

Customer experience can make or break your business

Ms Catherine Nabosha (L) explains to one of her customers about her hibiscus product which she manufactures during an expo in Kampala recently. PHOTO BY MICHAEL KAKUMIRIZI



Companies that monitor their customers' experiences have high chances of turning around their profits, writes **Diana Ondoga**.

As an SME either starting out or working towards expanding business, one sure way of being successful is ensuring you create consistent positive experiences for everyone who walks through your doors.

The challenge for you is that customers are more aware now than before and therefore have expectations on how to be treated.

Any time they get less than what they expected they do either of two things; they will either let you know that they are not pleased with what you are offering but stay hoping you will improve or they will walk away,

and give that money to another provider.

God forbid, majority of your customers are those described in the latter, you will never have repeat customers and your business will stagnate. However, there are means to prevent this situation and we share some suggestions below;

Know your product, customers

When a customer walks through your door they expect you to know the product you are selling. Many times, they will consult you on al-

most everything. It is a confidence booster in you and your product when you are an authority on it. Think about restaurants, some customers will usually ask what the ingredients are even when they are listed on the menu so make sure you know your product or service.

If you did not write a business case at the start, you might not have profiled your customers but once you open your doors, you start to interact with different people and get a feel of who your biggest consumers are. That is the right time to profile your customers and ensure that your

product and services are tailored to suit their needs. This way you position yourself as a business that understands your customers.

Encourage feedback from customers

Customers who like your business will point out your flaws as an opportunity for you to improve. Be deliberate about seeking feedback from them and when it's given - act!

Your look and feel matters

Appearance of the business premises and staff matters. Ensure neatness and infuse some colour to attract vs repel customers. When it comes to staff, it pays to remember 'People buy people.' Pleasant and amiable staff goes a long way in delivering customer experience. A Chinese proverb goes "A man without a smiling face must not open up a shop."

Train/mentor staff

It is one thing to talk about creating a customer experience but it is another to train and mentor staff to deliver this. If you cannot afford a professional trainer, use google to look up ways to impress your customers. Youtube has lots of videos that you can also download and watch or share with your teams.

Unless you are a monopoly, which is rare, there will always be someone else offering the same products and services at similar price. What will set you apart is your reputation as a business that values its customers and creates enjoyable and delightful experiences.

If you have not already taken conscious steps towards delivering exceptional customer experiences, it is never too late. You can start making the changes right away and watch how it influences your profits.

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