

# Feelings have no place in business? Customers would disagree

As a business owner, ask yourself, are you really doing enough to better your customers' experience of your brand? Are you making them feel good when doing business with you? If not - it is time to turn things around.



It was the late Maya Angelou who once said, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did but people will never forget how you made them feel." While this quote is applicable in everyday life, perhaps it is something that more business owners need to start living by, especially when it comes to their customers. Maria Stathoulis, the new owner of the Sandwich Baron Sandton store, believes that success needs to go hand-in-hand with customer service, because how you make your customers feel will determine how loyal they are to your business.

"Success is not ensured in any venture. You can have the best product or service, but if you do not invest in physically obtaining your success, all your efforts will be fruitless. Securing success itself starts with ensuring the loyalty and trust of your customers, because without their buy-in and support, your products will be unused and services unneeded.

"Sadly, it seems as though too many South African companies are not taking the importance of customer satisfaction seriously enough. The result? Customers are simply switching to other service providers. Research conducted by Accenture, a local provider of management consulting, technology and outsourcing services, shows that 76% of South African consumers have switched service providers in the past year due to poor customer service - despite being offered preferential treatment or being rewarded for doing business with the companies in question. The saddest thing is that South Africans have become so accustomed to bad service, that they are actually surprised when they receive good service. Bad service, fights with service providers and frequent follow-ups on the customer side have actually become the norm.

"This leads us to ask - have companies become blind to the basics of service delivery? Have they forgotten how pivotal the

customer is to their success?

"Even in franchising, where the rates of success are said to be significantly higher due to a proven track record and existing client base, customer satisfaction and loyalty are not guaranteed. As a business person who has bought into a franchising model, I know that my store will not be able to live up to the standards of Sandwich Baron customers without our entire team invested in continuously working to better the customer's experience of our store. Moreover, while some customers are willing to give second chances, knowing that human beings, who are prone to making mistakes, actually work in the business, it is never wise to gamble with customer relationships - whether you have been the business owner for months or years.

"With the focus on making the customer feel good when they enter and leave our store, I know the success of the brand will be multiplied going forward," concludes Stathoulis.

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