

Customer Service

Policy

John Thompson

Next Review Date: 14.02.24



This policy applies to all EcoNorth Staff / Internships / Consultants / Placements who work on behalf of the company and is reviewed annually to ensure its continuing suitability.

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Customer Service Policy

1. Purpose, Scope and Users

EcoNorth aims to provide a professional, high quality service to all our customers and other stakeholders throughout the UK and Ireland. This will ensure the highest standards of care are achieved in order to maximise customer satisfaction and minimise complaints.

This policy sets out EcoNorth's standards of care and how they are achieved.

This policy must be understood and adhered to by all EcoNorth employees and other company representatives.

This policy is located on our company websites.

2. Definitions

"EcoNorth" or "we" or "us" or "our" means EcoNorth Ltd.

"Customer" means an individual or business that purchases another company's goods or services.

"Stakeholder" means anyone who is or could be affected by the company's actions, objectives and policies eg customers, suppliers, contractors, subcontractors, employees, Board members, the community from which the company draws its resources.

"Customer service" means the act of taking care of a customer's needs by delivering professional, helpful, high quality service and assistance before, during and after the customer's requirements are met.

"Complaint" means a valid expression of dissatisfaction or concern about the standard of service or actions/lack of actions affecting an individual customer or group of customers.

"Compliment" means a customer statement of positive recognition or praise for a service or member of staff.

3. Objectives

EcoNorth's key customer service objectives include:

- Ensuring that customer service excellence is an integral part of the planning, resourcing and delivery of all our services.
- Ensuring that all contact with EcoNorth is met with the highest standards.
- Providing clear and effective lines of communication to all.
- Providing accurate, up to date information about our work.
- Actively promoting customer satisfaction feedback, responding accordingly and monitoring standards.

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- Providing suitable and adequate employee training.
- Exceeding customer expectations and encouraging repeat business.
- Maintaining ISO 9001 quality management certification, which was originally achieved in April 2022.

4. Communication

Effective communication is an essential part of customer service.

In our interactions with customers, EcoNorth's employees aim to:

- Identify ourselves clearly.
- Accurately record their contact details.
- Listen and respond effectively.
- Respond to all enquiries promptly with courtesy and respect.
- Be polite, honest and accurate with the information we provide.
- Ensure they understand all the information provided.
- Ensure all correspondence is handled in a professional and confidential manner.
- Inform them of any changes or delays in good time.
- Provide them with regular reports to keep them informed of progress.
- Provide alternative sources of services where we cannot help.

EcoNorth's employees utilise various communication channels and will respond to enquiries made through these channels, in the format of the original communication wherever possible.

- Digital.

Digital correspondence (emails and website enquiries) will be acknowledged within 48 hours (Monday to Friday) and responded to fully within 5 working days of receipt or in accordance with a timescale required by the client if it differs from those.

Email out-of-office messages, giving return dates and alternative contact details, will be enabled at all times of absence or periods away from office or desk space.

- Telephone.

Telephone calls will be answered promptly, ideally within the first three rings.

Customers will be addressed in a polite and courteous manner and provided with the name of the employee with whom they are conversing. Enquiries will be resolved immediately wherever possible, or the customer called back if not. Clear, detailed messages, ideally in writing, will be relayed to colleagues following the call which will record the caller's name, organisation, subject and a return contact number.

Voicemail will only be used to ensure that telephone calls do not go unanswered and only for short periods or specific purposes. The recorded message must be audible, accurate and

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appropriate. Messages will be responded to within 24 hours, or the next working day if the message is left over a weekend or bank holiday.

- Letters.

Letters will be responded to within 5 working days of receipt. A contact name, telephone number and email address, together with any other pertinent information, will be included in the response. There may be occasions when a full response cannot be given within the timeframe stated above. In this instance, a holding response will be provided, which includes an expected date for the full response to be given.

- Face to Face Meetings.

This covers meetings with or without appointments, contact with customers at the office, events or training courses, or whilst out on site.

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak such as Covid-19, EcoNorth's Infectious Diseases Policy and Procedures and government advice should be followed at all times and face to face meetings will be assessed on a specific basis as to whether they should be undertaken whilst any relevant restrictions are in place. Meetings should be conducted in open or well-ventilated places, or outside. They will not be undertaken in the EcoNorth office or any vehicle during periods of infectious disease related restrictions.

Outwith infectious disease related restrictions, the following will be adhered to:

Employees will behave in a professional, respectful and courteous manner at all times.

An appointment will be offered where this may be a more appropriate or effective response and clear instructions about the location of the meeting will be provided.

Customers will be greeted within 5 minutes of their arrival at our office or other venue for a scheduled meeting.

Full attention will be given to the customer during a meeting.

When a customer has specific requirements, employees will find out what these are and aim to provide them.

When discussing personal information, employees will always arrange to do so in a private and confidential environment.

5. Conducting Work

Customer service excellence is an integral part of planning, resourcing and delivering high quality work by EcoNorth.

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In our interactions with customers, EcoNorth's employees aim to:

- Clearly understand their requirements and desired outcomes.
- Provide up to date, accurate information about the services EcoNorth offers.
- Explain the work to be done, all costs, timeframes, any challenges to overcome and the team members to be involved.
- Agree plans which are realistic and achievable.
- Provide regular progress reports during the work.
- Complete work within the agreed timeframe.
- Complete work within the agreed budget.
- Conduct work in a conscientious and professional manner with a can-do approach, to provide a high standard of service throughout.

For project work, EcoNorth's employees aim to:

- Provide small project proposals within 48 hours or other timescale agreed with the client to suit their needs.
- Provide larger project proposals within the timescale requested by the customer, though an acknowledgement telephone call will be made, or an email/letter will be sent, within 24 hours.
- Confirm dates that survey work can be undertaken, as far as possible (weather, access etc permitting), within 48 hours.
- Provide summary feedback from fieldwork to client with key findings where appropriate within 48 hours of fieldwork being completed.
- Provide draft reports within 10 working days of survey work being completed unless otherwise agreed with the client taking into account the scale and nature of the project and overall project timescale requirements.
- Provide final reports upon receipt of full payment from the client, unless otherwise approved by the Finance Manager or Executive Director.

6. Customer Compliments

Receiving compliments from customers is a boon for a company's reputation and staff morale as they mean that employees have done something special.

All compliments will be responded to, as appropriate, within 5 working days of receipt, as the thanking process is a key part of the customer loyalty building mechanism. The correspondence should include thanking the customer for their kind words, an expression of how pleased we are that EcoNorth's efforts have been noticed and a promise to pass the compliment on to the employees involved in the service provision.

All positive feedback received from customers will be celebrated and shared with the team at team meetings, in order to acknowledge and reinforce the high standards of our customer service.

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7. Customer Complaints

Whilst we take great care to ensure that we provide all our services efficiently and to the highest standard possible, EcoNorth accepts that complaints may be made.

Complaints may be registered in various ways:

- By telephone to 01670 735 547.
- By face to face conversation (accepting infectious disease related restrictions).
- By email to enquiries@econorth.co.uk.
- By the company website contact pages.
- By post to EcoNorth Ltd, 11 Enterprise Court, Cramlington, Northumberland, NE23 1LZ.

EcoNorth aims to:

- Provide a complaints procedure which is clear and easy to understand for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- Ensure that all EcoNorth's employees know how to handle a complaint.
- Ensure all complaints are investigated fully, fairly and in a timely manner.
- Ensure that complaints are resolved whenever possible and that relationships are repaired.
- Gather and analyse information which helps us to improve our customer service in the future.

Complaints received by telephone or face to face meeting must be recorded. The employee who receives a complaint in this manner should:

- Record the facts of the complaint.
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number.
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to EcoNorth.
- Inform the complainant that we have a complaints procedure.
- Inform the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take.
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or email, so that the complaint is recorded in their own words.

A written complaint will be passed to the Executive Director with 24 hours of receipt, who will record it in the Complaints Log. An acknowledgement letter or email will be sent to the complainant within 5 working days. The acknowledgement should identify who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this policy document should be attached.

In order to resolve a complaint, the Executive Director will lead a full investigation to understand the problem, identify the cause and develop solutions. Any actions taken as a result of the complaint will be communicated to all relevant parties and recorded. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond. Their response will be recorded in writing.

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Complainants will receive a definitive response within 4 weeks. If this is not possible because the investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will be sent with an indication of when the final report will be provided.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the report to the complainant must describe the actions taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation and any actions taken because of the complaint.

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. The complaint will be passed to the Chairman. The request for Board level review will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. The acknowledgement must identify who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chairman may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This will involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint previously.

Complainants will receive a definitive response within 4 weeks. If this is not possible because the investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will be sent with an indication of when the final report will be provided.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the report to the complainant should describe the actions taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation and any actions taken because of the complaint.

The decision taken at this time is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance to reach a resolution.

The above procedure may be varied for good reason. It may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest eg an investigation into a complaint about the Executive Director must not be led by the Executive Director.

All complaint information will be handled sensitively. Information will only be shared with those who need to know and in accordance with any relevant data protection requirements. Complaints may have implications for individuals or organisations other than EcoNorth. Care must be taken not to breach client or commercial relationships and/or confidentiality. If necessary, complainants should be referred to the complaints procedure of the organisation concerned. Complaints and their resolution should be raised with EcoNorth's partners if confidentiality permits, to assist in learning lessons for the future.

8. Employee Grievances

This policy document does not cover complaints made by employees. Please refer to the Staff Handbook.

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9. Unacceptable Behaviour

EcoNorth believes that customers have the right to be heard, understood and respected. We also believe that employees have the same rights. EcoNorth will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence towards us. This includes threats, abuse or harassment towards employees on social media; this will be reported to the police. Any threat of physical violence will always be reported to the police.

10. Measuring Standards of Care

EcoNorth measures its level of customer service by:

- Seeking customer satisfaction feedback through the provision of questionnaires.
- Conducting feedback meetings upon the completion of large projects.
- Investigating all formal complaints thoroughly and in a timely manner.
- Analysing feedback and the results of complaint investigations to influence improvements in customer service.
- Monitoring performance against targets set on an annual basis by the Senior Management Team to identify trends which indicate a need for policy and/or procedural change.

11. Employee Training

All employees must be aware of, and adhere to, the Customer Service Policy. To consistently deliver exceptional customer service, additional employee training may be deemed necessary. Training will be arranged on either an individual or company-wide basis as and when required.

12. ISO 9001 Quality Standard

EcoNorth successfully achieved the internationally recognised quality management certification ISO 9001 in April 2022. This recognises our operational excellence through consistent, effective, risk-based processes as well as our increased customer focus and employee engagement.

EcoNorth will be audited on an annual basis to ensure quality standards are maintained at the highest level and a strategy for continual improvement is implemented to maximise results.

13. Policy Review

EcoNorth's Customer Service Policy is reviewed annually, or earlier if there are changes to the company or applicable legislation. Any amendments that are made will be shared with the EcoNorth team at these times.



John Thompson
Executive Director
17.02.23