



POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

OPENING REMARKS

BY

TJAMA TJIVIKUA

RECTOR OF THE POLYTECHNIC OF NAMIBIA

AT

**2ND CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGEMENT AFRICA AWARDS AND
CONFERENCE (2015)**

14 SEPTEMBER 2015

09:00

Director of Ceremonies and Director of the HP-GSB in the Polytechnic of Namibia, Dr
Grafton Whyte

Honourable Pendukeni Iivula-Ithana, Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration

Honourable Rebecca Kapitere Ndjoze-Ojo, Deputy Minister of Education, Training and
Innovation

Distinguished Captains of Industry

Distinguished Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

For the second year running, I am delighted to open the proceedings of The ***Customer Service Management Africa Awards and Conference.***

I would like to welcome and thank the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration, Hon Iivula-Ithana and the Deputy Minister of Education, Training and Innovation, Hon Ndjoze-Ojo for taking time from their busy schedules to be present with us here today. We are honoured that you recognise the importance of this new movement, and your presence gives impetus to a new culture of excellent customer service to be embedded in Namibia's daily business culture.

Indeed, we are still creating a *movement*. By improving customer service delivery in Namibia, we are doing more than hosting an event: we are changing the way people think and do things. This movement reminds me of the famous systems theorist, inventor, architect and author Richard Buckminster Fuller, who said: ***“You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”***

Therefore, we are here to review the current state of service delivery in our country and to create a new model, a new paradigm if you will, within our own context. This new paradigm should, sooner rather than later, make the *status quo* of poor customer service *obsolete*.

Director of Ceremonies

As we all know, the Polytechnic of Namibia is in the final stages of being renamed to the the Namibia University of Science and Technology. We are driven by the belief that development, both national and international, is based on knowledge creation and knowledge management, and innovation. Throughout history, academic institutions have always been key agents in the dissemination of knowledge and innovation, and therefore it is only fitting that the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business is spearheading customer service movement in Namibia. We need innovations in customer care as a matter of urgency.

The Polytechnic's theme for this year is ***"Excellence in the 21st Century."*** This encapsulates our drive in keeping up with globalisation and the world's academic trends. For us, as an academic institution that develops high level skills for the country, it is particularly important that we constantly gauge the market's needs for the future so as to prepare our students accordingly. Alternatively, we also have a responsibility to supply the market with critical thinkers who are emboldened to question the *status quo* and find innovative ways of addressing issues that have plagued us for too long.

As mentioned in my speech at the Customer Service Association launched earlier this year, we need to take cognisance of the fact that companies and government departments with high customer satisfaction are more likely to enjoy higher levels of customer retention, repeat business and contented citizens. Therefore, it is in our interest that government, organisations and educational institutions invest in our people (human capital), because customer service delivers tangible business and social benefits.

Director of Ceremonies

It is not sheer coincidence that The Polytechnic's theme "**Excellence in the 21st Century,**" and CSMA's theme, "**Expecting better: Delivering More,**" speak about our current and future aspirations in terms of service delivery. It shows you that these two entities are in tandem. The Customer Service Conference this year aims to facilitate the bridging of the gap between suppliers and customers by encouraging motivated suppliers and informed customers.

Likewise, the Polytechnic of Namibia takes cognisance of the nation's demands for better service delivery in tertiary education; we have therefore expanded this establishment to a diverse and differentiated system that would be able to cater for the different needs and effectively support the national development agenda. With the support of the government, we have experienced tremendous growth and exhibited stellar performance over the last two decades.

Director of Ceremonies

The inaugural event which took place last year, was called the Namibia Customer Service Awards, but has since taken a Pan-African perspective and has now become the Customer Service Management Africa Awards and Conference. While the focus is mainly on Namibia, especially for data collection, you will see that a host of speakers and experts from various African countries have been invited to contribute to research with a view to creating an Africa-wide movement, with Namibia as the hub.

For us here in Namibia, we realise that our country is intricately linked to the SADC region and even to the global village, which necessitates that we need to respond to this increasingly competitive environment with better communication, innovation, flexibility and speed.

What is the most valuable asset we have to give us this competitive edge? It is our **people**. Nowadays, where competition is rife, employees can no longer just do their jobs, they need to work more effectively. In order to be successful in attaining a competitive edge, they need to develop a deep customer service orientation.

As one of the country's leading institutes for skills development, research and promoting entrepreneurship, the Polytechnic of Namibia has a responsibility to instill an attitude of excellent customer service in our graduates. In the same vein, the Harold Pupkewitz Graduate School of Business and its partners aspire to be a guiding light to the Namibian business community by organising this Conference and Awards. The research survey addresses head-on one of the major impediments to growth and innovation: poor customer service delivery.

Director of Ceremonies

There is large chasm between poor and excellent customer service, and it is this gap that we, as Africans, need to address – we need to move from mediocre to excellent customer service. In a study by the World Bank titled ***“Africa’s Infrastructure: A time for Transformation,”*** it was found that service delivery remains a pressing issue throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. Recently, the focus of government policies on meeting the Millennium Development Goals has increased attention on better provision of services. At present, however, services in Africa lag significantly behind those of other developing countries and are considerably more expensive than elsewhere.¹

¹ *“Foster, Vivien; Briceno-Garmendia, Cecilia. 2010. Africa's Infrastructure: A Time for Transformation. World Bank.*

Distinguished Participants

I am pleased that together, we continue on this journey of transforming the face and nature of service delivery in Africa in general and in Namibia in particular. Our common goals and combined efforts are elements that can indeed foster the change that we envision. Furthermore, our commitment to the improvement of customer service will hopefully inspire new participants in our noble endeavour.

The nationwide survey research reports are available, the experts are here. We also have a Master Class running for the next two days, where social entrepreneurs and innovators from the African soil (Uganda and Tanzania) will present on how they created success with limited resources. I urge all participants to take advantage of the time we have allocated.

Director of Ceremonies

With these few thoughts, I would like to officially open **The 2nd Customer Service Management Awards and Conference 2015**

I thank you.