

How systems training can super-charge your customer service processes

 By [Lyndsey Moorhouse](#)

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South African organisations have a significant opportunity to improve their customer service performance by more closely aligning their back-office people and processes with those in the front-office.

There is a gap between the sales and marketing promise and the operational delivery in most large businesses. This gulf between the front-office and back-end of the business often results in a customer experience that is inconsistent, inefficient, and from the customer's point of view, frustrating.

Cross-functional approach

The single biggest reason for this lack of alignment between the front-office and back-office is that organisations do not take a cross-functional approach to designing their business processes, nor do they take an integrated approach to training workers across different business functions.

The result is that the sales and marketing teams focuses on the customer experience while the rest of the organisation must do the back-end delivery with no insight into the customer strategy or the client's needs. Often, the people doing the work in the back-office lack the context to provide good customer service-they simply do not understand how their business process impacts on the customer's experience.

Many South African organisations have made significant investments in business systems that are meant to make their organisations operate in a more integrated manner and ensure that all staff are working with access to the same business information. But these systems will only be effective in improving customer service if they are paired to an integrated customer strategy.

It's important for organisations today to think of how every department and function ultimately serves the customer. They need a customer service culture that stretches from the back-office to the front-office, based on a shared understanding of the business's key objectives and performance indicators for customer service.

Overall performance

Today's most successful businesses are those that understand that customer service is about the performance of the organisation as a whole, not just the sales reps or call centre agents who interface directly with clients. In the back-office, procurement, finance, distribution, and other departments will affect the customer experience.

That's why we believe that organisations today need to live customer service across all departments. This is about ensuring that operational outcomes are mapped to customer service needs—for example, product fulfilment from the warehouse or the resolution of a disputed bill by the finance department.

Training and user adoption strategies are the keys embedding a customer service culture and customer-focused processes in the business. Once workers have a sound, holistic understanding of how the business as a whole operates and how their role impacts the customer experience, they will be better equipped to ensure optimal customer outcomes.

Customer-focused people

Good customer service is usually the product of having customer-focused people, though disciplined processes and powerful IT systems will empower them to do their jobs better. For that reason, the people who fill customer-facing roles in the organisation need to be chosen carefully. They should have empathy, good listening skills and an ability to communicate clearly.

Simple systems with an intuitive user interface will help them to be more engaging in their interactions with customers. Training should also be tailored to the needs and strengths of different people in the business. As active, pragmatic learners, customer service people generally prefer practical, interactive learning approaches rather than theoretical classroom training.

They like to learn through role-playing and troubleshooting rather than by wading through pages of content. A further tip is to build interactive support tools into the systems they use every day so that they can access contextual help and guidance when they need it. The content should be scenario-based and presented in an easy to digest graphical format such as infographics.

ABOUT LYNDSEY MOORHOUSE

As Can!Do's managing director, Lyndsey Moorhouse oversees the delivery of high-impact ERP education solutions that help companies drive real ROI from their investments into applications. Lyndsey has been working in the ERP end-user education and change field for 20 years, 10 of those with Can!do Consulting. During this time, she has held trainer, team lead, project manager, change consultant, strategic training consultant operations management roles on a range of projects for blue-chip clients.

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