

Improving Professionalism

Developing and improving the knowledge base, competencies and skills of employees, serves the twofold purpose of better positioning individuals to deliver quality service and to enhance their professional image. This underscores the value of training and retraining at all levels. To the credit of the labour movement, it has remained a strong advocate for the training and retraining of workers, which it considers as a major aspect of worker empowerment.

The upgrading of competencies, skills and knowledge ought to be of interest to both employers and employees, as these are integral to the professionalism which personnel in organizations should aim to demonstrate. When these three elements are satisfied, there are grounds for a claim to be made that the employee is well-endowed to provide customer service. In the past, many an employee worked for the full period of their working life without having the opportunity to improve on their professional status. In the world in which we now live and work, familiarly referred to as the information age, there is need for all employees to remain on the cutting edge, for the purpose of ensuring that they remain relevant.

It is to be accepted that there is value to lifelong and continuous learning, for the simple reason that it will redound to the benefit of an individual throughout his/her working life. Based on this, it would be unwise to believe that there isn't a need to upgrade on previous academic knowledge and/or professional training. In every profession, new information and ways of doing things come to the fore, and it is through the acquisition of this knowledge that one's expertise is enhanced. This makes a tremendous difference to the organization/enterprise, as it can boast of a qualified, competent, capable and an experience staff.

While this is desired, such will only be achieved if both employers and employees take some measure of responsibility towards ensuring that professional upliftment takes place. Starting with the employee, there should be an interest in participating in professional development or self-development training programmes.

Employers should endeavour to raise the professional standard of their organization/enterprise by placing a premium on the training and retraining of their staff members. This means that a policy should be adopted towards such. It may be necessary to reflect within the collective bargaining agreement that

employees are required to participate in some form of training or retraining, within a specified time period.

Moving to another level, the issue of the re registration of professionals, is a progressive step in ensuring that individuals are kept abreast with the developments and changes within their area of professional expertise. There is likely to be a negative response by some to this, and those who oppose would tend to advocate a preference for the traditional ways of doing things. It is this kind of thinking that is unlikely to advance the individual within their profession of choice.

Given the nature of the competitive work environment, where individuals compete for jobs and promotional opportunities based on their advance knowledge, skills and competencies, and where organizations/enterprises compete for clients based on the quality of the service they offer then it makes good sense to be at the top of the class.

Any effort taken to improve one's professionalism is a positive and decisive step towards enabling them to better perform their role, to be more productive and efficient, and to provide value customer service; all of which are absolutely essential.