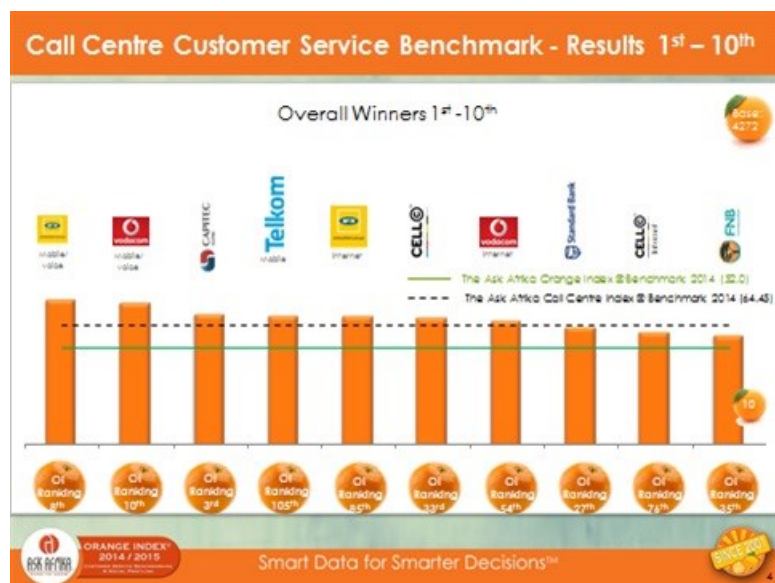


New research identifies top ten call centres

In order to assist companies with rating and improving their call centres, Ask Afrika introduced a dedicated call centre benchmark in 2014 into its Orange Index national service delivery survey. The results of the top ten indicate that call centres are an important customer contact point in service delivery, and, in certain industries, they can make or break a company's reputation.

The company's service delivery may be excellent, but if customers have problems and are frustrated by their interaction with the call centre, this negative emotional experience can colour their perception of the brand.



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MTN Mobile was the overall winner, followed by fellow telecommunication company Vodacom Mobile in second place, with Capitec in third, keeping up the reputation of financial institutions. Telkom Mobile was fourth and, after that, the internet service providers got a showing, with MTN Internet in fifth place. Cell C Mobile was sixth, Vodacom Internet seventh, Standard Bank was eighth, Cell C Internet ninth and FNB tenth.

Six industries and 18 companies were included in the call centre benchmark with a sample of almost 5,000 respondents. BDO and sampling expert Dr Neethling audited the results of the survey.

Comparing across industry, cross-industry standards

The Index not only measures service within industries but also across industries and identifies landscape changes to provide insights into the mass consumer trends, informing service improvement strategies.

The research can provide detailed reports of how consumers rate a company's call centre. This can be compared to an industry and a cross-industry standard, and give recommendations of how performance can be improved. This will be contextualised within the broader context of service delivery, as measured by the Ask Afrika Orange Index, providing customer service trends, insights and thought leadership based on 13 years of data, now across 32 industries and 155 companies, with representative companies as well as the government sector.

Training essential

Even though these companies took the lead, customers were not altogether satisfied with the service they received from call

centres overall and companies need to up their game and train the 225,000 people employed in the call centre industry in South Africa. It is vital that the 175,000 employees in the 2,000 call centres across SA who are directly in contact with consumers, are in touch with the latest in service delivery trends and how they can excel in their role.



The research revealed that call centre agents, who are in the front line of the customer service industry, need to be trained to deal with customers on an individual level, expressing humanness, and a genuine desire to problem solve, rather than just repeating their scripts 'parrot fashion'. Consumers require connection and engagement to be satisfied with service encounters, over and above transactional proficiency. Great service is not sufficient for loyalty and commitment, strong emotional satisfaction is imperative.

"The best call centre agents are empathetic to consumers, who are often already in an agitated state, hence the need to contact the call centre in the first place. Emotions are drivers of decisions, and have a huge impact on consumer perceptions of brands. Company heads and directors would be well advised to become cognisant of just how big an impact their call centres can have on their brand's reputation," says Sarina de Beer, MD of Ask Afrika.

Full research reports can be purchased from Ask Afrika, providing specific insights into a company's performance, contextualising this into the industry context and into the general service delivery landscape, both locally and globally. For more information, go to www.askafrika.co.za.

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