

THE SERVICEMAG

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW TO IMPROVE YOUR SERVICES

Iron Sharpens Iron

An interview with the PS,
Ministry of East African
Community in Rwanda,
Mr. Robert Ssali

Impamvu Zitera Kwakira Nabi Abakiriya

En avant pour nos droits
de consommateurs

Motivate Your Team

BEN KALKMAN

CEO, Banque Populaire du Rwanda

"Customer care is about efficiency"

FREE
COPY

NEW!
Ask Our Lawyer
Answers to legal issues

Environmental Awareness in the Service Industry

By Abena Amoako-Tuffour



For some the link between the service industry and environmental sustainability may not be obvious but there is a very important connection. Environmental sustainability is using the earth's resources carefully so that they are not permanently depleted or destroyed for future generations. An example of sustainable forestry is to cut down some trees but to leave enough to prevent serious soil erosion and the permanent destruction of the local wildlife habitat. It would then be sustainable to plant more trees to replace the ones you cut down.

Consider the daily activities of airports, restaurants, hotels, car rentals, business centers, grocery stores, and the public sector. Though they offer different

services, they all consume and affect the earth's resources. For example, they all use large quantities of water; many use paper and most if not all use vehicles to carry out day-to-day activities which mean consuming fossil fuels and emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. In addition, all of these service providers cater to large quantities of people - from tens to thousands of people a day. This means that by simply existing as a business or institution, you have a significant impact on the environment. And depending on your awareness and concern for the environment, this impact is either positive or negative.

As the world's population increases and lifestyles evolve, our relationship with the earth can affect the health of

other people, plants, and animals and determine whether they live or die. According to a 2002 United Nations Environment Program press release, climate change, and the pollution from cars and industries are two of the emerging threats Africa will face over the next three decades. And environmental conservation is receiving more attention around the world. Rwanda's Kwita Izina (baby gorilla naming ceremony) event is an effort to promote environmental awareness and to protect the diverse wildlife and habitats of Rwanda and neighboring countries.

In Rwanda, many in the service industry have some environmentally-friendly practices although they may not be aware of it. For instance the absence



“Being environmentally friendly does not only show respect for the planet and others living on it but it can also save time and money”

PHOTO BY Paul Smijders

of packaging for food in markets and restaurants requires people to bring reusable bags and containers. This means that very little waste is being produced. While some western countries are trying hard to promote the use of reusable bags for shopping, many Rwandans use them because nothing else is available or because it's cheaper than having to buy envelopes every time they shop.

One business center in Remera uses minimal amounts of paper. Besides the occasional large order, they use on average 10 pages a day for printing and photocopying. . “We recycle paper- for example if we print out too many copies by mistake, instead of throwing it away, we use it as scrap paper ” says Sharon, who works there. These are good

examples of environmentally friendly behavior, but people must be aware of the environmental impacts of their behavior in order to keep up these good practices. Being environmentally friendly not only shows respect for the planet and others living on it, human or non-human, it can also save time, money and foster creativity as well. For instance, workers in Mexico and Peru make handbags from discarded candy wrappers!

The service industry has a large impact on the environment and has the opportunity to be leaders in environmental sustainability. There are many different ways to work on being environmentally sustainable: Sell coffee? Buy coffee beans grown with natural fertilizers instead of artificial ones that destroy other

plants, are harmful to human health; Sell or serve food? Use reusable food containers instead of disposable ones. Use a lot of paper? Think of alternatives such as e-mail, erasable whiteboard. Also print double-sided when you can and reuse paper for scrap.

Avoid wasting power, turn off your lights, your television, your computer when they are not being used.

The possibilities are endless but the earth's resources are not. Think of how you can play your part for a thriving and sustainable service industry. **TSM**

aatuffour@gmail.com