

How leaders can stimulate customer complaint forwarding by professionally developing and empowering employees

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Abstract

Although the research fields of leadership and informal customer complaints management are studied extensively, empirical research examining their connections is still scarce. However, companies need insights into customers' complaints to improve their services and products. We examine how leaders' professional development of their frontline employees is a key driver of employees' willingness to forward customers' complaints to them. Across three studies, we demonstrate that professionally developing employees has a strong positive effect on their willingness to share customer complaints. Furthermore, we show that employees' empowerment in complaint handling explains this relationship. Our results provide theoretically and practically relevant implications for leader recruiting and development to cultivate internal information sharing.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Services, Organization Behavior, Organization Relationships, Sales Force*

Track: Sales Management and Personal Selling