

African tech earns international award in Berlin

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Intelligent assistant built by South African partnership recognised by Mobile Marketing Association.



Helm's Sean Alborough in Berlin

South African customer experience company Helm, and long standing partners DStv, were honoured on Thursday night at a gala event held by the Mobile Marketing Association. AI-powered solution DStv Assist took home a Smarties Award in the Customer Experience covering Europe, Middle East and Africa.

DStv Assist has radically changed the self-service experience for 4.7 million South Africans since its launch, and currently solves queries of 1.2 million South Africans every month. With that many users now able to problem-solve via WhatsApp, it's no surprise that the average customer satisfaction score is at an all-time high of 77%.

Helm head of marketing, Stef Adonis, attributes the success of the project to positive and radical change. "Five years ago, a DStv customer would have to phone a call centre, take out their smartcard, unplug their decoder and wait in a queue in order to clear a decoder error. Today, they can do that in 30 seconds without leaving their couch – all thanks to a smart use of technology, a well-chosen WhatsApp platform, and a DStv team who are committed to making the self-service experience as good as the viewing experience."

DStv Assist, built using a South African AI-powered platform called Helm Engine, has gathered data and learnt language nuances from over 1.6 billion messages. The DStv WhatsApp assistant can now complete over 13 self-service tasks in a matter of seconds.

Noni Tshabalala, group digital enablement, senior manager of product at Multichoice, says: "The award is a testament to our team's dedication to creating the best personalised experiences. Our customers are able to have an enriched self-service experience and engage with us about our value-added services and products through our DStv Assist platform."

With the success of this proudly South African partnership reaching the international stage, as well as the emergence of generative AI into mainstream society, the possibilities are starting to come alive for other local companies looking to instill change and improve the human experience through the power of technology.

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