



FAIRHEADS
Benefit Services

Nothing can beat face-to-face

By Olefile Moea, Executive Director, Fairheads Benefit Services

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It's funny how some things come full circle. Back in the day - before computers, fax and, later, cellphone and social media – the standard way to communicate with clients was face to face. You might have the occasional phone call, but otherwise if you needed to query something about your bank account for example, you would meet a bank consultant face to face and get the answer in person.

The world has moved on. Most people have a cellphone nowadays and this, combined with contact centres, has revolutionised communication for the man in the street. At your convenience, you can phone a contact centre and most times get what you need over the phone. Even better, companies can communicate important information to you via SMS. With the right security checks and balances, the importance of these modern forms of communication cannot be underestimated.

And yet, and yet. In a fast-moving digital world, there has come a need to return to basics. Many clients are longing for the human touch and a chance to speak to someone helpful face to face. Especially when it comes to more complex issues, where a client needs help understanding their particular issue and maybe needs some financial education, an in-person meeting can make all the difference.

Walk-in centres meet the need

Some companies are therefore meeting this need through permanent walk-in offices in addition to their contact centres. They make sure that caring people with an ability to listen to clients' needs are employed in their walk-in offices – and they are seeing the results in positive feedback from clients. There is an improved knowledge of the product, a sense that the company cares, and increased client satisfaction.

In the beneficiary fund industry we find that many members (clients) live in rural areas. For them, grassroots communication, in their language and in their area, counts a tremendous amount. Initiatives such as roadshows and field agents bring face-to-face contact to the

people. Yet we still find that people in remote areas make use of our permanent walk-in offices in the major centres. They may need to make a trip to the city for other reasons and then, while they are there, they visit a walk-in centre to find a caring person with whom they can chat about their beneficiary fund account.

Like I said, it's strange how the world has come full circle.

ENDS