

New job titles, old job descriptions

 By [Musa Msane](#)

31 Aug 2015

Something good happened at the Loeries this year, the introduction of the Service Design category in a 'creatives' event *noga!* This is a great development as it reflects the industry that takes itself seriously, wants to be taken seriously and further entrench its strategic value in the business mix.

As the industry evolves, it is worth-noting that service is becoming a much bigger deal with accompanying complexities, partly due to the agility and openness of social media. Service is no longer a duty of the front-staff, the after-sale person if not the call centre. The entire business should be wired to service; in fact the basic reason why business exists after all is to serve.

In the age of openness influence by social media, a new industry has opened. New job titles fill the recruitment pages, from Social Media Executives to SOE Strategists, titles that reflect a fast-moving world of technology. It is worth pointing out that these new titles are given to youngsters as they are the ones who understand the technologies and have an affinity to social media.



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Brands are even more pressured to maintain a high level of connectedness with their technologically connected consumers. From Facebook to Twitter, one hears stories of consumers turning to these platforms to complain or to compliment brand experiences. However, in the recent past, there have been a number of incidents of misses when it comes to handling of customer service issues, particularly on social media. This can be expected, the two-way communications ability that social media has introduced is still a new phenomenon.

If indeed to serve is the reason why business exists, would one leave this critical touchpoint of business to youngsters to handle? I know one sounds like an alarmist, even a pinch of ageism can be detected here, but really do they have a deeper appreciation of how the service world operates, especially when one considers the maturity of most brands in the South African marketplace? Unlike Uber with its impressive deep pockets but brand equity, our market is comprised of legacy brands with heritage which has been built over decades, the communication style can't be that casual and the complaints can't be handled dismissively as has been the case in other incidents, resulting to brand embarrassments. Job titles maybe new, but job descriptions may be as old as the concept of customer service itself.

One cannot claim to have the answers, nor do one insinuates that customer service has been better handled before the advent of social media, call-centres are another debate, but it's this openness that social media has created that the industry has to respond to, partly through on-going intensive training in creative customer services and partnering with the experienced staff members.

For instance in journalism, rookies don't handle certain assignments without the intervention of an old scribe, maybe this should be given to call-centres to handle, who knows? Responding to positive Tweeter feeds may not be the only activity that these youngsters would have to deal with. Unfortunately a customer is a pay-master, not a friend.

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