



# Build a better utility business

## 5 QUESTIONS LEADERS SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES

Understanding what your customers and employees want and how you can meet their needs will help your business become more successful and make a bigger positive impact.

TRANSFORM worked with two utilities, Southern Water and Sanitation Company (SWSC) based in Zambia and Malindi Water and Sewerage Company (MAWASCO) in Kenya, to help them launch new sanitation services.

In both cases, the utilities launched a service that helped people empty their full pit latrine toilets. It moved them from using emptiers who do the job by hand to a professional service that disposes of waste correctly and safely.

The approach put customers and employees at the centre of their business. Often called behaviour change theory, there are five questions that every entrepreneur should ask themselves as they plan their business growth. The answers will help businesses succeed because they increase the relevance of the service to the customer.

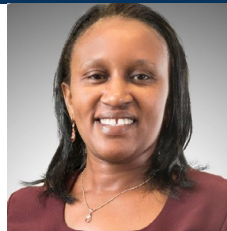
**1 Do people UNDERSTAND what we offer?**

**2 How can we make it EASY to use the service?**

**3 How can we make it DESIRABLE?**

**4 How can we make it REWARDING?**

**5 What can we do to help people form a HABIT?**



“It was good for us to start by thinking about what the community requires and what currently prevents them from practising the correct sanitation behaviours.”

Priscillah Githinji-Oluoch, Head of Sanitation & Programs, Malindi Water and Sewerage Company (MAWASCO), Kenya

“We learned that understanding human behaviour is critical and would advise any utility undertaking a similar project to ensure they truly know what behaviour they want to change and what the desired behaviour looks like.”

Eustakia Milimo Hamuchenje, Community Relations Officer, Southern Water and Sanitation Company (SWSC), Zambia



### Find out more

- [Expert insights into consumer behaviour & Unilever's Five Levers for Change](#)
- [Learnings from the TRANSFORM utilities sanitation challenge](#)

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## Do people **UNDERSTAND** what we offer?

If you are introducing a new product or service, alongside raising awareness of your service, you must also build understanding and acceptance of what is being offered.

Your customers might not even know that a new service is possible. At first, SWSC's potential customers didn't believe their toilets could be emptied any other way than by hand.

SWSC helped convince them that there were better ways of emptying toilets by producing a comic book style leaflet and video explaining their services.

## How can we make it **EASY** to use the service?

People are busy and they often find it difficult to do something new. It is important to show how your service fits into their lives, and give them simple and affordable steps to take.

The people in your team who are meeting customers daily will have relevant, first-hand experience about what your customers find difficult. They are an important source of information for you.

MAWASCO involved its customers in designing how to book and pay for its service. This meant customers got the support they wanted with the provision of a number to call, text or WhatsApp.

## How can we make it **DESIRABLE?**

People will only use a product or service if it helps them with something they care about and matches their aspirations. Emotions and identity are important drivers for behaviour change.

Aspiration was a strong driver for pit emptiers. In Kenya, emptiers felt despised by their local community for doing a dirty job.

The opportunity to professionalise with tools, uniforms and cleaning products was a motivating way to increase their social status.

These signs of professionalism also appealed to customers who wanted to show they were doing the 'right thing' by emptying their toilet in the 'right way'.

## How can we make it **REWARDING?**

Rewards are important to turn one-off use of a product or service into repeat use, and to support your sales.

Rewards can be both financial and non-financial. For financial rewards, MAWASCO and SWSC both offer customers a cash incentive for referring friends. They've also offered incentives to their employees who are paid extra to find and refer new clients.

A non-financial benefit to parents was that they could let their children play in the area without fearing that they would be playing in contaminated soil and get ill.

## What can we do to help people form a **HABIT?**

Once people have tried your service, keep reminding them of their positive experience so they come back. When customers are faced with a choice of what to do, you want to be the immediate thought. This then forms a habit.

Existing customers are likely to be your best sales people, telling their friends about your service. They need to be looked after.

After conducting customer research, MAWASCO and SWSC send their customers SMS messages six to 12 months after their initial empty, when their pit latrines will be getting full and needing emptying again. This helps customers to book the service (making it easy) and helps reinforce the new habit that when their pit latrines are full then customers should contact their utility.



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