SOWETO BUSINESS DIRECTORY · BOOK 6

Customer List & Follow-up

Remember the person. Keep the promise.



By Mendi Taukwena
Soweto Business Directory | Free download
Illustrated review - 4 November 2026

SOWETO BUSINESS DIRECTORY · BOOK 6

Customer List & Follow-up

Remember the person. Keep the promise.

Contents

Chapter 1: The Customer Called Blue Jacket

Chapter 2: The Message With a Job

Chapter 3: The Number Is Not the Yes

Chapter 4: The Special That Would Not Leave

Chapter 5: The Promise Comes Back

Fictional stories. Practical steps. Better customer care.

Chapter 1: The Customer Called Blue Jacket

Remember the person. Keep the promise. Leave the detective work to television.

Busi knew her customers. Until she had to find one. At her small laundry, she could describe everybody. The uncle with the spotless takkies. The auntie who counted her pegs. The man in the blue jacket who needed his shirts before a job interview. Names? Those were still coming. In her phone, three customers were saved as "Laundry", two as "New Customer" and one as "Don't Lose This Number". Naturally, that was the number she could not find.



The shirts were ready. The customer was a mystery.

The shirts were finished. The promise was not. Blue Jacket had asked Busi to message when they were ready. She opened old chats, checked missed calls and asked Bra Lucky whether he remembered the man's name. "Of course," he said. "Blue Jacket." Busi looked at him. "You have solved nothing, detective." When the customer arrived, he had spent his taxi fare coming to check because he had heard nothing.

Lucky's answer was a notebook, not an expensive system. On a clean page, Busi wrote the customer's chosen name, the number he checked with her, the laundry ticket number and the agreed collection time. Beside that she wrote: "Message when shirts are ready." The clothes still needed their own order record. This little customer list helped her connect the right person to the right job and the promise she had made.



A useful list remembers the job, not somebody's whole life.

A contact is a person, not a collection

Keep what helps you serve them. Start with the name they want you to use, a contact detail they confirm, what the current job needs and the next thing you promised. Check a number before relying on it. Two people called Thabo are not one customer. Ask for a helpful distinction, such as a surname, rather than guessing from a profile picture. Do not copy numbers out of a community group to grow your list.

> **Your customer list is a promise book, not a permission slip.**

The number has a job too

A collection message and a sales poster are different jobs. Blue Jacket gave Busi his number so she could tell him about his shirts. That did not mean he had asked for every special she might run. Write down what the contact detail is for. Keep order updates separate from marketing permission; do not turn the order list into an advertising list. Later we will build the permission and follow-up steps properly. Today, keep the promise already made.

Leave people's private lives off the page. Busi needed to know which shirts were his and when he would collect them. She did not need his ID number, salary, family gossip or the story behind the interview. Keep the notebook somewhere customers cannot browse it. Lock the phone. Do not share the customer list in a group or lend it to a friend who wants buyers. Review old entries and remove details you no longer need, while keeping any records your business is required to retain.

Small and correct beats long and useless. Busi checked her next three active jobs. One number was wrong. One collection time had changed. One customer had already collected. She fixed the entries instead of collecting another fifty names. Then she sent the ready message the next customer was actually waiting for. No detective. No chase. Just clean shirts and a kept promise.

Sho't left, do this today

1. Choose one place for your customer list: a notebook or a simple phone record.
2. Check the details for three active customers, one at a time. Do not copy a group's numbers.
3. Record the name, confirmed contact, job reference and next agreed action. Keep extra private details out.
4. Write what each number is for. An order update is not permission for sales messages.
5. Keep the list private. Finish one promise you already made before chasing new names.

Busi, Bra Lucky and their customers are made-up characters. Their laundry is a story; the lost number and the forgotten promise may sound familiar.

Chapter 2: The Message With a Job

Say who you are. Say what changed. Make the next step easy.

Busi sent a message. Then she sent a mystery. The first customer on her new list had asked to hear when his blankets were ready. Busi found the right chat and typed, "Hi." She watched the screen. Nothing. Ten minutes later: "How are you?" Still nothing. Bra Lucky looked over. "Are you returning his blankets or starting a relationship?" Busi put the phone down. The blankets were folded. The conversation had not even reached the washing line.



The blankets were ready. The message was still greeting.

The customer was busy, not a mind reader. When he finally replied, he asked, "Who is this?" His number was saved in her phone. That did not mean her business was saved in his. Busi started again: "Hello Mr Dube, it's Busi from the laundry. Your blankets, ticket 18, are ready. You asked me to let you know. You can collect today before 5pm or tomorrow from 8am to 5pm. Please tell me if you need another time." Those were her actual collection hours, not a promise copied from somebody else's message.

This time, the next step was clear. "Tomorrow at nine, thank you," he replied. Busi wrote the new collection time beside ticket 18. Lucky nodded. "Now the message is working. Before, it was visiting." She did not send a discount poster after it. The customer had been waiting for his blankets, not an advert.



A reply is useful when it changes what you do next.

Give the message one job

Start with the reason, not a guessing game. For an agreed order update, say your name and business, identify the job without sharing unnecessary private details, explain what has changed and give one clear next step. Keep it short enough to understand at a glance. If the customer asked for a call rather than a message, use that agreed route. Check the name, number and job reference before you send. A correct message in the wrong chat is still a mistake.

> **Follow up to help the customer, not to fill their phone.**

Check first. Then send.

Do not announce a promise the business cannot keep. Before typing "ready", look at the actual order. Check the collection hours and any change you need to explain. If there is a delay, tell the customer early, say what you know and offer a realistic next update. Do not invent a finishing time to make an awkward conversation go away. A polite message cannot iron a shirt that is still wet.

Silence is not a yes. If there is no reply, do not assume the customer has agreed to a changed price, time or order. Check your record and the contact detail. Follow the collection or reminder arrangement you made with them; do not send the same message every hour. If you never agreed how to handle an uncollected order, ask and record the arrangement when you speak. Do not invent storage fees or disposal rules in the chat.

Close the job, not only the chat. When Mr Dube collected his blankets, Busi marked ticket 18 as collected and crossed off the reminder. Otherwise, tomorrow she might ask him to collect the blankets already on his bed. Her list now showed what was waiting, what had changed and what was finished. Lucky wanted to add "Detective work avoided". Busi told him to fold towels.

Sho't left, do this today

1. Choose one order update a customer is already expecting. Check that the job is ready for that update.
2. Check the right name, number and job reference. Use the agreed contact route.
3. Write who you are, why you are contacting them and one clear next step.
4. Record the reply or next agreed action. No reply does not approve a change.
5. Mark completed jobs as finished so you do not keep chasing them. Keep sales offers out of service updates.

Busi, Bra Lucky and Mr Dube are made-up characters. Ticket 18 and the collection hours are examples, not a timetable for your business.

Chapter 3: The Number Is Not the Yes

A useful offer starts before you press send.

Bra Lucky had found Busi forty new customers. Apparently. He arrived with a list copied from a community group. "Look at this. Forty numbers. We can tell everybody about the blanket special." Busi put down her iron. "Did forty people ask you for laundry offers?" Lucky looked at the list. "They asked whether the water was back." Busi handed it back. "Then help them find water. My washing machine is not the municipality."



They joined for water updates. Lucky brought a blanket special.

The list in her notebook needed a boundary too. Mr Dube had given Busi his number for his blankets. Another customer had said she would like to hear about laundry offers. Those were different arrangements. Busi made a separate marketing record: what the person had agreed to, which contact route they chose, when it happened and where the proof was kept. An empty space did not become a yes because Lucky had a special ready.

Then a customer changed her mind. "Please stop the offers," she wrote. Lucky suggested sending one final bargain to win her back. Busi shook her head. She stopped the marketing and kept a short, private do-not-market record so the number would not slip back onto next month's list. "She said stop," Busi told him. "Not negotiate."



Stop is a complete instruction.

Permission is specific, not permanent

POPIA puts rules around electronic sales messages. For marketing by messages such as SMS, email or WhatsApp, you need a lawful route: valid consent, or the limited existing-customer route below. A number in your phone, a public group membership or a previous enquiry is not enough by itself. Consent must be a free, informed and specific choice. Do not make receiving adverts a condition of getting clean laundry.

> **A saved number is not a yes. A past yes is not forever.**

Two routes, with rules

If you rely on consent, record it properly. Use the Information Regulator's Form 4, or a substantially similar consent request with the required information. It identifies the business and the person, explains the choice, and specifies the goods or services and contact method. Keep the completed response as proof. A casual "Can I send things?" is not a complete consent process. You may approach someone only once to request this consent, and not if they have previously refused it. No reply is not consent; do not keep asking.

Existing customers are not a free pass. The limited route applies when you obtained their contact details during a sale, market your own similar products or services, and gave them a reasonable, free and easy chance to object both when collecting the details and in every marketing message. Honour any refusal. If those conditions were not met, do not assume an old sale fixes the gap. Check the consent route instead.

Every offer needs a clear sender and an easy exit. Identify your business and give contact details through which the person can ask you to stop. Make that request easy and free of charge. Honour it without demanding a reason or another form. Keep to the agreed contact method and scope. Permission for laundry offers does not cover a friend's insurance adverts or selling your customer list. Keep requested order updates separate; never hide a sales offer inside a collection message.

Sho't left, do this today

1. Separate active-order contacts from people you may lawfully send marketing to.
2. For each marketing entry, check the lawful route and its proof. If unsure, leave it off the send list.
3. For consent, use Form 4 or a substantially similar process, not an improvised yes/no greeting.
4. Keep a private do-not-market record and check it before every send. Do not re-ask people who refused.
5. Check the business identity, chosen contact route and easy, free stop method before sending an offer.

Busi and Bra Lucky are made-up characters. This is a practical introduction, not the whole law. Official forms and direct-marketing guidance: inforegulator.org.za/popia-forms/ and inforegulator.org.za/guidance-notes/. Check the current requirements before starting a campaign.

Chapter 4: The Special That Would Not Leave

Be useful enough to remember. Not noisy enough to block.

Bra Lucky had prepared a whole week of marketing. Monday: blanket special. Tuesday: reminder about the blanket special. Wednesday: "Did you see the blanket special?" Thursday had three exclamation marks and no new information. Busi read his plan. "Lucky, these blankets have been on the phone longer than they were in the washing machine." He pointed at Friday. "That one says final reminder." Busi turned the page. Saturday said, "Final final reminder."



One offer. Too many visits. No invitation to stay that long.

Permission did not make every message useful. Busi checked the marketing record from Chapter 3 before planning any offer. People who had refused or asked her to stop stayed off the send list. Among the people she could lawfully contact, one wanted occasional blanket offers. Another had chosen laundry offers by email, not WhatsApp. A third had agreed to a monthly offer. Lucky's daily plan fitted none of them.

So she started with what the customer might need. She chose one relevant offer, checked the actual price and available collection slots, and kept to the agreed contact method and frequency. The message would identify Busi's laundry, explain what was included, give a clear end date and show how to ask her to stop, easily and free of charge. She did not put every customer into one group where strangers could see each other's numbers.



The shorter plan had room for the customer.

Relevant beats regular noise

Send because there is something worth saying. A message can be lawful and still be annoying. Keep to the scope and frequency the person agreed to; if they ask for fewer messages, record and respect that. Do not invent a universal rule such as "every customer needs a message every Friday". Look at the service, the customer's choice and whether you have a real reason to contact them. No useful update is a good reason to stay quiet.

> **A customer should remember your service, not how often they had to dismiss your messages.**

Make the offer easy to understand

Check the promise behind the poster. Say what is included, the price, important limits and how to book or order. Use a real date rather than a floating "tomorrow" that becomes confusing when forwarded. Check that you can handle the work if people reply. If the slots fill up, stop promoting those slots and update people who enquire. "Limited space" must describe the business, not frighten somebody into buying.

A quiet phone is not an invitation to chase. No reply does not mean "send again until I answer". Do not call someone who chose messages simply because an offer got no response. If a person asks a question, answer it and agree the next step. If they ask you to check back at a particular time, record that request. Otherwise, leave the offer with them. Do not send guilt, invented urgency or "I can see you read it" messages.

A customer is allowed to buy elsewhere. Mrs Mokoena said she was not booking this month. Busi thanked her and left it there. Lucky wanted to ask whether another laundry had stolen her. "Maybe her blankets are clean," Busi said. "We are running a laundry, not a missing-person unit." One declined offer was not a complaint, an unpaid debt or permission to investigate her life.

Sho't left, do this today

1. Before planning an offer, check the lawful marketing route, proof and do-not-market record from Chapter 3.
2. Choose a relevant offer for the people covered by that permission or lawful route. Respect their chosen contact method and any agreed frequency.
3. Check the price, real dates, available capacity and one clear way to respond.
4. Identify the business and include an easy, free way to stop marketing. Keep recipients' details private.
5. Do not chase silence. Record any follow-up the customer actually asks for, and leave a no as a no.

Busi, Bra Lucky and Mrs Mokoena are made-up characters. The message plan is an example, not a recommended sending schedule. The marketing rules in Chapter 3 still apply.

Chapter 5: The Promise Comes Back

A small routine turns a list into better service.

Busi's notebook was beautiful. Her Tuesday was not. Three customers were waiting for updates. One had changed a collection time. Another had reported a missing pillowcase. Bra Lucky had drawn a star beside every name. "Priority customers," he explained. Busi counted the stars. Everybody had one. "Lucky, if every taxi is first in the queue, we are not going anywhere."



Every customer was a priority. Nothing had a next step.

So she gave each open promise a next action. Not "sort out customer". Check the pillowcase against the order record. Confirm the changed collection time. Send the ready update the customer requested. Beside each action she wrote who would do it and when the next update was due. The marketing choices stayed in their separate record. A service problem was not an excuse to put somebody back on the offers list.

The pillowcase needed attention, not a clever reply. Busi thanked the customer for telling her, checked the ticket and asked which item was missing. She did not request an ID number or a family history. She told the customer she would check the matching laundry bag and give an update by the time they agreed. Lucky suggested, "Are you sure you brought it?" Busi pointed him towards the shelf. "First we check our side. The pillowcase is missing, not our manners."



The best follow-up had something fixed behind it.

Open the list before the day opens you

Make one short check part of the working day. Look at active jobs, promised updates and unresolved problems before starting new promotions. Check what is due, what changed and what is finished. If someone helps you, give them only the customer details needed for their task, not the whole list to copy. Keep the record private and make clear who owns each next action. A name with no action is easy to admire and easy to forget.

> **The follow-up is not finished when you send. It is finished when you have kept the promise.**

Fix the problem. Learn from the pattern.

Record what happened, not what you think of the person. Write "collection update sent late", not "difficult customer". Listen, check the facts and explain the next step. If a remedy or decision is still unresolved, keep it open and say when you will update them. Do not promise a refund, replacement or finishing time you have not checked. A discount on the next wash does not answer a missing item today, and it does not replace the customer's rights.

Cross off the job only when the job is done. Busi found the pillowcase in a bag waiting to be labelled. She updated the customer, agreed how it would be returned and recorded completion after the handover. "Found" and "returned" were different steps. Then she changed how bags were checked before sealing them. Otherwise, next week's apology would have the same story and a different pillowcase.

Look for one improvement, not a reason to send more. At the end of the week, Busi counted late updates, open problems and customers who had chosen to return. The numbers were clues, not proof that one message caused a sale. She asked customers about their experience during ordinary service conversations, without demanding praise or treating an answer as marketing consent. Lucky wanted to celebrate with another blanket special. Busi handed him the label pen. "Today we are improving the laundry."

Sho't left, do this today

1. Check your active jobs and open promises. Give each one a next action, a person responsible and an agreed or realistic update time.
2. Handle one unresolved service problem before planning another promotion. Keep notes factual and private.
3. Record the customer's reply and any agreed next step. Mark completion only after the action is done.
4. At week's end, look for one repeated problem and change one part of the service.
5. Review old records safely: keep what you still need or must retain, remove unnecessary details, and protect the separate do-not-market record.

Busi and Bra Lucky are made-up characters. Their laundry shows the method: know the right person, keep the right record, respect the boundary and finish the promise. The marketing rules in Chapter 3 still apply.