



## **SERVICE EXCELLENCE: What are the key ingredients?:**

The challenge researchers have been faced with has been to search for the bouquet of service excellence components that differentiate successful service-orientated companies from ordinary ones. This set of standards would make tangible the concept of service excellence in South Africa and act as a barometer for measurement.

Service Excellence Research describes some common sets of characteristics as follows:

### **1. A strong understanding of the concept of service**

Service excellence usually has been properly introduced into companies and inducted into the complexity of the business itself. They are knowledgeable about the contributions their companies make to industry as well as their own contribution to profitability. Under the banner of understanding service they also understand human behaviour and are made aware of their effect of their behaviour on others. They have the ability to monitor and predict their own patterns of behaviour, seeking consistency at all times.

### **2. Service Excellence Behaviours**

It has become evident that effective service excellence companies display a keen sense of personal moral values and easily identify with professional codes of conduct within and between industries. Ethics and ethical behaviour are high on the agenda at all times. Also evident is a strong focus on application and compliance with all relevant legislation and regulatory frameworks.

### **3. Technical and Professional Competencies**

Service excellence companies consistently display the highest order of the above. Personal and work-related competencies in administration and understanding of financial controls were also evident. Among team leaders, supervisors and first-line managers strong human resource management capabilities are clearly evident.

#### **4. Visions and Strategies**

Service excellence companies distinguish themselves by their clear-cut and tangible visions and strategies, thereby separating the good from the bad. These visions and strategies conceived by top individual performers display an uncanny notion for future developments in their industries as well as strategic directions to achieve their aims and objectives.

#### **5. Passion and a sense of innovation**

These are clearly evident characteristics of service excellence organizations. Perhaps the most striking common factor was a focus on consistently reliable delivery of service, to the point of self and company sacrifice at times. This clearly differentiates the exemplary performers of excellent service delivery from those evidenced in under performers which are often characterized by continuous crisis management.

#### **6. Communications and marketing**

Service excellence companies understand the effectiveness of communications and marketing. They practise these skills successfully and keep open lines of communication and feedback. They also welcome and receive information in a constructive manner.

#### **7. A strong sense of quality**

These companies are able to optimally use designed systems with the intention to ensure consistent quality as their benchmark. Whereas under-performing companies see such systems as challenges to their autonomy often viewing system procedures as bureaucracy.

#### **8. Team roles**

Understanding “my role in the team” was perhaps the most informative factor in identifying truly service excellence companies. The role of teams and team-effectiveness in the successful companies was a clear differentiator from the good performers against the below-average ones.