

ISO 18295-1: Improving customer experience with new standard for call centres

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We all know the frustration of phoning a call centre, only to be put on hold for an interminable amount of time or taken through a long and complex series of options before arriving at a dead end. And when we finally get hold of someone, it is usually to battle with the language barrier or be told to call back later - all while paying an extortionate rate for the call itself.

A survey amongst ISO members suggests that the general public is, on average, only mildly satisfied with customer contact centres, indicating there is much room for improvement. It is for this reason that two new International Standards on the subject have just been published.

ISO 18295-1, *Customer contact centres – Part 1: Requirements for customer contact centres*, specifies best practice for all contact centres, whether in-house or outsourced, on a range of areas to ensure a high level of service; these include communication with customers, complaints handling and employee engagement.

Complementing this, ISO 18295-2, *Customer contact centres – Part 2: Requirements for clients using the services of customer contact centres*, is aimed at those organizations making use of the services of a customer contact centre to ensure their customers' expectations are being met through its effective engagement. It provides guidance on the types of information the organization needs to provide in order to achieve high levels of customer engagement.

Zainuddin Hussein, Chair of ISO/PC 273, the project committee in charge of ISO 18295, said it considered and addressed many customer concerns when developing the standards, such as waiting times, means of contacting the company and customer experience expectations.

"The committee established that there are already some regulations and national standards present in some countries," he said, "and our research showed that where they were implemented, customer satisfaction improved.

"The new standards bring together international best practice that can improve the service offering and customer experience even more, while also providing a framework on which future national standards can be based."

