

Making communication clearer



for your
customers

Guidance for what you say **and how you say it**

Following on from last year's Discussion Paper: 'Smarter Consumer Communications' the FCA has, this October, issued the related Feedback Statement. The FCA is challenging firms to consider innovative ways to engage and communicate with customers. Its aim is to share research findings and prompt discussion in order to make information clearer and easier to understand.

Work in this area will continue throughout 2017, but in the meantime we've put this guide together to highlight the main points.

What are the issues?

The FCA's work has highlighted the impact that the type, timing and delivery of communications can have on each customer's journey. From positive outcomes – where customers have fully engaged with a firm's communications – to poor outcomes – where customers have been overwhelmed by information or overuse of technical jargon.

Key themes and areas identified for improvement in terms of general insurance include:

- reducing complexity of terms and conditions
- reducing use of jargon
- better presentation of key information, including price
- balancing presenting key information succinctly and clearly with the need to tell customers about the importance of product features
- availability of redress mechanisms, such as the FSCS, to ensure a positive customer experience when making a decision to purchase
- signposting clear methods of contacting firms to raise queries/clarify information without the need to escalate to a complaint.

How can I improve communication?

The FCA acknowledged that many firms are already looking at how they could improve engagement with customers, citing the examples of good practice below.

1. Ensuring key product information is easy to understand through use of plain language, clear and short text and bullet points or graphics.
2. Writing to customers first and then ensuring communications are compliant, rather than the other way round.
3. Moving away from tick box design and the assumption that communications driven by regulation are the responsibility of compliance and legal staff.
4. Presenting key information as FAQs.
5. The use of supporting material, videos and other communication methods, such as pop-ups, to help customers understand essential terms and conditions.
6. Building a wider understanding of customers' information needs and objectively considering what, when and how much they need to know.
7. Clear signposting and contact methods to allow customers to ask questions and clarify information, ensuring there are no post-sale barriers.
8. Encouraging customers to consider more than just price, e.g. product features, customer experience and claims handling.
9. Reminding customers of information, e.g. at the point when charges will become due, rather than just at the point of sale.
10. Taking advantage of alternative channels of communication, e.g. mobile apps, social media or visual media platforms such as YouTube.

We're on your side

We appreciate how tricky it can be to balance clearer communication with meeting evolving regulatory expectations (e.g. the FCA changes that come into effect on 1 April 2017 and involve providing more information at renewal). So we're always here to discuss your concerns and make suggestions. For example:

- when making changes to documentation or communication methods (either regulatory or internal changes), consider how communications and presentations to customers can be improved to aid greater understanding
- determine whether streamlined communications remain as effective in delivering information as originally intended
- think about trialling material and different methods of communication to work out whether there are simpler and clearer ways of engaging with customers.

'Good Thinking' leads the way

We're proud to say that the FCA referenced our 'MyAviva' platform within its discussion paper as an example of an effective way to engage with customers. Our app in particular drew praise for allowing easy access to risk information or policy documentation, promoting stronger engagement with customers.



Where can I find out more?

To discuss the findings and recommendations of the feedback statement, talk to your Aviva Sales Manager.

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