



Flexibility, service excellence driving businesses to smaller service providers

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Frustrated South African businesses are increasingly turning to smaller telecommunications service providers, drawn by their ability to innovate and craft bespoke solutions that are backed up by a higher quality of customer service. More than just a good sale or good installation experience, it's the after sales service that helps smaller telecoms service providers differentiate themselves. Businesses are tired of having to make endless support calls, as well as the seeming lack of urgency with which their problems are addressed. They want to be more than just another number to their service provider.

Accountability, flexibility Businesses are also looking for a single point of accountability, and smaller providers are able to offer just that, by ensuring that as far as possible, all services are provided in-house. Too much outsourcing, or selling too many services often causes confusion for the customer who can never be sure who to contact in the event of a problem. Larger providers not only lack agility when it comes to customer service, but can also be inflexible in their product offering and pricing. Their smaller counterparts, however, do not encounter the same struggles, and have also been far quicker to automate many processes and systems, meaning they are able to speed up the decision-making process and provide innovative solutions to their customers. While smaller service providers like us might have defined products and pricing structures, we are far more willing to engage with clients who want something different, and to tailor a solution to meet the requirements. This includes being able to customise the services included and the contract duration. Providing a more personalised level of service also allows for a deeper understanding of the customer. In turn, this enables the service provider to upsell products that can help the customer further enhance their business, over and above the benefits resulting from use of the base product sold. **Service is key** Working with a smaller service provider offers businesses this level of service: unlike with large-scale providers where customers don't have access to senior company executives, key decision makers at smaller service providers are often just a phone call away. Our management team for example participates in WhatsApp groups

with our customers, allowing these key team members to be kept abreast of problems affecting customers, and to directly intervene should the need arise. Having this clear escalation path means issues that are difficult to resolve through the customer support centre are brought to the attention of senior staff timeously. Even in situations where an issue cannot be resolved immediately, it's about ensuring that the customer knows the problem is being attended to, and then managing expectations. It is vital that smaller service providers master this: companies are looking for customer references when it comes to choosing a telecoms service provider, and quality after sales service provided to a key client can lead to positive referrals, and potentially new business going forward. **Post written by Kyle Woolf CEO Saicom Voice Services (PTY) LTD**