

TAPESCRIPT: LISTENING 1
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH: 6 Minute English
Complaining

Sam Hello, this is 6 Minute English. I'm Sam.

Rob And I'm Rob.

Sam Are good at complaining, Rob?

Rob Of course not. I'm British! I never complain, even when I get terrible service. It's just too embarrassing.

Sam Well, you might be in a minority now as it seems we British are complaining more than we used to. We'll look at this topic a little more after this week's quiz question. The oldest recorded complaint is on a stone tablet in the British Museum. It's nearly 4000 years old. What was the complaint about?

- a) An incorrect number of goats that were delivered after being bought at market
- b) The quality of copper bars that were supplied, or
- c) The non-payment of a bill for a banquet.

What do you think, Rob?

Rob I'm just going to guess at the goats. Someone bought a load of goats and fewer were delivered than were bought. That sounds good, but it's just a guess.

Sam OK. Well, I will reveal the answer later in the programme, and don't complain if you get it wrong! You and Yours is a BBC radio programme about consumer affairs. On a recent programme they discussed the topic of complaining and customer service with Giles Hawke from an organisation called the Institute of Customer Service. He talks about different sectors. A sector is a particular area of business. Which sectors does he say have most problems when it comes to keeping the complaining customer satisfied?

Giles Hawke The sectors that probably have more problems than the UK average are public services, telecommunications, transport and service sector. And there are probably some inherent challenges within those sectors – they may have more impact on a day-to-day basis. Those sectors which are performing well ... travel is performing well, retail is performing well, leisure appears to be performing well.

Sam So, which sectors are not keeping the customer satisfied?

Rob He says that public services, telecoms, transport and the service sector have most problems.

Sam And he says that these sectors may have inherent challenges. What does he mean by that?

Rob Well, some sectors, by their nature, are more complicated and more likely to cause problems for customers. Public services, for example, often don't have enough money or enough staff. Telecommunications systems, such as your internet connection, are very complicated and sometimes go wrong. Bad weather can affect transport, and so on. So an inherent problem is a problem that is part of the nature of the thing itself.

Sam So, those sectors are not performing well. We usually think of the word perform when we are talking about actors or musicians, but in a business sense to perform well or badly means to be successful or not, and, according to Giles Hawke, travel and retail are performing well in terms of customer service. Giles Hawke goes on to talk about how people are actually making their complaints, but are modern methods taking over from the traditional letter or phone call?

Giles Hawke We still see over 58% of complaints are made by phone or by letter so, you know, the more traditional methods of making a complaint are still dominant, but we are seeing social media rise, although it's still a very small part of how people complain and it tends to be used as an escalation point if people aren't getting what they want dealt with in the first instance.

Sam So, are people using modern methods more than traditional ones?

Rob Actually, no. He says that phoning or writing a letter are still dominant. This means they are still the main, most used methods for making a complaint.

Sam Where people are turning to social media is if their complaint is not dealt with. To deal with something means to sort it, to fix it – and if you complain and it's not dealt with, then, he says, people turn to social media as a form of escalation.

Rob When you escalate a complaint, you take it to a higher level. Putting your complaint on social media means that a lot more people are going to see it and it might encourage a company to deal with the complaint.

Sam Right, well before we receive any complaints, let's review today's vocabulary after the answer to the question which was about a 4000-year-old complaint. Was the complaint about:

- a) An incorrect number of goats that were delivered after being bought at market.
- b) The quality of copper bars that were supplied, or
- c) The non-payment of a bill for a banquet.

Rob, what did you say?

Rob I went for a). I went for the goats.

Sam Sorry! It was actually a complaint about the quality of copper ingots or bars that were supplied. If you knew that, very well done. If you guessed right, also, very well done. No shame to get that one wrong.

Rob And no complaints from me!

Sam OK. Right, now vocabulary. We had sectors, which are particular areas of business in the economy.

Rob Something that is inherent is a natural part of something. It's usually used to describe a problem or risk that is an unavoidable part of something.

Sam How successful a company is can be described as how well it's performing. And if something is dominant, it means it is the strongest or most used.

Rob And if a company doesn't deal with, or try to fix a problem, the customer might take the complaint to the next level on social media, which would mean an escalation.

Sam Thank you, Rob. That's all from 6 Minute English this time. Do join us again soon and don't forget to check us out online. Bye bye!

Rob Bye!

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1. Complaining // 6 Minute English – British Broadcasting Corporation 2019: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/features/6min/191003_6min_english_complaining.pdf.