

## SA's self-service growing, embracing new trends

Self-service in South Africa has spectacularly grown in the past three years, showing significant changes in many areas as local companies begin to embrace customer's choices of web, mobile kiosks and speech. This is according to a survey conducted this year by World Wide Worx in partnership with Consology.

 [Bylssa Sikiti da Silva](#) 5 Nov 2010

The findings of the survey, released yesterday Thursday, 4 November 2010 at the Melrose Arch Hotel in Johannesburg, say the main benefits currently driving self-service in SA are, among others, cost-saving through automating (94%), ability to cross-sell and up-sell (94%), speed up bill payment (88%), reduction in customer churn (88%), customer service and satisfaction (82%), consistency of experience (82%) and call centre deflection (71%).

### Benefits customers, benefits companies

Whereas in the past, self-service was mostly seen as only benefiting customers, many businesses are now realising that it represents as much of a benefit to themselves," World Wide Worx MD Arthur Goldstuck said.

However, Consology CEO Glen Lumley warned companies not to fall into the trap of self-service, thinking 'we can do that - let's build it ourselves'.

"If not done well, it can be counter-productive. Always ensure that you benchmark against best practice. It's not about web-enabling, but about customer experience," he said.

The survey also shows that the telecommunications sector (49%) leads the way in terms of self-service channels, followed by financial (41%), retail (7%) and healthcare (3%).

### Begun to embrace new trends

Goldstuck also said organisations have begun to embrace new trends, with a third using social networking an option that did not exist in this environment three years ago. Some organisations (a third), he added, also use instant messaging, which is seen to have matured in this time.

This is the third time the study has been carried out, to help track the evolution of the industry in terms of data and understanding its dynamics. The previous studies were done in 2003 and 2007. The study was conducted among 17 of the country's major customer-carrying organisations, representing some 69 million customer accounts and 7200 customer contact agents or consultants. Companies surveyed include Pick n Pay, FNB, Absa and Capitec.

There is a serious strategic awakening in this industry, Goldstuck said, stating that compared to the previous studies, self-service is now being seen as a strategic part of a business. The responsibility of implementing self-service strategies has also been shifted from IT and other departments to the board (76%), the study found.

Half of all respondents said in 2007 they would charge customers for self-service. This year, however, not

single respondent still intended to charge for self-service.

## **Focus is moving**

"This demonstrates the focus that companies now have on moving their customers to self-service channels," Goldstuck said.

However, despite these positive developments, a dark cloud still hangs over self-service in SA, as many companies surveyed did not have the clear insight into their self-service channel required to understand and grow the channel successfully. Goldstuck explained: "The strategic gap became apparent in the finding that only 53% had increased spending on self-service in 2010, while less than a quarter planned to do so in 2011 (23%), and even fewer in 2012 (18%).

"This is a clear indication that self-service is not yet an integral part of the operational implementation of large organisations."

Nevertheless, Lumley said key elements that need to be considered going forward include consistency across the three pillars of customer self-service - online selling, online commerce and online support. Data governance and analytics is also increasingly becoming important, he said.

For more, go to [www.worldwideworx.com](http://www.worldwideworx.com) and [www.consology.com](http://www.consology.com).

## **ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA**

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.  
[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>