



The BSI Kitemark for Customer Service proves that SP Energy Networks has achieved excellence in customer service

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Kendal Adams,
General Manager, Customer and Social Delivery, SP Energy Networks

Client background

SP Energy Networks (SPEN) is an electricity distribution and transmission network operator. The company keeps electricity flowing to 3.5 million customers – homes and businesses throughout Central and Southern Scotland, North Wales, Merseyside, Cheshire and North Shropshire. SPEN aims to be a service leader in the UK, providing an excellent customer experience, which it has recently demonstrated by achieving the Customer Service Kitemark.

The Customer Service Kitemark

- Proves excellent customer service delivery
- Ensures process consistency
- Embeds a culture of continual improvement
- Boosts consumer confidence
- Reassures industry regulators
- Engages, recognizes and motivates employees
- Enhances brand reputation



Creating a service culture

SP Energy Networks strives to be a service leader in the UK. As Kendal Adams, General Manager, Customer and Social Delivery, explains, "That means bringing everyone on board, from dedicated customer service professionals in our call centre to on-site field engineers."

To make sure it's on track, SPEN benchmarks its level of customer service every year against the top 50 companies in the UK. It also has an extensive social programme to ensure it plays a supportive role within the communities it serves. This involves partnerships with approximately 150 organizations that help with issues such as specialized training for staff in dealing with customers with special needs, from speech or hearing difficulties to dementia.

Kendal continues, "These partnerships help us deliver free services that you wouldn't necessarily expect an energy company to offer, such as befriending services for customers who are lonely or isolated, debt advice and an income maximization service to customers, so they can check they're on the right benefits. In return, we support our social programme partners in the valuable work they do in the community, for example, by offering them free office space and staff volunteering time."

Why the BSI Kitemark?

Kendal says, "We decided to go for the Customer Service Kitemark to test our processes – to evidence that we really are doing the things we say we're doing".

For over a century, BSI Kitemark-certified products and services have been rigorously tested against national and international standards. The Customer Service Kitemark acts as a mark of trust for service businesses, demonstrating commitment to best practice and a culture of continual improvement in customer service.

Achieving the Customer Service Kitemark involves BSI assessment of key areas of customer service, including complaints management and customer feedback.

Kendal continues, "It's important that we get our organization – our people and processes – lined up. The service we aim to deliver must be really consistent – and we felt that going for the BSI Kitemark would really help us to drive and test that."

BSI assessment

Stephen Park, Customer Experience Lead at SPEN, was responsible for managing the delivery of the BSI audit for the Customer Service BSI Kitemark. He adopted a staged approach, which began by gaining a detailed understanding of the Kitemark. "I broke down its requirements in terms of the processes we operate within our distribution model," he says. "Next, I approached our districts to prepare their process teams, making sure they understood the requirements and to identify any weaknesses through a gap analysis. For example, we went through a full review of our processes for assisting customers in the event of faults or planned outages."

When the company was ready, it invited BSI to conduct a two-stage assessment process. This reaffirmed that SPEN was doing everything needed to meet the necessary standards to achieve the BSI Kitemark.

Stephen observes, "It was interesting to find we could relate the day-to-day customer stories our team share and map these against the process steps required by the Kitemark. It was satisfying to confirm we are operating our processes to such a high standard."

He continues, "The BSI Kitemark recognizes that the detail of what our people do on a day-to-day basis matters – whether that's individual conversations with customers, or applying processes and protocols – they all count towards service excellence."

He adds, "We realized how far we had embedded our desired behaviours within our company culture."

Reaping the benefits

Kendal Adams continues, "The Customer Service Kitemark really tests the consistency of our processes. It proves that we're doing what

we say we're doing, demonstrating to both our regulator and our customers that the service we're delivering is at a really high level.

"We're looking for alignment of our stated values with what we're asking our people to do on a day-to-day basis. They can see the bigger picture and the impact they're having on the customers and the business. It's continual cycle – with highly engaged staff being recognized for offering improved customer service, which motivates them even more."

Kendal's advice to other businesses is, "Listen to what your customers are saying, look at your processes, and make sure you're trying to drive consistency. It's all about your people – you need to get everybody facing in the same direction to achieve that consistency."

She adds, "Generally, people want to deliver good service. They care. So if you can harness that positive attitude and back it up with processes that are clear and consistent – driving out weaknesses and variations – you'll get there."

Harnessing BSI's support

Stephen Park says SPEN "learnt a lot from the feedback BSI provided throughout the assessment process, from how staff were behaving on site, to how consistently they were dealing with customers calling in a fault".

Now, being able to put the iconic BSI Kitemark on marketing material and on its website tells the world how the company delivers excellent customer service – and boosts perception of the SP Energy Networks brand.

Kendal observes, "BSI is a respected organization and the BSI Kitemark is such a recognizable brand. People know it's a mark of quality and reliability, and they trust it."

She sums up, "Over recent years, we've worked hard to improve our customer service, and we've undergone a huge cultural change. We're proud of that. The BSI Kitemark makes a strong public statement for us, reinforcing our message that we're really serious about our customers and the service we deliver."