

Invest in your people!



By [Linda Hamman](#)

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Many companies invest heavily in building their brand, but too often they seem to neglect investing time and effort in the very people who at the end of the day are the window to the company - its staff.



It's ironic that those who invariably expect service of superlative quality are often the ones who don't invest in their organisation's employees to make sure that the promise of their own brand is delivered. What do I mean? Those of the C-suite, the business elite, have the means to frequent places where they expect to be treated with attitudes and behaviours which make them feel they are getting value for their money: it makes them feel good about themselves. These same people probably don't even know whether their employees are being properly informed and trained to deliver their own organisation's brand promise. Don't they see the anomaly?

In the past couple of weeks it has struck me yet again just how much money is being 'invested' in 'building brands' via marketing campaigns. And yes, marketing is an absolute necessity to get the brand 'out there' and create awareness of what they're offering - but do the 'investors' consider for one minute that this investment is also creating an expectation - and can they meet it? What is being 'invested' in the employee's competence and ability to deliver on that expectation?

By and large, it has been my experience that the funding for this totally indispensable element is sorely lacking. Theory is one thing - but in practice, in their interaction with the customer, your employees are the brand! And here's a staggering statistic - 68% of customers abandon a brand because of the attitude of the employee they interact with.

Keep staff informed

There's no question: your employees are key to building your brand, so investing in them, continuously informing them about what they need to do to deliver your brand promise, making them understand how they fit into achieving the corporate vision, training them, ensuring that they demonstrate the correct attitudes and behaviours - all these are vital, as well as rewarding them for performance, so that they too have a genuine stake in your success and a tangible reason to care.

Make effective use of your middle management; they are your representatives, and the stewards of your brand. They are critical to keeping customer-facing staff informed and have a huge influence on the attitudes of those at the front line. Attitudes of staff are formed by the experiences they have at work and the attitudes they display to the customer.

If greater investment is made in defining what actions need to take place in order to deliver the brand promise and by communicating that information to front line staff, organisations will meet the expectations they create, build trust in their brand and in doing so build their business. So put your money where it can really make a difference!

ABOUT LINDA HAMMAN

Linda Hamman is the CEO of Talk2Us. In 1990, Linda founded an IT business developing, selling, implementing and supporting ERP software. She built it up to a national organisation with a staff of 55, and sold it to a JSE-listed company 10 years later. In 2000, motivated by her philosophy around staff alignment with the brand promise and customer experience, Linda launched Talk2Us, a strategic communication and marketing consultancy. Not long after the launch, Talk2Us won the TFMC account, reputedly the largest Facilities Management contract in Africa. Contact her on linda@talk2us.co.za.

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