

Why customer service is so bad

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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One of the main reasons why customer service in South Africa is pretty much atrocious is because staff attend customer service training courses...

What I am saying is that the problem lies in the fact that customer service training is called customer service training.

Think about it. Just ask anyone who comes into contact with the public - shop assistants, call centre operators and receptionists.

Most of them, particularly those in the retail trade, undergo intensive customer service training but it is human nature for them to believe that they don't need to be trained. We all know how to handle people.

Different name, different game

So just about everyone who attends these courses firmly believes that the messages they are getting are meant for someone else and not them. It's a bit like road safety campaigns in the media. Motorists see the campaigns but firmly believe that it is other people who drive badly and have accidents. Not them

So actually, instead of insisting that staff attend "Customer Service Training" workshops they should rather be invited to attend workshop designed to "Make Your Lives Easier."

Now THAT to me is an incentive to get everyone keen to attend. And it is also the consequence of good consumer service.

It is entirely logical that anyone who really practices great customer service will find that their working lives do become a lot easier and pleasant.

Stock standard answers

However, there are another two reasons why customer service is bad in this country.

The first is in the retail sector and its called "Out of Stock." Nothing, but nothing, irritates consumers more than finding items out of stock and nothing but nothing is more demoralising for staff than to perpetually have to deal with irate customers due to out of stock situations.

Another reason for bad customer service is that staff on the floor and in call centres, are not empowered to take decisions. With the result that the only safe word they know is "No" and the only safe action to take is to defend the company to the hilt.

Customer service training is probably one of the most complex marketing tasks in the mix.

It requires experience, skill and psychology.

I find the results quite remarkable when training a group of people and using these methods instead of just trying to tell them something they think they already know.

Proper customer service education has a massive return on investment.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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