

## Should your Reception Area be in your Marketing Budget?

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### **Why you should create a professional Frontline and Reception area and train your receptionist.**

Why your reception area should be part of your marketing budget.

The [frontline](#) and reception area, manned by either a telephonist or receptionist is often seen as an entry-level area. Your receptionist is in fact one of the people who your clients speak to more often than not and should therefore be optimally placed and trained to ensure maximum [client care](#) and [sales](#).

A sales representative goes out for the day and contacts eight prospective clients. A calling card is left with your company telephone number. One of these eight prospects calls in and speaks to the [receptionist](#) asking for the sales representative. The sales representative is not in the office and the receptionist now needs to redirect the call, retain the client's interest and assist in any way possible.

At this stage your receptionist has just become the most important person in the company as far as your client is concerned. This frontline person will provide your potential client with information that will make or break the relationship between your company and theirs.

Should your receptionist be professional, friendly, knowledgeable and suitably trained, chances are that you will retain the client. If not, your receptionist has single handedly managed to negatively affect your sales targets.

This is but one scenario where the [frontline /reception](#) person shows their worth to a company.

Let us list more such instances.

An existing client phones into your company on a regular basis to place ongoing orders for their "materials"

Your receptionist either becomes extremely familiar with the client and forgets that there is a fine line that one should not cross as familiarity breeds contempt, alternatively remains too aloof and as a result no relationship is formed.

Poor receptionists lose clients. Good receptionists retain clients. For receptionists to achieve correctly they need to be trained.

A further example of where a frontline receptionist can be worth his/her weight in gold. Let us imagine that a client phones to speak to a [manager](#) and upon hearing that the manager is not there, declines to leave a full message. His message is simply: "Tell your manager that John called – he knows me!"

Now a [receptionist](#) who is not assertive enough will without a doubt, in a most friendly voice thank the client for calling and pass this incomplete message to the manager who will not be sure which of the 4 John's that he knows this may be. Meaning full well to take a swing at guessing the right one, he postpones until just after returning the next call, and promptly forgets. John in the meanwhile gets to speak to your competitor!

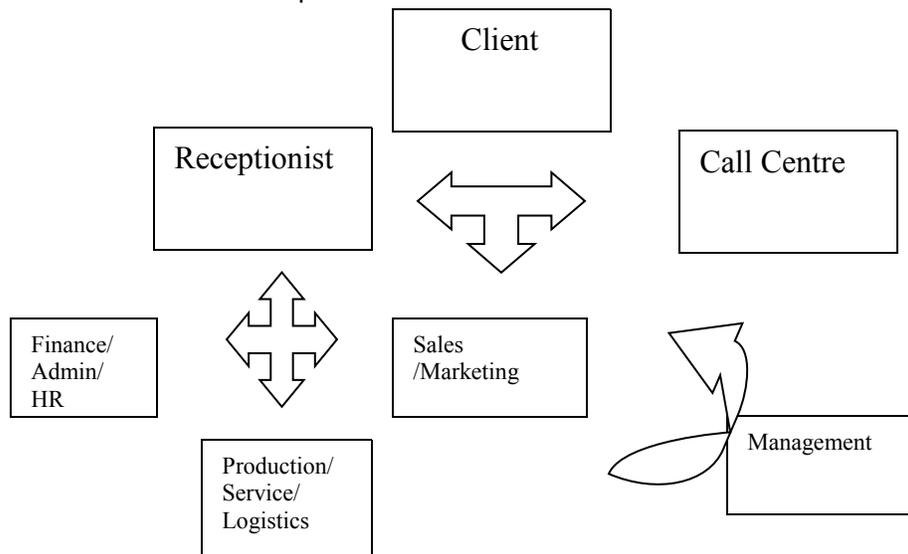
The value of a well-run reception area and good receptionist training cannot be overstated. A further example that is sadly more common than we would like is in the recruitment area. The HR department are often run off their feet and recruitment becomes a huge expense (often unmeasured) for them. They have 3 positions in the company to fill and place an advert in the local newspaper for Monday morning. On Monday the receptionist who is all geared up and ready to go for the week, walks into the office and is ambushed when the first 3 candidates simply call in with the words..."we are calling regarding your position advertised"

At this moment it is feasible that your receptionist could stammer and stutter a bit and not sound as good, nor know where to transfer the call to and thus keep the candidates on hold for too long.

The end result could be a loss of a potential candidate.

So when we say that the receptionist or frontline staff should be part of the marketing budget, we mean that you would need to invest into whatever means necessary to prepare your receptionist to do their jobs professionally. For too long receptionists have been seen as the most junior and the person who least needs to know information and with this particular approach, many companies have managed to shoot themselves in the foot.

Maybe the following extremely simplified schematic of a typical provider's interaction with their client will help:



Generally speaking the receptionist or frontline person has the most interaction with the clients and is also more likely to get involved in a particular flow of information more than once. This is not necessarily the case for other portfolios. A call centre agent would seldom transfer a call to a totally different department. In all honesty the call centre agent would more than likely provide the company's main number and ask the client to call the receptionist.

It is thus obvious that [receptionist training](#) is paramount to the survival and professionalism of all companies. Add to this mix South Africa's very unique situation of having 11 official languages as well as our ongoing quest to strengthen ties with the BRIC nations and suddenly we have even more reason to look at our reception or frontline area in exactly the same way we would look at any marketing project.

Firstly we need to be clear as to what message we want to give out with our frontline and receptionist training. Do we want a uniform and professional approach by all and are we prepared to put the receptionist in charge of this campaign or are we going to give the running of this reception campaign to the marketing/sales division.

What hardware, tools, props, information, business cards and /or other systems would we need to make sure that the receptionist can do his or her job professionally?

What budget are we prepared to free up for the above?

Is it possible that we have various themes for our reception area and if so how would these be implemented?

As you can see [professional receptionist training](#) is vital to the success and growth of a business. It is true that we have many good receptionists out there; we also have some really poor ones, but mostly good receptionists. Excellent and great receptionist skills should, however, be our benchmark. And to achieve this professional attitude I do suggest you make the decision to up-skill your receptionist today.

Up to this point we have dealt mainly with the receptionist and not really with the reception area or the other extension users. Telephone etiquette is essential for all telephone users. The volume with which we speak on the telephone, the manner in which the receptionist screens the call and the extension user then answers as well as the correct identification of whom the caller is speaking to, all play a part in correct telephone etiquette.

Not only does telephone etiquette and receptionist or frontline skills come into play but also the area that visitors are expected to wait in and the manner in which they are entertained whilst they wait.

Reception areas that are conducive to entertaining clients and providing more information about your products whilst that entertainment takes place are of utmost importance. Just recently I was taken to a waiting room with about 1 000 mag wheels and some awesome lighting on display whilst my tyres were being refitted. I was offered something to drink and the manager saw that I was wanting to work while waiting so immediately brought in a table for me so I could use my netbook. This is the type of knowledge your receptionist should have.

So make the decision to do receptionist training now.

Visit [Staff Training's website](#) or contact [info@stafftraining.co.za](mailto:info@stafftraining.co.za) (or give us a call at +27 21 839 3021 ) to find out more about this and other workshops.

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