for innovation and growth.

Culture & People Development

Build essential skills and behaviours that drive a customer-first culture across all teams.

Independent Validation & Reputation Building

Achieve formal certification that demonstrates commitment to excellence—boosting credibility with customers, stakeholders, and partners.

Features and Explanations

The following pages detail the CSE Standard.

The standard comprises of **five Criteria** supported by **12 related Principles**, and underpinned by **39 Elements**.

Every Element is identified by a reference number and title, and outlines the specific outcome your organisation should accomplish. This is what your Assessor will focus on during an assessment of your organisation against the CSE Standard. In addition, each Element explains ***Why This Element is Important*** to your organisation and how it relates to providing outstanding customer service.

Each organisation seeking assessment is unique and will therefore approach the meeting of the CSE Standard in a way that reflects its individuality, and your Assessor will take that into account when working with you.



Customer Insight

Criterion 1 of the CSE Standard focuses on an organisation's understanding of customers. A comprehensive understanding of the characteristics, needs, and preferences of both current and potential customers enables the organisation to tailor its offerings effectively.

By prioritising inclusive service, the organisation ensures that all individuals, particularly those facing challenges in accessing services, feel valued and heard. Through strategic engagement and active customer consultation, a culture of collaboration and responsiveness is fostered. Establishing customer satisfaction targets, along with effective feedback mechanisms, drives continuous improvement and enhances the overall customer experience.

Ultimately, these endeavours significantly contribute to the organisation's success and reputation, positioning it as a leader in customer-centric service delivery.

1.1 Customer Identification

1.1.1 Understanding Customers

We can demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics, needs, and preferences of our current and potential customer groups based on recent, reliable data.

Why?

Understanding customer characteristics, needs, and preferences is paramount. Organisations must focus on a personalised service and leveraging data to enhance customer experiences. By demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of current and potential customer groups, organisations can effectively meet and exceed customer expectations, thereby maintaining a competitive edge.

1.1.2 Inclusive Service

We actively review and address the needs of individuals who may have difficulties accessing our services, ensuring we meet their specific requirements.

Why?

In contemporary customer service, there is a strong emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility. Actively reviewing and addressing the needs of individuals who may have difficulty accessing services is crucial to ensuring that all customers feel valued and supported. This commitment enhances the overall customer experience and demonstrates a proactive approach to meeting diverse customer needs.

1.2 Engagement and Feedback

1.2.1 Strategic Engagement

We take a clear, strategic approach to engaging customers, involving them through tailored methods that address the specific needs of identified customer groups.

Why?

Tailoring methods to meet the specific needs of identified customer groups ensures that services are relevant and practical, fostering stronger relationships and loyalty. This level of customer involvement enhances satisfaction and drives innovation as organisations receive valuable feedback directly from their customers.

1.2.2 Consultation

We actively consult with customers to enhance our services, ensuring they receive timely updates on outcomes and actions taken in response to their valuable feedback.

Why?

Consulting customers is increasingly recognised as vital for service improvement and customer satisfaction. By actively consulting with customers and keeping them updated on actions taken in response to their feedback, organisations can build trust and loyalty. It demonstrates to customers that their opinions are valued, which can lead to enhanced services and a more positive customer experience.

1.2.3 Regular Review

We regularly evaluate our customer engagement strategies to ensure that the methods employed are effective and produce reliable and representative outcomes.

Why?

The emphasis on regularly evaluating customer engagement strategies demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement, which is essential in today's dynamic market. By ensuring methods are effective and yield reliable outcomes, organisations can adapt to changing customer needs and preferences.

1.3 Measuring Customer Satisfaction

1.3.1 Customer Satisfaction Targets

We have established ambitious yet achievable key performance indicators to measure customer satisfaction in our key service areas and have communicated them to our staff, customers, and stakeholders.

Why?

Having customer satisfaction targets enables organisations to assess their service quality and identify areas for improvement. This process not only drives accountability but also ensures that customer needs are met effectively, ultimately leading to increased customer loyalty and satisfaction.

1.3.2 Customer Satisfaction Feedback

We have identified and implemented effective customer feedback methods that prioritise our key service areas and include mechanisms for real-time feedback.

Why?

By prioritising key service areas and incorporating real-time feedback, organisations can make informed decisions that directly enhance customer satisfaction. This responsiveness not only fosters customer loyalty but also creates a culture of continuous improvement. As a result, organisations are better positioned to adapt to changing market demands.

1.3.3 Customer Satisfaction Measures

We employ reliable methods to measure our key customer satisfaction performance indicators across a diverse range of customer groups, the results of which are systematically analysed and optimised, where appropriate, with stretch targets and communicated to staff, customers, and stakeholders.

Why?

It emphasises the need for reliable methods to measure customer satisfaction, which is crucial for understanding and improving service quality and for providing insights into customer experiences and expectations. This information enables organisations to make informed improvements to their services and targets while sharing results to ensure service improvements align with current best practices, where data-driven decision-making is paramount..



Organisational Culture

Criterion 2 of the CSE Standard emphasises the importance of organisational culture in delivering exceptional customer service.

For an organisation aiming for customer service excellence, essential elements such as leadership commitment and staff empowerment are crucial to creating a robust framework that prioritises customer needs. Leadership commitment fosters a culture centred around service, while empowering staff encourages proactive engagement and enhances satisfaction.

Furthermore, aligning organisational policies with customer expectations and maintaining data protection helps build trust and loyalty with customers. When these elements work in harmony, they significantly enhance overall customer experiences, driving repeat business and contributing to success.

2.1 Leadership & Commitment

2.1.1 Commitment to Customer-Centric Service

We prioritise providing a service centred on our customers, as demonstrated by the actions of our leaders and managers and enhanced through technology and innovation.

Why?

A steadfast commitment to placing customers at the heart of service delivery is crucial. Customers expect quality service, personalised experiences, and responsiveness. This approach, as demonstrated by leaders' and managers' actions and behaviours, is essential for fostering customer loyalty and satisfaction.

2.1.2 Policy and Procedure Alignment

Our policies and procedures are designed to foster a customer service culture that aligns with corporate commitments and insights, using, where appropriate, artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics to enhance experiences while prioritising personalisation and proactive engagement.

Why?

It underscores the necessity of a customer service culture that aligns with corporate commitments and customer insights. Integrating technologies such as AI and data analytics is pivotal to enhancing customer experiences, and the emphasis on personalisation and proactive engagement aligns with current customer expectations.

2.1.3 Privacy Protection

We prioritise customer privacy during face-to-face interactions and strictly protect customer data throughout its transfer, storage, and usage processes.

Why?

Customer privacy is paramount; prioritising it during interactions and ensuring robust data protection throughout its lifecycle is essential. This focus builds customer trust when it aligns with industry regulatory requirements and best practices.

2.1.4 Empowerment of Staff

Our staff are encouraged to deliver excellent customer service by fostering a customer-centric culture that empowers them and leverages technology and data analytics to enhance customer satisfaction.

Why?

A customer-centric culture not only empowers staff to take initiative but also leads to higher job satisfaction and retention, contributing to overall organisational success. In modern contexts, it is also essential to integrate technology and data analytics to enhance customer insights.

2.2 Professionalism & Staff Engagement

2.2.1 Recruitment & Training

Our recruitment, induction, training, and development practices reflect a strong commitment to customer service, ensuring that all staff are equipped to meet customer needs effectively.

Why?

The emphasis on recruitment, induction, training, and development practices underscores a strong commitment to ensuring that all staff are well-prepared to meet customer needs effectively. As customer expectations continually evolve, such a foundation is vital for fostering a culture of service excellence.

2.2.2 Staff Professionalism

Our staff embody professionalism and courtesy, interacting with customers to comprehend their needs and improve service delivery across all communication channels.

Why?

Professionalism and politeness are vital for an organisation as they enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. When staff engage respectfully and effectively with customers, it builds trust and encourages repeat business. Additionally, such interactions enhance the organisation's reputation

2.2.3 Customer Focus at All Levels

Customer focus, including a commitment to digital engagement and personalised service, is prioritised throughout the organisation, with mechanisms in place for individual and team performance management and feedback.

Why?

By offering personalised service, organisations can address individual needs, foster stronger relationships and encourage repeat business. Furthermore, robust performance management and feedback mechanisms create a culture of continuous improvement, enabling teams to adapt to evolving customer expectations.

2.2.4 Staff Contribution

Our staff understand how they contribute to the customer-centric focus of the organisation and believe that leaders, managers, customers, and stakeholders recognise their efforts.

Why?

When staff understand their role in contributing to a customer-centric focus and feel recognised for their efforts, it enhances their engagement and commitment to the organisation. This, in turn, can lead to improved customer service, higher satisfaction rates, and, ultimately, better business outcomes

Information and Access



Criterion 3 of the CSE Standard emphasises the importance of providing comprehensive service information and clarifying charges to enhance customer understanding and accessibility. It advocates delivering accurate information through various channels, leveraging technology to improve service delivery and customer engagement.

Furthermore, it underscores the need to create a welcoming environment for customers visiting the organisation and to foster strong partnerships that meet their needs and expectations. These initiatives are essential for enriching the customer experience and satisfaction by ensuring access to reliable information and cultivating an atmosphere of trust and loyalty.

3.1 Availability & Quality of Information

3.1.1 Service Transparency

We consistently provide comprehensive service information, including contact methods, operational details, personalised service, responsiveness, and all associated service charges (where applicable), tailored to customer needs, ensuring transparent communication and accessibility for all customers.

Why?

Providing comprehensive service information is crucial for organisations, as it fosters trust and builds strong customer relationships. By ensuring transparent communication about contact methods, operational details, and associated charges, organisations can manage customer expectations.

3.1.2 Customer Information Delivery

We ensure that customer information is delivered through appropriate channels, aligned with customers' needs and preferences.

Why?

It underscores the importance of providing tailored information, which is crucial where customers expect personalised experiences. Additionally, the emphasis on diverse, appropriate channels aligns with current trends, as customers prefer to engage across various platforms, making it essential for companies to cater to their needs and preferences.

3.1.3 Digital Information

We utilise technology, including but not limited to digital access, applications, social media, data-driven insights, and virtual chat systems, to enhance customer engagement and satisfaction.

Why?

Leveraging digital tools, data-driven insights, and social media enables organisations to meet evolving customer expectations, provide personalised experiences, and drive overall business growth. Technology, such as online access, applications, social media, and virtual chat systems, allows organisations to connect with customers more effectively and provide timely support.

3.1.4 Comprehension Assurance

We have implemented systems to ensure that customers receive and understand the information provided, leveraging technology to improve communication and anticipate customer needs.

Why?

As customer expectations evolve, clear communication and understanding become even more critical. Customers expect timely, accurate information and personalised interactions. They are increasingly engaging through digital channels, and the effective use of technology can streamline interactions.

3.1.5 Continuous Quality Improvement

We systematically assess and enhance the quality of all types of our communications, including verbal, published, electronic, and web-based information.

Why?

Effective communication is paramount, as customers engage through various channels, including social media, chatbots, and email. Systematically evaluating and improving communication enhances clarity and understanding among team members, leading to better collaboration and fewer errors. Effective communication also reflects professionalism, which can bolster an organisation's reputation.

3.2 Accessibility of Services and/or Products

3.2.1 Accessibility

We are committed to making our services and products accessible to all customers and promoting inclusivity across diverse demographics.

Why?

With an increased emphasis on ensuring that services and products are accessible to all customers. This focus on inclusivity is crucial in creating positive customer experiences and catering to the diverse needs of a broader audience. By promoting accessibility, organisations can create a more equitable environment that enhances customer satisfaction and can broaden their market reach.

3.2.2 Customer Engagement

We continuously monitor and analyse customer engagement with our services and products to identify opportunities for enhancement and implement necessary improvements.

Why?

The focus on continuously monitoring and analysing customer engagement is crucial, as it indicates a proactive approach to identifying areas for improvement. This aligns with current best practices in customer service, where organisations strive to adapt to evolving customer needs and expectations.

3.2.3 Appropriate Facilities

We provide suitable facilities for customers visiting our premises in person, ensuring their comfort and accessibility needs are met.

Why?

Providing suitable facilities for in-person visitors is crucial to ensuring comfort and accessibility, key components of a positive customer experience.

3.3 Collaborative Partnerships

3.3.1 Coordinated Services

We leverage technology to partner with stakeholders, providing coordinated services that enhance customer benefits and ensure accountability for quality, creating a seamless experience for all users.

Why?

Coordinated services enable organisations to streamline operations, improve service delivery, and enhance customer satisfaction. By partnering with stakeholders and delivering coordinated services, organisations can ensure that they effectively meet customer expectations.

3.3.2 Communication & Accountability

We have established collaborative partnerships that enhance technology utilisation and incorporate customer feedback, thereby ensuring transparent communication and accountability regarding service quality.

Why?

Establishing collaborative partnerships that enhance technology utilisation and incorporate customer feedback is crucial for organisations. This approach promotes transparency and accountability regarding service quality, allowing organisations to adapt to customer needs effectively.

3.3.3 Community Engagement

We actively engage with the broader community, demonstrating a robust culture and a commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) that enhances our social impact.

Why?

Customers value organisations that actively engage with their communities and demonstrate their commitment to corporate social responsibility. This engagement enhances the organisation's social impact and fosters customer loyalty and trust, both of which are crucial to delivering exceptional customer service.

Service Delivery



Criterion 4 of the CSE Standard highlights the importance of establishing ambitious customer interaction standards and key performance indicators (KPIs). These standards not only align with the organisation's goals but also ensure compliance with national and industry regulations. By prioritising stakeholder engagement, organisations can remain attuned to their customers' evolving needs and expectations.

Moreover, the ongoing monitoring of these standards, coupled with transparent performance sharing, enables swift identification of areas for improvement. This proactive approach is key to enhancing service quality, fostering customer trust, and ultimately cultivating greater loyalty and satisfaction among customers.

4.1 Response Times & Quality Standards

4.1.1 Ambitious Customer Interaction Standards

In our pursuit of excellent customer service, we aim to meet, or ideally exceed, our ambitious key performance indicators, which are pivotal to achieving our organisational goals, including those relating to timeliness and quality of customer service, and are meticulously aligned with national standards, regulatory requirements, and industry benchmarks.

Why?

It ensures that organisations provide timely responses and high-quality customer service. This not only enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty but also aligns with organisational goals and relevant regulations.

4.1.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Our customer interaction standards and key performance indicators (KPIs) for timely response and quality customer service are shaped by feedback from relevant stakeholders, ensuring that our approach stays responsive and effective.

Why?

It emphasises the importance of formulating performance standards and key performance indicators based on feedback from relevant stakeholders, which is crucial for remaining responsive and effective in a rapidly changing environment. This focus on stakeholder feedback aligns with current best practices in customer service, where adaptability and continuous improvement are key to meeting customer expectations.

4.1.3 Performance Monitoring and Improvement

We continuously monitor, assess, and publicise our performance against national, regulatory, and industry standards and key performance indicators, including those related to the timeliness and quality of customer service, and when these standards or indicators are not met, we promptly implement the necessary improvement actions.

Why?

By consistently monitoring and assessing performance, an organisation can identify areas for improvement, respond promptly to any shortcomings, and make necessary adjustments.

4.2 Delivering on Our Promise

4.2.1 Sharing Standards

We ensure that customers are informed from the outset of our engagement with them about our commitment to timely responses, quality customer service standards, key performance indicators, and contract terms, thereby setting clear expectations.

Why?

It emphasises the importance of informing customers about service standards, key performance indicators and contract terms, which helps set clear expectations. This transparency is crucial for building trust.

4.2.2 Communicating Issues

We proactively address dips in delivery performance related to customer interaction standards and key performance indicators to ensure timely responses and quality service, and we promptly explain any issues to our customers.

Why?

A commitment to promptly addressing dips in delivery performance and explaining to customers is essential for maintaining transparency and trust. This approach is vital as customers value clear communication and responsiveness.

4.2.3 Benchmarking

We carefully benchmark our response time, customer service quality standards, and key performance indicators against comparable organisations, leveraging competitor insights to drive improvements and ensure our practices remain aligned with the highest external standards.

Why?

It emphasises the importance of benchmarking against similar organisations and leveraging competitor insights, both of which are crucial for continuous improvement.

Connecting with Customers



Criterion 5 of the CSE Standard emphasises the importance of connecting with customers through effective communication and responsive service. At the heart of this criterion is the establishment of a user-friendly complaints procedure that encourages proactive engagement and ensures that customer grievances are addressed promptly and effectively.

By training staff to handle complaints and empowering them to take corrective actions, organisations create an environment that values customer feedback and fosters responsiveness. Moreover, the ability to swiftly identify customer needs and share relevant information internally enhances service efficiency, minimising unnecessary contacts. Communicating next steps and timelines enhances transparency, thereby building trust and customer satisfaction.

Collectively, these practices not only address immediate concerns but also contribute to continuous service-delivery improvement, which is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in today's dynamic market.

5.1 Handling Complaints

5.1.1 Complaints Procedure

Our user-friendly complaints procedure utilises proactive engagement and technology to track and resolve issues quickly, as required by our key performance indicators for timely response, ensuring satisfaction for all parties involved.

Why?

The emphasis on a user-friendly complaints procedure and a commitment to resolving issues within an agreed timeframe aligns well with customer service expectations. Customers value clear communication and efficiency; the focus on satisfying all parties is fundamental to building positive relationships.

5.1.2 Complaints Handling

We provide comprehensive training and guidance to our staff, enabling them to effectively handle complaints (both formal and informal) relevant to their roles, and empower them to undertake appropriate corrective actions as necessary, in line with our detailed complaints and escalation policy and procedures.

Why?

Training staff to handle complaints effectively is crucial, as it equips them to address customer concerns promptly. Furthermore, empowering staff to take corrective actions fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, leading to improved customer satisfaction and loyalty.

5.1.3 Feedback & Improvement

We regularly review our complaints and feedback processes to ensure they effectively address customer concerns and inform service improvements based on customer experiences.

Why?

It highlights the importance of analysing customer feedback, which is essential for understanding customer needs and expectations. Additionally, regularly reviewing the complaints and feedback procedures for continual improvement demonstrates a dedication to enhancing service quality.

5.2 Handling Customer Enquiries

5.2.1 Identification of Customer Needs

We quickly identify customer needs during the initial contact and direct them to the appropriate representative, as required by our key performance indicators, to ensure timely responses that address their concerns.

Why?

By quickly directing customers to the appropriate representative, the organisation ensures that concerns are addressed effectively, minimising frustration and wait times. This proactive approach improves the customer experience and builds trust and loyalty by making customers feel valued and understood.

5.2.2 Sharing Customer Information

We utilise advanced technologies, including, where appropriate, Artificial Intelligence (AI), to facilitate the sharing of customer information within our organisation, minimising unnecessary contact and enhancing service efficiency as required by our key performance indicators, including timely response.

Why?

By utilising advanced technologies, such as AI, the organisation can ensure that relevant customer data is available to the correct representatives at the right time, reducing the need for customers to repeat information and minimising unnecessary contact.

5.2.3 Communicating Next Steps

We communicate the "next steps" and expected timelines to customers when the service cannot be completed during the initial interaction, while ensuring prompt responses to all initial enquiries.

Why?

Customers appreciate being informed about the next steps and timelines, especially when their issues cannot be resolved immediately. This practice helps build trust and satisfaction.

Achieving the Standard

An organisation will be rated against all Elements in the Standard using the system below.



Compliance Plus (CP)

Evidence provided by the Organisation—including input from its staff, customers, partners, and stakeholders—demonstrates that the Elements requirements are thoroughly integrated and are implemented with consistent creativity and innovation. These practices are widely regarded as outstanding or exemplary, especially when compared with organisations of similar size and in the same sector.



Compliance (C)

The evidence presented by the Organisation, its staff, customers, partners, and stakeholders confirm that the requirements described within the Element are being applied consistently and have been embedded in behaviours and practices. There are minimal areas for further development.



Partial Compliance (PC)

The evidence presented by the Organisation, its staff, customers, partners, and stakeholders confirm that the requirements described within the Element are being applied inconsistently or have not yet been in place for a sufficient time to verify that they are embedded and effective, and, as a result, require significant improvement.



Non-Compliance (NC)

The evidence presented by the Organisation, its staff, customers, partners, and stakeholders confirm that the requirements of this Element have not been addressed.



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