

HOW TO COMPLAIN & GET WHAT YOU WANT

- 1.** Calm down! And if possible, don't complain yet! Give yourself time to gather your thoughts and construct a list of everything you are unhappy about. As it isn't necessary to complain at the precise moment something happens, you won't quite be as emotionally charged and no one, not even the waiter who accidentally spilt soup over your Jimmy Choos, will react well to be shouted at.
- 2.** Be sure to document times, dates and names of those involved – this will give the organisation you are complaining to as much information as possible to help understand your complaint and act on it. Think about what you want to achieve from your complaint also. No organisation is under any obligation to give away things for free so preventing it from happening again and rectifying the problem should be key. Whatever your thrust, be clear and keep it in mind when complaining.
- 3.** Try to speak or at least write to the most senior person available. Many employees not in management positions are not able to do much more than apologise. If you want change, you need to contact decision makers, IE management.
- 4.** Never give up. Keep writing, keep calling and if it gets really silly with a poor response or the organisation not taking your complaint seriously enough, you can involve regulatory bodies, your local MP, write to the CEO or Managing Director and don't forget that your taxes pay for the Citizen's Advice Bureau and, where relevant, Trading Standards.
- 5.** If a complete stranger wanted something from you or needed your help, how would you want them to speak to you? Politely? Patiently? With respect? With as much information as possible? Which is how you should address the organisation - don't annoy people with "my Father is a Barrister", even if he is.
- 6.** Letters carry more weight than telephone calls. The tone, content and urgency of a 'phone call is lost in translation. A letter clearly and accurately documents every issue and can be copied, as you intend it to be read, to other people.
- 7.** Spare a thought for those handling your complaint. There's no excuse for rudeness but yours' may be the 20th complaint they've had that day and they may still be waiting for their lunch break. We're only human.
- 8.** Ensure correspondence is direct, clear, non-aggressive and non-threatening - but firm. Set a time limit of 14 days as a minimum to expect a reply regarding the points you've raised and where necessary, number them so it is clear what your complaint contains.