



THREE P'S

THAT SHOULD FORM THE BASIS OF HOW A BUSINESS ENGAGES WITH CUSTOMERS

BY DAVID PRESTON, CANON SOUTH AFRICA

The pandemic has been the most challenging experience of our lifetime. As the dust settles and we begin to emerge out of the haze of lockdowns and uncertainty, opportunity knocks on the horizon. The global economy's recovery is predicted to occur at an accelerated pace than initially expected, so many businesses are desperate to take advantage and make up for lost time (and sales).

To grab these opportunities, though, a change in mindset needs to take place, according to Canon South Africa Managing Director, David Preston. 'It is about reanalysing and challenging the values that we want to possess to reach the next level,' he added. 'This is not only as individuals but collectively as a business.'

For Preston, it's about three P's. The first P is proactivity. Preston believes the days of top-down management are harmful to organisations in the long run as they encourage passiveness. 'A business cannot move forward if people fear initiative because they need to be told what to do by someone else,' he said.

'An initiative-taking approach means looking at the business more holistically and with a solution-orientated mindset. If there is a way to improve a process or to solve an issue, come forward with the suggestion instead of waiting for someone else to initiate the next step.' A simple example of proactivity could be answering a colleague's phone or taking the lead to reply to a customer email, according to Preston.

Professionalism is the second P, and it's directly linked to proactivity. 'As a business, it is important to be professional in the face of adversity and to keep emotions in check,' Preston explained. 'Sometimes, customers experience challenges with a business and their responses might be emotional due to frustration or the lack of communication.' If businesses are to truly become customer-centric at all touchpoints, Preston added, they need to have the mindset of changing a negative experience into a positive one through their

communication skills and proactive approach, rather than through emotional reactions.

'Professionalism also means adding value within our internal and external teams,' Preston said. 'We need to understand our products and the markets we sell into, so that we add real value to partners and customers. If they are not sure about something, rather double-check and ask the necessary questions for a better understanding of the situation.'

Preston believes that if a business follows the first two P's, the final one, performance, will come naturally. 'By all of us buying into the values and working together, we are capable of building a collaborative spirit and can-do culture that will have a direct impact on success and performance, which will be seen through the increased sales and satisfied customers,' he said. 'This, in turn, allows a business to invest in itself going forward, recruit more talent and to promote and reward its people.'

In conclusion, Preston stressed that performance can only be achieved if proactivity and professionalism are in place from the start. With the marketplace being highly competitive and with similar products and services all aimed at the same customer base, the only way to stand out from competitors is in the core values and how businesses conduct themselves, both internally and externally.

www.canon.co.za