



## GOOD CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE – HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

By Arnold Matimba

Is good customer experience exclusively for big corporations?

At Khuthaza we have been running a series of workshops on Customer Service. We realise how crucial it is for the contractors on our programmes to understand and appreciate the importance of good customer service. During this economic downturn, many may be tempted to say that price is the only important factor in winning new business let alone retain existing customers. This is not the case. A recent research, The Harris Interactive Customer Experience Impact, revealed the following:

- **87%** of the surveyed consumers said that they stopped engaging with companies because of **negative customer experience**. Two years ago 68% said the same thing.
- **58%** of consumers said they **will pay more for a better customer experience** even during tough times.

### ***So what is customer experience?***

Customer experience is the sum of all experiences a customer has with a supplier of goods or services, over the duration of their relationship with that supplier. Good customer experience is what causes customers to keep using a certain supplier or choose one supplier over another. Now is the time to improve on your customer experience in order to separate yourself from your competition.

### ***What can contractors do to win and retain customers?***

- Be reliable and keep service promises. Let your service be accurate and dependable. Simple things like answering your phone, being on time for appointments and providing customer aftercare can go a long way. There is nothing that irritates a customer more than an unanswered phone.
- Customer aftercare can help keep your company name in front of customers on a regular basis, and also remind them of how special and important they are to you
- Provide the surprise element by going the extra mile and out of your way to help your customers
- Identify customer problems and resolve them effectively and strive to continually improve on the service you provide
- Equally important, be fair to your customers and ensure that your pricing reflects the quality of your work

### ***Benefits***

- **Customer Retention** - If your company provides a world-class customer service, you will retain a large percentage of customers. A customer will go where they are treated with courtesy and respect.
- **Increased Profit** - When your company provides excellent customer service, the word will spread. You can acquire new customers based on word of mouth. New customers mean an increase in market share which ultimately translates into an increase in profit
- **Continued Operations** - Many companies have gone out of business because they did not provide excellent customer service to their customers and clients.
- **Advertising Expenditures** – If you are constantly trying to find new customers because your current customers are leaving, you spend money in the form of advertising and marketing. It is quite expensive to advertise in an effort to acquire new customers. Happy customers also make the best advertisers for your service!!!

### ***Bad customer experience news travels fast...***

Companies that do not keep pace with customer demands will lose customers due to poor customer experience. Unhappy customers are likely to tell 20 or more people about their experience, which is poor publicity for any business.

It may be worthwhile to start finding out what your customers are saying about your company's service over the past year or two. As we come out of the recession, find innovative ways to improve on your customer experience so that your customers have good things to say. Great way to gather feedback is to check with your customers whether or not they are happy with the service that you provided. For example ask them how you can improve on the service and if they would recommend you to anyone else.

Contact Khuthaza to find out more on the development programmes.

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