

EMOTIONAL LABOUR IN THE SERVICE ENCOUNTER

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Abstract

Service employee works on the boundary of the organization and performs boundary spanning roles (Tushman, 1977) and their Position during the service encounter can be used as a strategy to gain competitive advantage (Zeithmal and Bitner, 2000). Customer's perception of the service quality is influenced by how the service employee expresses her/his emotion in service interactions (Pugh, 2001). Emotions are intense feelings that are directed at someone or something. The term "Emotional Labour" was coined by Arlie Hochschild in her book *The Managed Heart* and she defines emotional labour as. "Inducing or suppressing feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others." (Hochschild 1983 p 7). Jobs that involve voice-to-voice or face-to-face interactions often involve emotional labour and in such jobs employees must manage and at times modify their own emotions, while attempting to manage the emotions of the customer (Hochschild 1983). This paper explores the significance of emotional labour in the service encounter.

Key words: Emotional labour, service encounter

Introduction

It has been generally established that the delivery of quality service starts with the selection of right kind of employees and the imparting appropriate training to them. But very little attention is given to the selection and training of employees to perform emotional labour and the way in which they should be supported in their client service work.

It is a common phenomenon in our daily life, we have to suppress our feelings and display a socially accepted emotion that is more appropriate. For example, showing excitement about a colleague's promotion. Similarly a service employee may have to show cheers or tears to the customers depending upon the situation.

The Service Encounter is the "moment of truth" and it may occur any time the customer interacts with the firm. The service encounter is critical in determining customer satisfaction and loyalty. Service employee works on the boundary of the organization and performs boundary spanning roles (Tushman, 1977) and their Position during the service encounter can be used as a strategy to gain competitive advantage (Zeithmal and Bitner, 2000). Customer's perception of the service quality is influenced by how the service employee expresses her/his emotion in service interactions (Pugh, 2001). So, organizations

expect the service employee to present emotions that are desired by their organizations besides the competence and expertise in the job (Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005).

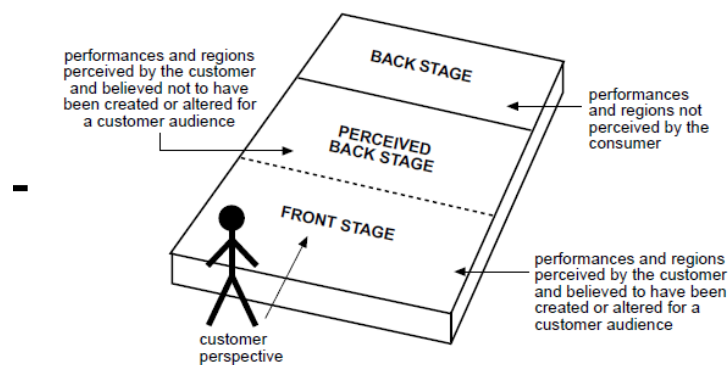
Emotions are intense feelings that are directed at someone or something. The term “Emotional Labour” was coined by Arlie Hochschild in her book *The Managed Heart* and she defines emotional labour as. “Inducing or suppressing feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others.” (Hochschild 1983 p 7) or is the effort put by the service employee to express emotions acceptable to the consumer (Hochschild, 2003).

Jobs involving emotional labour possess three characteristics (Hochschild 1983).

1. They require the workers to make facial or voice contact with the public;
2. They require the worker to produce an emotional state in the client or customer, and
3. They provide the employer with an opportunity to exert some control over the emotional activities of workers

Front and back stage

During the majority of social interactions, individuals will often try to display that which meets social expectations and/or supports a desired impression. They also will decide not to show lots of things. To describe this social process, the impression management framework refers to two regions, or “stages,” of interaction. The “front stage” is that which is chosen to be shown as part of the focal interaction; the “back stage” is that which is not. For example, a restaurant’s management is likely to decorate the dining area tastefully and to staff it with customer-oriented employees, thus contributing to the customer’s impression of polished, personal service. Kent Grayson (1998)



Source: Kent Grayson (1998)

Forms of emotional labour

Employees can display desired emotions instead of showing their true emotions. The employees can either choose (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993)

1. Surface acting where an employee's presents his emotions on the "surface" without actually feeling them
2. Deep acting wherein they modify their inner feelings to match the emotion expressions the organization requires.
3. Genuine acting where one spontaneously and genuinely experiences and expresses the expected emotion without exerting any effort

Jobs demanding Emotional labour

The following are some jobs that demand emotional labour

1. Nurse
2. Bill-collectors
3. Waitresses
4. Cashiers
5. Police officers
6. Flight attendants

Consequences of Emotional Labour

Emotional labour is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can facilitate the task performance by regulating interactions and precluding interpersonal problems. On the other hand, it can impair performance by priming expectations of good service that cannot be met (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

Negative Consequences

1. Suppressing negative emotions often lead to patterns of physiological response that presage somatic illness (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000).
2. Burnout (Hochschild, 1983)
3. Job dissatisfaction (Morris & Feldman, 1996)

Positive consequences**For the company**

1. Emotional display in an effective manner can ensure task effectiveness and service quality (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993)
2. Increase sales and repeated business (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987)

For the employee

1. Financial rewards (i.e., tips or salaries) (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987)
2. Decreased stress

Conclusion

Emotional labour is an important issue for service marketers, further researches have to be carried out to understand the negative and positive consequences of emotional labour. The service organizations should give importance not only to the display of positive emotions but also the way in which the positive emotions is managed by the service employee. As feelings are at the center of human emotions, emotion plays a very important function in organizations. In this age of extreme job stress, the ability to manage emotions is related to interpersonal relations.

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