

Longevity through customer experience

By  Danette Breitenbach

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When it comes to customer experience, many brands talk the talk. Not that many walk the walk. Avis Rent a Car (Avis) is not one of these. Customer experience is the DNA that runs through its organisation.

Proof of this is its recent top spot in the *Sunday Times* 2017 Top Brands Business to Business Car Hire category and the *Daily News* Your Choice Awards named them Best Car Rental Company – both wins are for the 14th consecutive year!

They have also just been ranked category and overall winners in the Car Hire (Car hire/Taxi service) in the 2017/2018 Target Group Index (TGI), Ask Afrika Youth Brand Survey.

“It’s a humbling experience being voted Best Car Hire again,” says Rainer Gottschick, chief executive, Avis Rent a Car, Southern Africa.

He believes that it is the company’s vision, built around the customer experience, that has made it a winner. “Our vision is lived top down and it is not something I do, it is something everyone does. Everyone in the company is a brand ambassador.”



Rainer Gottschick, chief executive, Avis Rent a Car, Southern Africa.

Invests heavily in training

To achieve this, the company invests heavily in training. “We do a lot of training and align the team around that, internally and externally. This training extends beyond technical training and focuses on what it means to be an Avis ambassador.”

In addition, they make sure they have the right people to deliver on this. “Recruiting the right people is key. There is a clear DNA that runs through the organisation and your values and ours need to match.”

It is only by living the vision every day that the company can deliver a consistent customer experience. “The customer is at the centre of this and, therefore, customer satisfaction is measured across the organisation, not only at the front line, and it is the customer that rates the service they received.”

You have to recognise that no two customers are the same and treat them differently. “Reading your customer to meet their needs is so important. For example, two customers may rent the same vehicle at the same location, but their needs are very different. One is a businessperson and just wants their car and to go. The other is a first time visitor to South Africa and needs advice.”

Listen to your customer

Make sure you listen to your customer he adds. “Their needs are changing. The next three to five years will bring much bigger changes than we have seen over the past 15 years. To cater for these changing needs, we will need to adopt the appropriate processes and systems. For us, system and processes are in meeting future customer needs.”

Generally, change globally, in the car rental industry and other industries, is being driven by ease of use, technology and the consumer in control of the process. South Africa is not too different to the rest of the world. “Generally we follow global trends, such as ease of use and mobility. The biggest impact in the short term is the shift from ownership to user. This is a global trend.”

Looking ahead to the next few years, he believes people will be the competitive advantage. “Even if you have the best technology, if you do not have the processes and systems and people, then you will not deliver to the customer. What will change is the skills that people need.”

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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