



Knowledgeone^{K1}

USING KNOWLEDGEONE^{K1} AS A COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

Using Knowledgeone^{K1} as a Complaints Management Solution

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Introduction

Now, I know none of you ever have complaints from your customers, but just in case you do in the future, this paper spells out how to use Knowledgeone^{K1}'s 'out-of-the-box' functionality to handle all aspects of complaint processing. This is a way to make your customers happy, or at least, happier.

Overview of the Complaints Process

I guess that the term 'complaints system' covers a multitude of sins and a plethora of industries and applications. Basically however, it means that you are trying to handle the situation when a customer is unhappy with some aspect of your business and has taken the trouble to tell you about it, (always a good thing – it is much worse if a customer is unhappy and doesn't tell you about it).

The complaint can take many forms and may arrive as a telephone call, an email, a fax or a letter as the most common forms. If you are really unlucky, the customer will take the trouble to come to your office and yell at you. This is described either as a verbal complaint or verbal abuse depending upon the circumstances and your degree of enjoyment or otherwise of the experience.

It is reasonable to assume that the customer expects you to take the complaint seriously. If you don't take complaints seriously then you really can't expect to hold on to your customers. So I guess that in a perverse way, the best way to rid yourself of complaints is to rid yourself of customers. This approach does have its pitfalls like no money for the rent this month.

If you do take the complaint seriously (and therefore your customers seriously) this fundamentally means you will investigate each complaint and then respond to the customer in a reasonable time frame with the results of your investigation.

In order to ensure that no complaint is overlooked, you will need to have some form of a registration process such that it is logged and visible. Losing a complaint is usually not good practice and will not endear you to your customers. It will also double your workload because you will end up having to handle complaints about complaints being missing as well as the original complaint.

It would also be a good idea to let the customer know you have received the complaint and will be looking into it. This helps convince the customer that you care and is usually a wise policy. In my experience, customers understand that you sometimes get it wrong but they never understand you ignoring them.

You will also probably delegate the investigation to the most suitable person and you will then need to track the progress of the investigation in case the customer contacts you again and asks that often embarrassing question, "What have you done about my complaint?" It is really difficult to blame someone else for the non response if you don't know who is handling it or where they are up to or not up to, as the case may be.

It also helps if someone in authority comes up with some guidelines or rules about how classes of complaints should be handled. It is tough to meet goals if no one sets them. Let's be a little formal and call this "Complaints Management Policy and Procedures".

And finally, there is always someone in management who fills in his or her time between nine and five by asking you for reports on all aspects of complaints management like, "How many complaints did we get last week? What percentage did we resolve within five days? How many are still outstanding after twenty days? How well is Joe Bloggs doing handling his complaints workload?" And my favourite, "What are our mean and average times to respond to complaints and can you graph it please for my management meeting in twelve minutes?"

On a more serious note, the bottom line is, "If you want to stay in business and prosper then you have to look after your customers. On a scale of importance of 1 to 3, customers rate 1, 2 and 3. An

essential part of looking after customers is to respond to each and every complaint in the most assiduous and expeditious fashion possible. If you look after your customers then they will in turn look after you. If you don't look after your customers then you very soon won't have any."

Effective complaints management is a foundation of every successful business.

Complaints Business Processes

If we view the above overview as typical of complaints management then we can clearly see a number of distinct business processes that we need to handle with Knowledgeone^{K1}.

Capture

You have to have a way of capturing the details of each and every complaint no matter the form it arrives in. This means that you have to be able to capture the details of a conversation (in person or by phone), a letter, an email, a fax or even a text message.

If you are clever, you will make it easy for yourself and the customers by formalizing the way complaints can be delivered. Obviously, the best way is via a form on your website.

Registration

Each and every complaint must be registered and given a unique number so it can be processed and tracked. The registration process should always include the date and time of receipt. It is always good policy to provide the customer with this unique complaint number because it makes the ongoing dialogue infinitely easier to manage for both parties.

Acknowledgement

Most customers won't be psychic so it is really good policy to let them know you have received their complaint and will be looking into it. This is also when you give them the complaint or tracking number. It is also the first step in convincing them that you really do care.

Classification

Before you can decide which lucky individual you will assign the complaint to, you will need to first classify the complaint. For example, in local government some classifications may be; trash collection; traffic safety; pedestrian walkways; etc. Once classified, it then becomes relatively simple to select the person or department best suited to investigate the complaint.

Investigation

Putting the complaint in your desk drawer and then waiting the prescribed five days is not a way to endear yourself to either your employer or your customers. If you are serious about caring for your customers, you need to make a serious effort to understand and investigate the complaint.

If you are smart, you will get someone else to do the work for you. This is why it is always a good idea to classify each complaint (as described above) and then flick it (sorry, transfer it) to the most appropriate person or department to handle.

Tracking

If you don't track complaints then you probably spend a lot of time avoiding phone calls and filtering them by voice mail. You probably also have a lot of unanswered emails.

It is much smarter to implement a tracking system so you aren't afraid to take those, "What is happening with my complaint?" phone calls. It is also a great way to reduce stress.

Response

Knowing you have an answer is not the same as actually telling the customer. Remember, most customers are not psychic. If you don't take the trouble to tell them you are looking after them how will they know? Even if you don't have an answer, tell them that you are working on the problem; keep them informed.

If you don't tell them you have an answer or a solution they think you are ignoring them. You may as well just have thrown the complaint in the trash at the very beginning of the process.

Once again, if you are smart you will formalize the response process. For example, if you capture most complaints via a form on your website make sure you ask for a valid email address. This makes responding easy and convenient for both you and the customer.

Reporting

If it were me I would first agree with management on the reports required and then build some standard reports so weekly reporting was as easy as possible. This won't stop that difficult manager from constantly creating new report requests in an effort to ensure you have no time to do your real job but, it will satisfy the more reasonable of your masters.

Searching

Responding to customers and reporting on a particular complaint or a set of complaints isn't possible unless you have a way of searching your complaints database. You have to be able to find things quickly and easily and not just by the complaint registration number. You have to be able to find complaints by any attribute of the complaint as well as by any combination of attributes. For example, "All complaints received between November 20 and November 28 that referred to trash collection and noise."

Policies and Procedures

It is difficult to meet or exceed the guidelines if you don't have any or don't know what they are. Generally, guidelines for complaint management would come under the umbrella of either Quality Assurance or Compliance.

Good guidelines will clearly specify how each class or category of complaint is to be handled. They will specify all of the processes above and will set standards of performance, such as the times to respond to each class of complaint.

If you don't have formal guidelines you obviously cannot have an effective complaints management system so these are a prerequisite.

Implementing a Complaints Management System in Knowledgeone^{K1}

Introduction

Knowledgeone^{K1} is both a knowledge management system and a generic application solution. In the 'olden days' we would probably have called Knowledgeone^{K1} a highly configurable information management system. Its core functions are to capture, index and store information and to make it as easy as possible to manage, search for and report on information.

Fortunately, complaints management is also about information management so Knowledgeone^{K1} is the right kind of tool to choose to solve a complaints management problem.

Out-of-the-box Functionality

Even though Knowledgeone^{K1} was designed to be a generic application solution where the customer can easily and quickly change both the Data Model and any Process, we didn't deliver Knowledgeone^{K1} as an empty toolset. We delivered Knowledgeone^{K1} with a number of applications (we call them personalities) already configured and ready-for-use. One of those is Complaints Management.

Complaints Management as an 'Out-of-the-box' Knowledgeone^{K1} Application

There are any number of ways to handle complaints management in Knowledgeone^{K1} but the easiest is to use the out-of-the-box personality based on the Incident Table.

Single Table Centric

All personalities in Knowledgeone^{K1} are designed to be single table centric. This means that you work within a single Knowledgeone^{K1} table and are able to reference all other required information from within that one table.

The Incident Table



Overview

The Incident table has been specifically designed to hold the details of any complaint or 'incident'.

It can be used to record complaints from either people or companies or both. For example, if you are a local government organization you will probably want to record complaints from your ratepayers, the people that live in your district. If you are a software company, (like us), you will probably want to record complaints from your customers, from companies that use your software.

When we configured the default Incident record we configured it to handle both. We also configured it to link to a number of other Knowledgeone^{K1} tables that you may or may not require. Because of this, the default Incident table probably has more fields and more links than you require. This is by design; it was configured as a 'superset' of most users' requirements. Even so, you may still find that you need to add another field or link that we haven't thought of because it is unique to your situation.

This is why we say the 'out-of-the-box' personalities in Knowledgeone^{K1} are 85% solutions. We have provided a working core and you now need to add the final touches to make the 'out-of-the-box' solution a 100% fit for your requirements. But, and trust me on this, we have done all of the hard work.

Incident Table Contents (Record)

This is where you record the details of each and every complaint and register it in the Knowledgeone^{K1} system with a unique identifier (e.g., Incident number or Complaint number).

It is also where you:

1. Assign a priority
2. Determine any corrective actions
3. Identify the product or service being the source of the complaint
4. Identify the support person initially receiving the complaint
5. Enter/Select the customer name
6. Enter/select the Person name
7. Select the Registration Date

8. Assign a current status
9. Select escalation rules
10. Record notes (e.g., from a phone call)
11. Refer it to another person in your organization
12. Add any activities required to resolve it (e.g., set up some meetings or phone calls)
13. Capture any electronic documents related to it (e.g., a letter or email or fax)
14. Link it to a corporate record

Incident Number	20050004
Type	
Description	The customer complains of unnecessary noise at 4:00 am during trash collection. The revving of the truck engine, the loud beep when it is backing up, the dropping of the trash cans and the bad language of the workers
Priority	Respond in 5 days
#DaysOpen	0
CorrectiveAction	Speak to the supervisor for this shift and interview the workers
ProductorService	
ReleaseVersion#	
Function	
InitialSupportPerson	K1 Administrator
CurrentSupportPerson	K1 Administrator
CustomerName	
Location	
ContactPerson	Georgina Smith
DateRegistered	12 December 2005 10:33:05 AM
DateClosed	
CloseType	
CurrentStatus	OPEN
Escalations	
Notes	
Referrals	
Activities	
LinkedIncidents	
EDOCs	
MetadataProfiles	
SecurityCode	Basic

See the following for a description of how to use each field in the Incident record.

Incident Number

Note that we have changed the Caption from "External ID" to "Incident Number".
 Note also that we have used an Autofill/AutoSequence Number to automatically populate this field every time a new incident is created.

Type

Optional.

Description

Enter a meaningful description of the incident.

Priority

Select an appropriate priority from the Priority Table. You will have to populate the Priority Table with your values.

#DaysOpen

Automatically calculated by Knowledgeone^{K1} using Triggers and Stored Procedures.

CorrectiveAction

Describe the required corrective action.

ProductService

Select the product or service from the ProductService Table. You will have to populate this table with your values.

ReleaseVersion#

If a product, enter the version for reference.

Function

Select the Function, involved/causing the error, from the Method Table (note that this table is pre-populated with Knowledgeone^{K1}'s Methods).

InitialSupportPerson

Automatically populated by Knowledgeone^{K1} using an Autofill.

CurrentSupportPerson

Automatically populated by Knowledgeone^{K1} using an Autofill.

CustomerName

Select the customer from the Entity Table. You will have to populate this table with your customers.

Location

Select the location for this customer from the Location Table. You will have to populate this table with your customer's locations.

ContactPerson

Select the contact (the person at the customer you are dealing with) from the Person Table. You will have to populate this table with your staff and customers.

DateRegistered

Automatically populated by Knowledgeone^{K1} using an Autofill.

DateClosed

Selected by the user when the Incident is closed.

CloseType

Select the appropriate category from the CloseType Table. You will need to populate this table with your values.

CurrentStatus

Select appropriate Status from the Codes table. This table comes pre-populated but you can also add your own values.

Escalations

Click the link to add an Escalation record if one is required.

Referrals

Click the link to add a referral if one is required.

MetadataProfiles

Click the link to add links to a corporate record.

Security Code

Defaults to user's security code.



Note: For a detailed reference to handling complaints in Knowledgeone^{K1} and to the Incident record, Escalation record and Referral record please access the K1 online help and search on "Help Desk"; and "Complaints Management".

How Knowledgeone^{K1} Provides all the Processing you Require

Let's look at all the processes we defined above as being mandatory for effective complaints management and see how Knowledgeone^{K1} handles each.

Capture

As the phone call or text message arrives, you open up a new Incident record (using the Add Method) and record the details.

If the complaint arrives as a letter or email or fax you use the EDOC link in the Incident record to scan or read in the electronic document, save and index it in the Knowledgeone^{K1} database and link it to the Incident record for future reference.



Note: All of the information covered in this paper is also covered in Knowledgeone^{K1}'s online help system. Search on "Add", "Read" and "Scan" for detailed explanations on how to use these Knowledgeone^{K1} Methods.

Registration

When you save the new Incident record Knowledgeone^{K1} generates a unique Incident number. Knowledgeone^{K1} also automatically fills in the date and time registered as well as the details of the person registering the Incident.



Note: For a detailed explanation of how to set up an autonumber field please access the K1 online help and search on "Autofill".

Acknowledgement

You have a choice of using:

- The Print Method to produce a standard acknowledgement letter.
- The Export Method to export the details of the Incident to say Microsoft Word for a mail merge to produce your standard acknowledgement letter.
- A Scheduled Task, run say every day at midnight, to automatically email complainants with an acknowledgement email.



Note: Please access the K1 online help and search on "Print", "Export" and "Scheduled Task" for a detailed description of how to use these K1 Methods.

Classification

As you populate all the linked tables (i.e., linked to the Incident record) in Knowledgeone^{K1} you can enter your terminology and classifications.

In the standard system we have used the Priority table to classify our complaint by days to respond. You can enter whatever terminology you please in the Priority table to reflect the way you deal with complaints.

If the Priority table isn't enough for your classification needs then consider using either an existing Knowledgeone^{K1} table, e.g., the CorporateVocabulary table or add a new table, i.e., called the 'Classification' table using the DRM.



Note: For a detailed reference on using the Knowledgeone^{K1} features mentioned above please access the Knowledgeone^{K1} online help and search on "Corporate Vocabulary" and "The DRM Wizard".

Investigation

The simple version involves you assigning this to a support person to investigate (CurrentSupportPerson), referring it to one or more other people to investigate (Referrals), or initiating an escalation process (Escalations) if it isn't resolved within a defined timeframe.

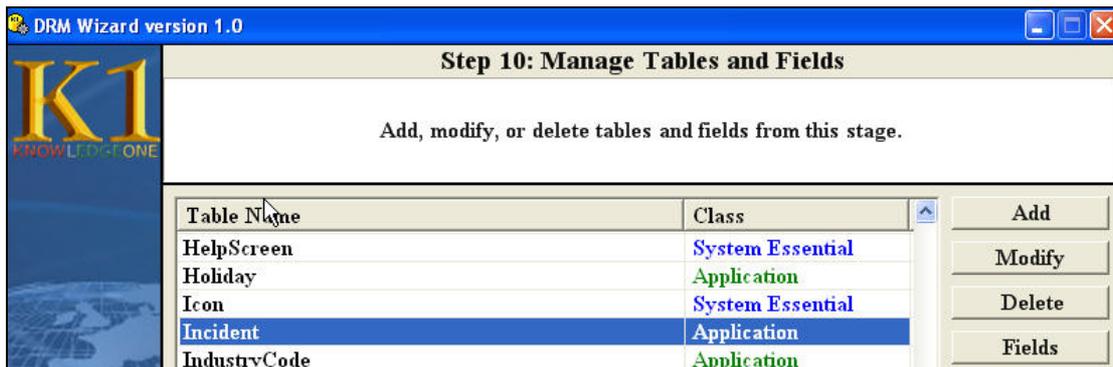
You can also link it to an Activity.

If this still isn't enough to satisfy your complaints handling policies and procedures you could also link the Incident to a Workflow. To do this, you will need to add a link to Workflow in the standard Incident record. This can be done in few seconds using the DRM as follows:

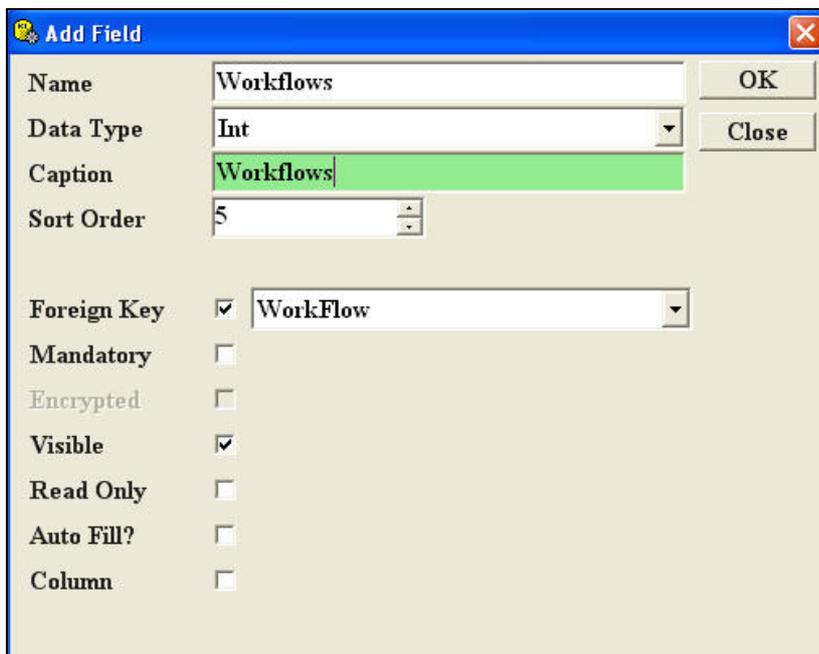
Close Knowledgeone^{K1} and open the DRM.

Navigate to the Tables and Fields section (just keep clicking Next).

Select the Incident Table and the Fields button.



Then Click Add in the Fields screen to add a new field link as follows:



Close the DRM and open Knowledgeone^{K1} again.

Look at the Incident record; it now includes a link to the Workflow table.



Note: For a detailed explanation on how to use the K1 features discussed above please access the K1 online help and search on "The DRM Wizard" and "Help Desk".

Also see the PDF paper on our website titled, "Modifying the Knowledgeone^{K1} Data Model" at: <http://www.knowledgeonecorp.com/support/faq/pdfs/Modifying%20the%20Knowledgeone%20Data%20Model.pdf>

Tracking

Obviously, the best way to track a complaint is by the unique incident number. In our example this is also the External ID of the Incident record.



Simply use the Search Method (see below) to search on this field or any combination of fields (attributes) of the Incident record to find it instantly. Once you find the Incident, simply open it in View to see the status of any aspect of this Incident, i.e., whether it is open or closed, the progress of any Activities, Workflows, Referrals or Escalations, etc.

This is why we say the Complaints Management personality is 'single-table-centric'. Once you open up the Incident record you can view the details in any related table from within this record. You never have to 'leave' the Incident table in order to manage all aspects of complaints management.

The Notes table is also of great assistance when tracking the progress of any complaint. You need to ensure that your support people record the details of not just conversations with the customer but also of any significant events in the complaints management process. The Notes table is ideal for this purpose.



Response

You can use the Print Method (see Reporting below) or the Export Method or a Scheduled Task to respond to the complainant.



Note: For a detailed explanation of how to use these features please access the K1 online help and search on "Export" and "Scheduled Tasks". Also search on "Help Desk" for an explanation of how to use Triggers and Scheduled Tasks/Stored Procedures in complaints processing.

Reporting

Using Knowledgeone^{K1}'s Print function you can produce any report or form or letter required. You can also save standard reports/letters/forms for ongoing use.



Note: For a detailed explanation of how to use Knowledgeone^{K1}'s Print Method and wizard please access the K1 online help and search on "Print".

Searching

The Knowledgeone^{K1} Search Method (External ID, Metadata, Range and Replay) provides all the functionality you require to easily and quickly search for and locate any incident or set of incidents.



Note: For a detailed explanation of how to use K1's Search Methods please access the K1 online help and search on "Search".

Policy and Procedures

As we said earlier, without effective Policy and Procedures (Guidelines) there can be no effective complaints management system.

The real trick with Knowledgeone^{K1} is to embed your guidelines within Knowledgeone^{K1}'s tables.

So, use Knowledgeone^{K1} tables like Priority, Codes (status), and DocumentType to record and enforce your guidelines.

Use Triggers and Scheduled Tasks to implement any additional processes you require.

Summary

Knowledgeone^{K1} is the ideal tool for managing either a complaints or help desk system. Its complaint or incident centric nature means everything you need to add or access is just a click away. There is no jumping in and out of different modules; everything is doable and accessible from the Incident record.

Knowledgeone^{K1} also allows you to capture any document or evidence or supporting information whilst within the Incident record. Scan a paper document or fax, read in a Word document or email and instantly link them to the Incident; all without leaving the Incident record you are in the process of creating.

Decide when recording the Incident to 'turn on' an escalation process or to refer the Incident to an appropriate authority. Create Activities like meetings or conference calls on the fly as you record the Incident. For more complex problems, you can also create Workflows and Tasks and link them to the Incident record.

All ongoing discussions can be recorded as Notes so there is a complete record of the lifecycle of the complaint.

Respond to the customer using the standard Print Method or export your reports for external processing (say in MS Word) using the Export Method. Report to your superiors using the same features of Knowledgeone^{K1}.

Track every complaint using the Search Method.

There isn't any process that is required for complaints management that isn't included as part of the 'out-of-the-box' complaints management personality of Knowledgeone^{K1}.

Frank McKenna, CEO