



# EDF REALIZES MULTIPLE BENEFITS FROM CSE CERTIFICATION

## CASE STUDY

## BE THE BENCHMARK

In partnership with:



EDF Energy is an integrated energy company, generating electricity and supplying both electricity and gas to homes and businesses throughout the UK. The company's Exeter-based Customer Services Department comprises residential, SME, and industrial and commercial areas, of which the last-named has achieved Customer Service Excellence (CSE) certification. EDF Energy is the only energy supplier to have gained this certification.

Their successful initial certification was conducted by SGS United Kingdom Ltd in 2018 followed by their first annual review in 2019.



### WHY EDF CUSTOMER SERVICES SOUGHT CSE CERTIFICATION

The department had always believed that with its enthusiasm and dedication, it provided excellent service and ensured that customers were very much at the heart of what it did.

#### WHY CSE?

Having looked at other standards, EDF Energy decided that CSE would be the most relevant and appropriate for the business, with government backing and wide recognition across many sectors. It believed that the standards requirement for comprehensive customer insight, in-depth understanding of the customer journey and robust processes in place would help further embed service excellence into the department's culture.

The similarity of the preparation and audit process to that of ISO 9001 – held by EDF Energy company-wide – also held appeal.

**THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT, AND WE WANTED SOME KIND OF FORMAL RECOGNITION THAT WE ARE DELIVERING THE BEST POSSIBLE SERVICE, ESPECIALLY IN THE FACE OF CHANGING CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS BECAUSE OF MARKET CONDITIONS, COMPETITION AND ENERGY COSTS.**

**KIMBERLEY DICKSON**  
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE  
EXECUTIVE



## IMPLEMENTING CSE: THE PROCESS

The comprehensive nature of the CSE standard requires a considerable amount of preparation for the first audit. A successful process also needs the buy-in of all key stakeholders and support at top level.

Kimberley Dickson says: "There was a lot of documentation to cover on my part, but the whole team – up to and including director level – was very helpful, as everybody was actually excited about this formal recognition and the benefits for them and the company. I cannot think of anybody who expressed any negativity."

At the outset, Kimberley received a document from the SGS assessor setting out the requirements that had to be evidenced and expectations for the two-day visit. She also found SGS' self-assessment tool very helpful and easy to follow. Throughout the process, the team maintained an open-minded approach to any feedback – positive or negative – that might be received. SGS also invited Kimberley to an event where companies that had already achieved CSE certification shared their experiences.

The audit itself was successful, with everything required in place. However, arranging it had not been without its difficulties. Kimberley Dickson recalls: "I wanted SGS to see a wide selection of different staff from Customer Service Advisors to senior management, which was a challenge as you cannot just drag people off live calls. It was also important for all relevant staff to be present in the contact centre on the same day – again not always easy."

Certification was granted in July 2018, with EDF recognizing the achievement with small gifts to team members, inclusion in its internal newsletter and a notification on the back of energy bills.

In common with ISO standards, CSE certification lasts for three years, with annual renewals after the first and second years in which selected operational areas are assessed to gauge that the correct procedures are still being observed. EDF's first annual review focused on aspects of the customer journey, including registrations and the newly created mybusiness online self-service portal, via which customers can submit meter readings, request copy invoices, live chat with a Customer Service Advisor and many other functions. The review also encompassed post-complaint procedures. Again, the process went smoothly, with Kimberley Dickson commenting: "We were not at all apprehensive as we were confident we had been continuing to do everything correctly."

On SGS, Kimberley says: "SGS are really great to work with. Not only have their audit tools been key to our original certification, but on a day-to-day basis they are helpful, responsive, accessible and friendly."

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## HOW THE CERTIFICATION HAS BENEFITED THE ORGANIZATION

Certification has resulted in a number of important improvements, most significantly in levels of customer service.

The above-mentioned mybusiness portal provides customers with a single point of contact, replacing a number of disparate systems. It also enables staff to work more effectively by being able to access data quickly and easily when helping customers, whilst enjoying improved job satisfaction.

Customer issues are being resolved more quickly, not least because of more effective escalation to colleagues with the most appropriate tools for the query. Customer expectations are also now set more realistically.

Many additional customer-focused improvements have resulted, including increased use of 'how to' videos and updated email auto replies that give more confidence that enquiries will be dealt with.

In turn, staff are more confident that they are properly equipped to provide customers with the help they need. They no longer have to handle as high a volume of routine enquiries, thanks to improved self-service. They also have new tools including reference guides, process maps and links, as well as improved coaching. As a result, morale has improved considerably, helped by the provision of accurate customer feedback.

Some unexpected gains have also resulted. The replacement of handwritten notes with whiteboards on each desk has brought the dual benefits of sustainability and GDPR compliance.

At a corporate level, EDF now also benefits from insightful customer data.

Kimberley Dickson comments: "This is a brilliant tool to help organizations take a look at their customer service and engagement and drive continuous improvement through linking our processes and service we provide. CSE shows you understand your customers, listen to their needs and are focused on continuous improvement to deliver great customer service. We are the only energy supplier to hold this certification, which gives us standout against our competitors."

She continues: "CSE has not only effected a culture change in the team, but also frequently makes us – including myself – realize that there is a different and better way of doing things. Any organization thinking about some kind of service standard should strongly consider CSE, it is certainly worth the journey."

**ANY ORGANIZATION THINKING ABOUT SOME KIND OF SERVICE STANDARD SHOULD STRONGLY CONSIDER CSE, IT IS CERTAINLY WORTH THE JOURNEY.**

## CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE CERTIFICATION

The government standard for Customer Service Excellence (CSE) was introduced in 2008, replacing the previous Charter Mark. It focuses on an organization's delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude and requires a comprehensive insight into the customer.

A driver of continuous improvement, CSE requires that sound processes are in place to measure customer satisfaction within the service delivered.

CSE certification assessment from SGS helps organizations deliver the best possible customer service within budget limitations.

## ABOUT SGS

SGS is the world's leading inspection, verification, testing and certification company. SGS is recognized as the global benchmark for quality and integrity. With more than 94,000 employees, SGS operates a network of over 2,600 offices and laboratories around the world.

We provide competitive advantage, drive sustainability and deliver trust. At SGS, we are continually pushing ourselves to deliver innovative services and solutions that help our customers move their businesses forward.

Efficiency and cost-optimization are no longer the sole drivers in business development strategies. Successful businesses recognize the importance of offering their workforce continuous development and training. Motivated and effective teams create industry leaders.

## CONTACT SGS

For more information, call the Certification team



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WHEN YOU NEED TO BE SURE