

DESIGNING FOR EMOTIONS:
ADDRESSING EMPLOYEE EMOTIONAL LABOR THROUGH SERVICE DESIGN

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Abstract

The service industry is booming, now more than ever. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2024, 95% of new jobs will be in the service sector. Jobs within the service industry take physical and mental tolls on frontline employees. This concept is more commonly referred to as emotional labor. This paper argues that the consequences of emotional labor, a rather well-known concept that has been widely studied since the early nineteen-eighties, can positively address a frontline employee experience through the implementation of service design. The leading research question guiding this paper, which was established through the literature review, is “*How can organizations use service design to lessen emotional labor at the front-line?*” While service design’s traditional purpose focuses on the customer journey and experience, this paper states that concepts, which are defined through the theoretical framework, such as journey maps, blueprints, and prototyping can be used to reduce the emotional labor a frontline employee experiences at the frontline. This paper will also showcase how implementing a service design strategy from the frontline employee perspective will create happier, more engaged employees, thus guiding the organization to success.

Keywords: service design, design thinking, emotional labor, frontline employees, service industry

Introduction

In 1983, Hochschild coined the term ‘emotional labor’ in her book *The Managed Heart*. She described the effects emotional labor has on people (primarily workers who regulate their emotions to satisfy their customers). Emotional labor has been connected to emotional intelligence and emotional agility. The most prominent corresponding factors include gender, employee engagement, and the volume and profit of the respective company. Despite all research conducted on emotional labor, frontline employees are still affected by these consequences. One idea that organizations should consider in order to reduce frontline employee emotional labor is service design. The concept of service design was introduced in 1982 by Shostack. She proposed that organizations develop an understanding of modeling and blueprinting so that marketers can design and experiment innovative ideas and can therefore function more cohesively. Service design began as a concept in the 1980’s and has since grown from an idea to a discipline and is now a respected, mature field. One book heavily referenced from the service design perspective in this paper is *This is Service Design Doing: Applying Service Design Thinking Concepts in the Real World*, written by Stickdorn et al. (2018).

Emotional labor and service design are mastered topics in the art of research, however, the connection of the two has received little attention and is what this paper aims to address. Emotional labor can be addressed through the art of service design and can bring about improvements in organizational function such as innovation, journey maps, prototyping, co-creation, and empathy can be used to design a seamless employee experience for frontline employees in the service

industry, therefore reducing emotional labor consequences. This paper also showcases how implementing a service design strategy from the employee perspective will create happier, more engaged employees, thus guiding the organization to success. The overarching research question for this paper is: “*How can organizations use service design to lessen emotional labor at the front-line?*”

This paper is conceptual in nature. This paper is connecting points from prior contributions to synthesize a conclusion. The structure of this paper is going to begin by analyzing literature in the contexts of emotional labor, emotional intelligence, and emotional agility. Emotional labor will then be connected to the services marketing triangle highlighting the interconnection between company, customers, and employees in service organizations. Following will be a detailed breakdown of service design. The literature review, which included prior research conducted on emotional labor and service design, led this paper to the theoretical framework proposed. This paper will then link those terms with emotional labor through several different components commonly used while studying service design. The paper will conclude by stating limitations faced while conducting research, providing directions for future research, and summarizing the key findings.

Literature Review

Emotional Labor

Frontline employees are vital to the operation of a business. Customers purchase decisions are often elevated or dismissed on the basis of interactions they had with frontline employees. Emotional labor has been present for decades, however very few companies seem to be taking action towards this pressing concern. As defined by Hochschild, emotional labor refers to “the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial or bodily display...for a wage,” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). Hochschild described the effects emotional labor has on people, specifically frontline employees of service-based jobs. Hochschild does state that “in managing emotion, we contribute to the creation of it,” (p. 18), but also maintains the idea that emotion is something individual and real, that is then made fake through deep acting or surface acting.

Deep acting and surface acting are two concepts Hochschild presented that are heavily referenced in today's world of academia. Surface acting takes place when service workers display emotions they do not actually feel in order to comply with organizational display rules (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild states “in surface acting, the expression on my face or the posture of my body feels “put on.” It is not a “part of me,” (p. 36). Grove and Fisk stated surface acting occurs when one is painting on affective displays (Grove and Fisk, 1989). When an employee is engaging in surface acting, they are frequently faking their emotions which can in turn lead to job burnout and depression (Abraham 1998, Brotheridge and Gradney 2002, Erickson and Wharton, 1997). Rafaeli and Sutton (1987), termed surface acting “faking in bad faith,” (p. 32).

Contrary to surface acting is deep acting. Deep acting refers to changing one's internal feelings to better express the emotions that others expect to see in a given situation (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild states "in deep acting, my conscious mental work...keeps the feeling that I conjure up from being part of "myself,"" (p. 36). Grove and Fisk defined deep acting as a modification of inner feelings to match outbound expressions (Grove and Fisk, 1989). The purpose of deep acting is to appear authentic to the audience through empathizing with customers in order to feel what they are feeling, similar to method acting (Ekman and Friesen 1982; Gradney, 2000). Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) termed deep acting "faking in good faith," (p.32).

In *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild (1983) states "in both cases, the actor has learned to intervene - either by creating the inner shape of a feeling or in shaping the outward appearance of one," (p. 36). She also claims the more we engage in emotional labor, the more "we push this 'real self' further inside, making it more inaccessible," (p. 34).

While frontline employees have displayed these different acting methods, there have been a lot of studies conducted on authenticity in past years. Surakka and Hietanen (1998) proved that an authentic smile, also referred to as a Duchenne smile, engaged different facial muscles than an inauthentic smile. For instance, there is a certain muscle around the eye only used during an authentic smile (Ekman, 1992). This point leads into the argument that customers can recognize an unauthentic smile, and do not favor these interactions compared to those where employees exuberate genuine and authentic smiles (Ekman et al., 1988; Frank, Ekman, and Friesen, 1993). However, it is not always easy for one to have an

authentically positive persona, as individual's differences in personality has a major influence on emotional labor affects. Traits positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) are the two most frequently studied difference characteristics (Wang et al., 2011). Trait affects such as these represent stable and enduring personality characteristics in someone (Watson, 2000). Therefore, people high on PA tend to experience more positive feelings such as enthusiasm, joy, and happiness, whereas people high on NA are more likely to experience negative feelings such as anxiety, nervousness, guilt, and fear (Watson et al., 1988).

Relating this concept back to deep acting and surface acting, for those who score high on PA, there is less need to hide negative emotions since they are rarely experienced by said individual. On the same note, it is easier for that individual to call up positive emotions, even if they are not experiencing positive emotions at a given time, because they frequently feel positive emotions, and are familiar with revoking those feelings. These high PA individuals will use deep acting to call up their positive emotions. On the contrary, high NA individuals will primarily use surface acting to suppress the negative emotions they feel in order to maintain consistency with display rules, as a negative frontline employee is never good for business (Wang et al, 2011).

Consequences of Emotional Labor

Emotional labor, being the widely studied topic it is, has a lot of consequences associated with it, from different perspectives. These consequences are faced by companies, employees, and customers. The famous services marketing triangle showing in Figure 1 below, as created by Grönroos (1998), displays the relationships between the various providers of a service, and the

customers who consume those services. The reason this model is important is it outlines the importance of the interactions between the components of a service, and helps align customer satisfaction. The paper will discuss how emotional labor effects each of the listed components, as emotional labor has consequences on every part of the organization.

Figure 1

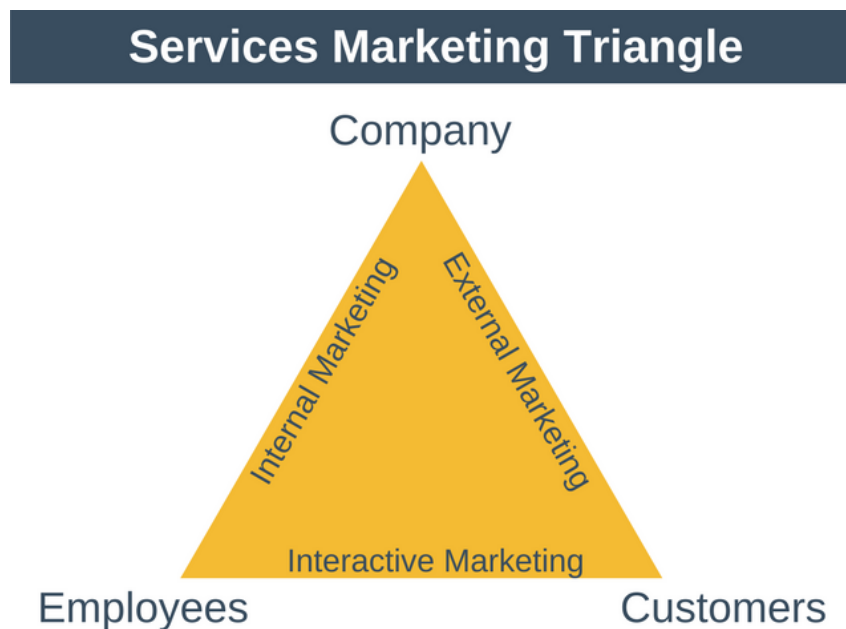


Figure 1: The Services Marketing Triangle. Source: Grönroos (1998)

Consequences on Frontline Employees

Frontline employees experience a lot of exhaustion from the heavy effects of emotional labor they endure every day. Tracy (2000) discussed the emotional struggles she faced while she served on her 8-month contract as an assistant cruise director on a 1,600-passenger, 700-crew member ship. While working on a cruise ship, Tracy realized how employee emotion is not only a response to work situations, but is actually the work. One staff member on Tracy's ship stated, "our

job is our personality (p. 91).” Tracy not only observed, but personally experienced the effects of emotional labor and burnout, which is quite easy when you sign a 5- to 10-month contract with no days off. With 15-hour days, and several demanding tasks including public speaking abilities, interpersonal skills, and the capacity to be patient and warm with large groups of people for extensive periods of time, it is easy to see how “employee identities are constructed in relation to virtually incontestable and inescapable emotion labor norms implemented for the economic purposes of pleasing customers and increasing profits,” (p.122) truly allowing one to observe how easy frontline employees can become “characters for commerce,” (p. 122).

Emotional demands also differ on the basis of gender. Hochschild (1983) pointed out that the majority of service jobs are performed by women. According to the Labor Force Statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018), service jobs have become closer in the proportion of men and women, with percentages closer to 40/60. Hochschild (1983) states that women are not only providing the bulk of emotional labor work, but even when there are men present in these emotional labor jobs (as there are today), women are *expected* to do so. Women have always been more likely to manage their emotions at work and at home (Wharton and Erickson, 1993), which results in suppression of one’s feelings, which therefore accounts for higher stress levels (Gradney, 2000). Emotions have always been seen as a feminine, private, and irrational, therefore always being largely excluded from the masculine world of work (Fineman, 1993, 1996). When discussing differences in gender, women have always been more concerned with getting along whereas men have always been more motivated to stay in control while expressing powerful

emotions such as anger and pride (Timmers et al., 1998). This paper will argue that men are subdued to emotional labor nowadays as well, and are also *expected* to concur with display rules while at work, as if they do not, they will be fired just as anyone else not displaying organizational display rules would. Women have the ability to connect with people through deep acting, more so than men. Meier et al. (2006) conducted a study on emotional labor in Texas school districts among both male and female teachers. Through their research, they proved that female teachers were characterized by higher student attendance on a daily basis, lower teacher turnover, and higher overall organizational performance. These are all great accomplishments, that also in turn help the organization. So yes, even though past research argues that emotional labor is primarily only taken on by women (which is not true nowadays), regardless of the time, women are more effective at performing emotional labor, and bring about great results to the organization and customers.

Consequences on Customers

Emotional labor may seem like it only affects frontline employees, but what a lot of people do not know is it also has a huge effect on customers. Pugh (2001) conducted a study on the retail banking industry and found that higher levels of emotional labor had a more positive impact on customers. When frontline employees displayed emotional labor, customers grew in loyalty, repeat business, and financial gains for the bank. Frontline employees are expected to put on these emotions, as it provides a better experience for the customer. It is hard to imagine taking a trip to Disneyland, the Happiest Place on Earth, to have interactions with every Cast Member while they are displaying negative affect

traits. This would bring down the customer experience, therefore, not bringing in revenues for the organization. While frontline employees are required to engage in emotional labor for the majority of service jobs, it is on the basis of how well one is able to control their emotions that reflects how easy the process will be.

Consequences on Company

Emotional labor is defined differently from an organization standpoint. Guy and Newman (2004) introduced the concept of emotional labor to public organizations and defined it as personal interactions – separate from the job description – between employees, employers, and clients that cause for an effective and smooth operation to the organization. If one thinks about every job description they have come across that would require emotional labor, they will notice that the job description itself never states things such as “will be required to smile for 10-12 hours shifts, despite high-stress situations while handling customer concerns,” or “introverts must become extroverts to be successful in this role.” Morris and Feldman define emotional labor from this organization standpoint as “the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions,” (1996, 987). Since emotional labor is not included within the formal job description, as emotional labor focuses on transferable skills such as ability to communicate well and above and beyond guest service, emotional labor is generally undervalued in organizations, typically resulting in lower pay for those positions that call for emotional labor (Guy and Newman, 2004). While emotional labor does primarily consist of stellar people skills, these frontline employees have some of the most emotionally draining jobs, and therefore, organizations should value their time

more. Other consequences emotional labor has on organizations include absenteeism, burnout, and stress. All of these consequences cause frontline employees to be less productive to the organization, which can cause for a loss of profits, and cause for even worse customer service, which will ultimately lead the organization to less success.

As stated above, there are several consequences that take effect due to emotional labor stresses. This can place strain on the company, the frontline employee, and the customer. While these the consequences are important to address, there are two capabilities often used to overcome emotional labor from every angle. These two capabilities are emotional intelligence and emotional agility.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotions can clearly have positive and negative consequences within organizations. Daniel Goleman, founder of the emotional intelligence concept, has several definitions. Related to the organization, Goleman defines emotional intelligence as the management of emotional labor, that will in turn, benefit the organization (1998). Secondly, Goleman defined emotional intelligence as someone being aware of, and in control of, their emotions, and how their behavior might affect others (1995). A slightly more detailed definition from research dating a few years later is: emotional intelligence represents a set of competencies that consist of the abilities to perceive emotion in the self and in others, use emotions to facilitate performance, understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and regulate emotions in the self (Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Goleman's book discovers that emotional intelligence is one of the most important skills for any job,

compared to factors such as technical skills or IQ levels. His reasoning for this is when one has a high level of self-awareness in the workplace, not only does it maintain professionalism, but it also provides said employee with more self-confidence (Goleman, 2004). In his book, Goleman also states that many senior level executives do not give self-awareness the credit that it deserves. What these senior level executives are discrediting include facts such as motivation correlating with commitment. Whenever an employee is offered benefits such as pay, time off, and retirement, this motivates them to do their best. This all relates to empathetic responses from leadership. While benefits are standard in most jobs, what really makes a company stand out is making employees feel valued beyond standard benefits. With this, employees are more likely to stay committed to their organization, even if another company was offering them another job for more money. Empathy strongly aligns with emotional intelligence. Due to the increasing usage of teams in organizations, the rapid pace of globalization, and the growing need to retain talent, learning empathetic approaches to handle conflicts will keep employees calm, and will show them that their management cares. One solution to implement empathy into an organization includes starting up a coaching or mentoring program. Coach and mentoring have been proven to show better job performance, increase job satisfaction, and decrease turnover rates. The last component of emotional intelligence in the work place is social skill, or in laymen terms, “friendliness with a purpose (Goleman, 2004).” Emotional intelligence is needed to overcome emotional labor. In addition, emotional agility makes a great complement to overcoming emotional labor.

Emotional Agility

Emotional agility is defined as someone who is able to stay in tune with their emotions. The power behind emotional agility allows one to be in tact with not only their positive emotions, but also their negative emotions (David and Congleton, 2013). By doing so, a frontline employee will be putting less emotional labor stress on them since they will be able to recognize drastic changes in their emotions. There are four practices identified in David and Congleton's (2013) article that are designed to help develop one's emotional agility:

1. Recognize Your Patterns
2. Label Your Thoughts and Emotions
3. Accept Them
4. Act on Your Values.

These practices can help develop one's emotional agility. Having a strong sense of emotional agility can "help people alleviate stress, reduce errors, become more innovative, and improve job performance." (David and Congleton, 2013, p.126). Management has the ability to increase the emotional intelligence levels of their frontline employees. However, in order to do this, management needs to be able to control their emotions better than frontline employees, in order to set the example.

Executives need to handle emotional agility better than their frontline employees, as executives who handle it well, are able to create better experiences for their frontline employees, that will reduce the emotional labor of everyone around. One excerpt from the article stated how executives and leaders are always expected to be cheerful (this rule could apply to any frontline employee in reality).

They are constantly needing to project confidence and disintegrate all negative energy inside of them in order to be viewed professionally. However, this all goes against basic biology. Healthy human beings have inner streams of thoughts and feelings which include criticism, doubt, and fear. Outsiders are always analyzing executives who deal with recurring emotional challenges at work, and then find ways to "fix" them. However, these techniques typically do not work. Everyone has a different backstory and a different upbringing. Considering no one knows what an executive endures, what one considers how long these executives have had to deal with these issues, the answer could be as short as a few years to as long as since childhood. The article stated that when people attempt to minimize or ignore thoughts and emotions, they actually only end up amplifying them (David and Congleton, 2013). It would not make sense for an executive to be bursting with positivity and vibrancy when sales are plummeting, or the business is going under. Similarly, this applies to frontline employees who have customers yell to their face about problems that have been facing, yet expecting to smile through it all. The most effective executives have the skills to control their moods and behaviors to best match the situation at hand, while adding slight doses of optimism (Goleman et al., 2001). These executives are able to model what it is like to move forward, even when not at their best. Executives have the ability to design an experience for their frontline employees, as the frontline typically does not hold the power to design their own experiences.

Service Design

Despite all prior research done in the field of emotional labor, the problem still exists. However, what has not been done is looking at emotional labor from a service design perspective. Service design is a growing research field, and has a lot of potential to make major change happen in within multiple disciplines. This research will be focusing on service design from a frontline employee perspective, in order to reduce the significant emotional labor frontline employees face on a day to day basis.

Stickdorn, Lawrence, Hormess, and Schneider (2018) brought together a panel of 150 service designers from around the globe to pitch their best definition. The most popular definition of service design according to the 150 panelists surveyed is:

*“Service design helps organizations see their services from a **customer’s perspective**. It is an approach to designing services that balances the needs of the customer with the needs of the business, aiming to create seamless and quality service experiences. Service design is rooted in **design thinking**, and brings a creative, **human-centered** process to service improvement and designing new services. Through collaborative methods that engage both customers and service delivery teams, service design helps organizations gain true, end-to-end understanding of their services, enabling them holistic and*

meaningful improvements” (Stickdorn, Lawrence, Hormess, and Schneider, 2018, p.20).

Key words from this definition include ‘customers perspective,’ ‘design thinking,’ and ‘human-centered.’ The definition begins almost immediately with the words ‘customer perspective.’ According to traditional methods of service design, this can be seen as true. The concept of service design is about enhancing the customer experience from their point of view. Key words in service design include empowerment, creating a journey map, prototyping, and empathy. Primarily these terms are used to enhance the customer experience. Design thinking also drives power. There is a class taught at Stanford University titled Designing Your Life taught by Bill Burnett who delivered a TED Talk at the 2017 TED x Stanford event in 2017. During the talk, Burnett passionately speaks about the concept of designing the life you want to live. The primary difference needing to be addressed is that of service design versus design thinking. According to Burnett, design thinking is a mindset that is used to solve problems, whereas service design involves applying the design thinking mindset into products or services. In a similar definition, design thinking is referred to as a human-centered approach to innovation and problem-solving that puts people and their needs at the forefront of the design process (Bertolotti et al., 2018). This leads into the last word needing to be addressed is human-centered. The text illustrates human-centered activities as the experiences of all individuals affected by a service, which again is primarily customers. The goal of this paper is to transform service design from a customer-centered concept to an employee-centered concept. With this

approach, organizations consider employees as the humans, to then frame the right problems employees are facing and design the proper solutions (Bertolotti et al., 2018).

Research Objective

Based upon the literature review, there is no great solution to solving the consequences of emotional labor. This paper argues that service design can be the leading force in bridging this problem and this research gap. The overarching research question that will guide the findings throughout the rest of this paper is: *“How can organizations use service design to lessen emotional labor at the front-line?”*

Proposed Framework

The goal of this research paper was to bridge the gap between emotional labor and service design for frontline employees. Through an in-depth analysis of all service design components, this research proposes a framework consisting of various components to tackle emotional labor and reduce its consequences at the frontline. Figure 2 showcases a visual representation of the proposed framework:

Figure 2

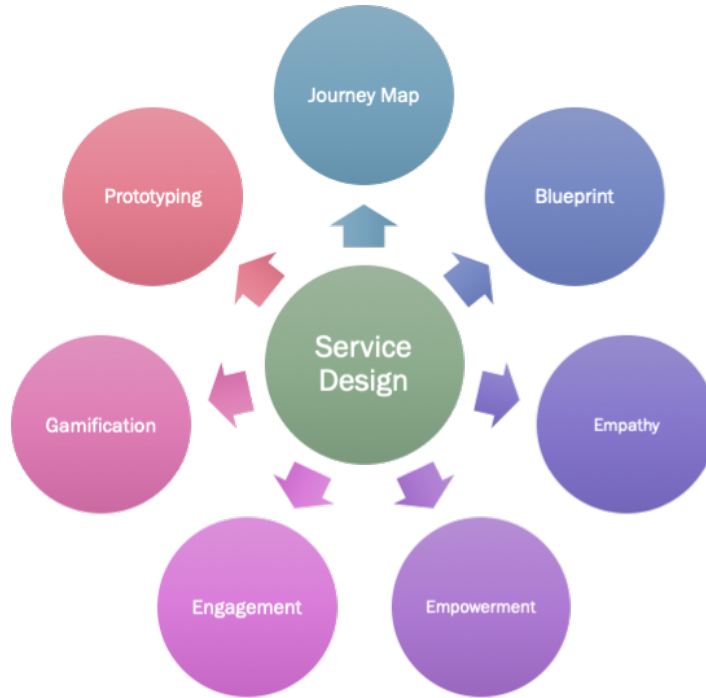


Figure 2: Proposed Framework

There are seven proposed components to addressing the research question. They are placed in a specific order starting with Journey Map → Blueprint → Empathy → Empowerment → Engagement → Gamification → Prototyping. They are placed in this specific order as they all link together, and flow best within this order. While they are fluid, and are all interchangeable, with the sequential order this research proposes, it can cause for a repetitive cycle to test the service design elements of an organization to perfection, therefore providing the best results in reducing the emotional labor consequences. Each component will be explained in depth. Before one can understand the framework, however, one must first get a general understanding on the idea that service design generated from: design thinking.

The Link Between Emotional Labor and Service Design

Seven Principles of Design Thinking

According to a recent study, among 7,000 executives from 130 countries, 92% of the HR Senior Managers and Directors mentioned one of their top priorities was to re-think and re-design their organization in order to improve the employee experience (Trends, 2016, p. 1). Furthermore, 79% of CEO's and HR Directors want to utilize Design Thinking to make these changes. The Seven Principles of Design Thinking Include (Bertolotti et al., 2018):

- Understand Needs, Engage in Choices
 - Organizations need to provide people with an opportunity to be involved with decision-making. Co-creation is important with this rule, specifically for employees. While there can be varying levels of problems an organization takes on, even at the highest level, feedback can still be provided by employees to make them feel they have a voice.
- Communicate and Create Awareness
 - Clearly communicating information to employees is crucial. If communication is poor, negative effects may take place, which could prevent co-creation. Awareness is also important for employees, as it can promote behavioral habits which directly relate to one's well-being. All of this increases the sense of belonging and satisfaction with the workplace, which lowers stress levels.
- Anticipate Expectations

- It is never the goal to disappoint people. If organizations plan accordingly, they can overcome expectations. When done effectively, there is an increase in the sense of gratitude from employees.
- Encourage Human Interaction
 - Whether it is inside or outside of the work environment, promoting the importance of relationships among co-workers can do so much for an organization. While a lot of services are technology-driven, thus emphasizing the importance of digital touchpoints as a part of the employee experience, an organization needs to facilitate interactions among the employees. This should be considered a top priority as this leads to a reduction of conflict in the workplace, which leads to more productivity.
- Adapting Over Time
 - Change is inevitable. Whether the experience of a service being provided changes, the individuals or leadership on the team changes, or the expectations of the group changes, encouraging adaptability in the workplace can lead to a strengthened trust with management .
- Consider the Variable Preferences of People
 - Some employees will love to stay in the background and complete their work, while others will thrive being in the forefront. An organization should work with the different skill sets on the team and accommodate to each employee's strengths. Giving the employee the opportunity to choose what role they want to take in the organization gives strengthens their personal and social identities.

- Differentiate the Accessibility to Services
 - Employees should have easily accessible information to the services an organization provides. It is important to keep in mind how a service (such as health insurance) can meet the same needs of different people through the different options offered (i.e. low coverage vs high coverage). This creates a positive impact among employees in an organization.

By respecting these basic principles, emotional labor would be better understood by management, as these are catalysts needed to tackle emotional labor. There are several key phrases such as “satisfied needs,” “positive impact,” “higher trust in management,” “increased satisfaction,” “conflict reduction,” “stress relief,” and “a sense of belonging,” show how much of an impact a strong organization design can lead to success. These interconnected terms characterize the experiences of employees within an organization (Bertolotti et al., 2018).

Service Design and Journey Maps

Customer journey maps are detailed visualizations of a customer experience over a period of time, laid out to showcase the journey of a user, including what works and what does not. For example, an end-to-end customer journey map can visualize the overall experience a customer has with a service, a physical or digital product, or a brand. This could include recognizing a need, searching for a specific service, booking and paying for it, and using the service, as well as possibly complaining about it if something goes wrong, or praising the service for its excellent performance and use the service again. Journey maps are important as they reveal all key steps of an experience, rather than displaying only moments

when the customer is interacting with the company. While journey maps have always been designed from a customer perspective, this research proposes journey maps should be made from the frontline employee perspective. Journey maps are vitally important to companies and organizations, as they can find gaps within customer experiences (or in this case gaps in frontline employee experiences), and are then able to find solutions. An additional reason of importance is journey maps are able to make intangible experiences visible. Within the service industry, viewing the intangibility of services is one of the most difficult components, but journey maps can help employees find common understandings in a simple and empathetic way, to better help the customer or frontline employee (Stickdorn et al., 2018). Reference Figure 3 below, where this paper will explain the importance of points A-J on the figure. Each bullet will explain how these concepts relate to the customer, per industry standards, while each sub-bullet will explain how these concepts tie into the frontline employee experience, and how creating this employee journey map will reduce emotional labor stress.

Figure 3

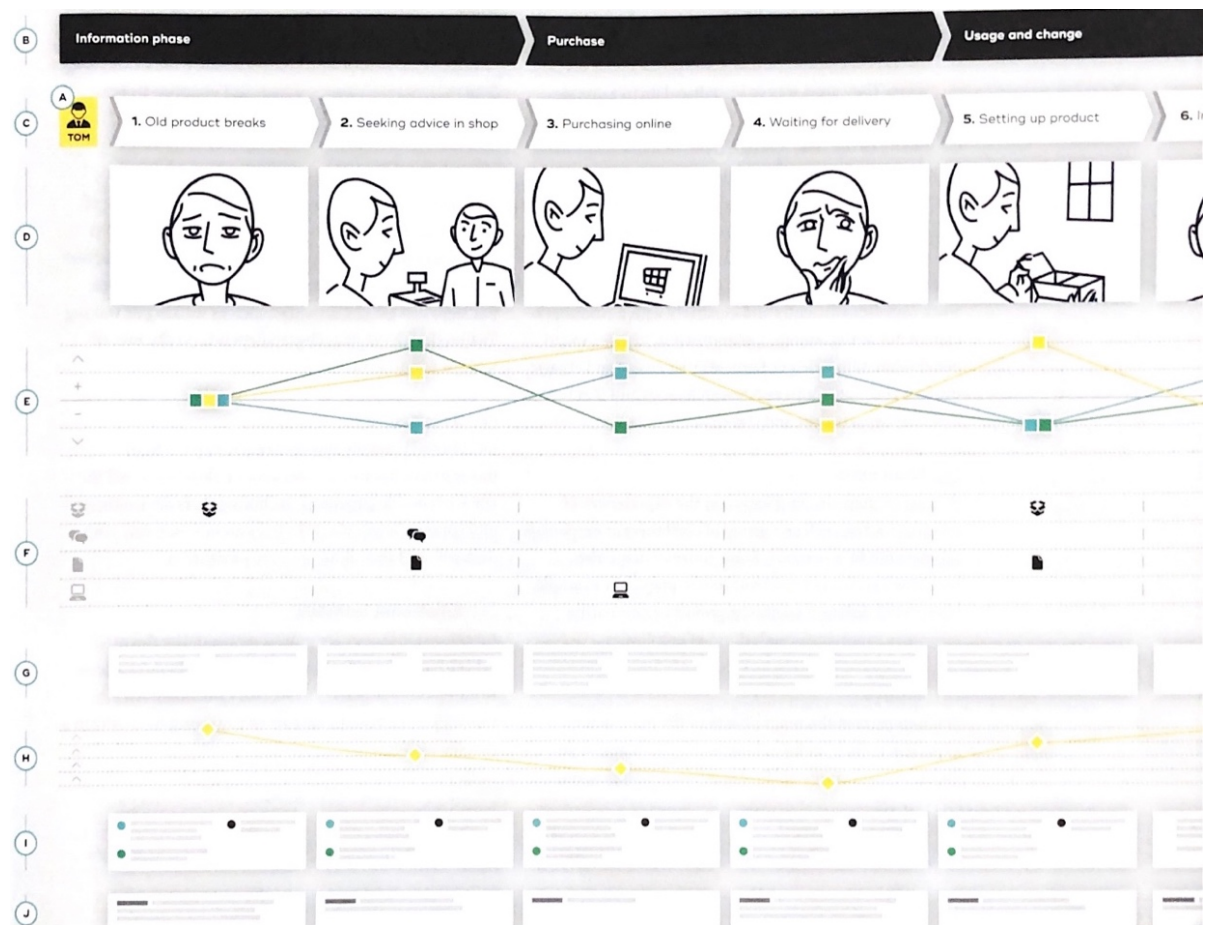


Figure 3: Customer Journey Map. Source: Stickdorn et al. (2018, p. 45)

- (A) Main Actor: a group of customers or employees whose experience an organization is focusing on. Some journey maps will take it one step further by combining multiple perspectives into one map. For example, this could be comparing customer experiences with those of employee experiences.
 - Frontline employees will be the main actor for the purposes of this research paper.
- (B) Stages: the main phases of the main actor's experience. These stages reference the buyer decision process stages of "Problem/Need Recognition," "Information Search," "Evaluation of Alternatives," "Purchase Decision," and

“Post-Purchase Behavior.” These stages help to structure a journey map and visualize its scale.

- Starting stages of the employee experience could include “Struggling Financially,” or “Looking for Change.” However, the employee experience, in regard to contact with the employer, would start as early as the “Applying for Jobs,” stage, as a potential employee’s experience with an employer’s application process initiates that transaction. Other stages will include “Interview(s),” “Training and Development,” “Growth Within the Company,” and other experiences that could play a role such as “Social Interactions,” “Work Life Balance,” “Physical and/or Mental Demand,” “Diversity and Inclusion,” “Pay and Benefits,” and so much more.
- (C) Steps: journey maps visualize experiences as a sequence of steps from the perspective of the main actor. Steps are the more detailed form of stages. Stages are broader. For example, under the “Information Search” stage, old product breaks and seeking advice in the shop would be steps of the that specific stage. Steps could include interactions with other people (including frontline employees), machines, or digital touchpoints. Steps could also include physical activities such as walking, driving, or waiting. The level of detail for each step varies on the basis of the journey maps overall scale.
 - When looking at the newly designed “Looking for Change” stage, steps of this stage could include feeling undervalued at one’s current workplace due to emotional labor drain, wanting to relocate cities, aiming to gain experience in a new sector or field, and countless other

possibilities. The steps of the employee journey map will not be in a specific order after a few stages, as once someone gets a job and is fully trained, there is no exact end-point. Comparing this to the customer experience where one orders a product, receives the product, formulates opinion on the product, and chooses to either use it again or never again. Once a customer has reached that end point, they start a new journey map for a new product. If an employee chooses to work for an employer for 5, 10, 15, 20 years, the journey map will not be as detailed or structured. They will have a more zoomed out perspective, rather than a zoomed in one.

- (D) Storyboards: represent each step through illustrations, photos, screenshots, or sketches to detail specific situations within the story, including the setting and context. Storyboards increase one's empathy when looking at a journey map, and also allows for quicker navigation.
 - This would be no different than a customer journey map, as it is just a compilation of pictures and illustrations. The only difference would be drawing out the employee's experience rather than the customer's experience. For example, one could illustrate a prospective employee on their computer applying for jobs. Another illustration could include the expression on one's face when receiving a phone call or email stating that they got the job. Emotions would fluctuate heavily throughout this employee journey map, which is why it is important to illustrate every crucial point.

- (E) Emotional Journeys: are graphs that represent the main actor's level of satisfaction at each step. These graphs are often on a scale that ranges from -2 (very negative) to +2 (very positive). An emotional journey visually represents obvious problems within a specific experience.
 - As stated earlier, an employee journey map is more than likely going to cover multiple years, up to decades of time, and therefore the emotional journey will be range from very negative to very positive, frequently. Receiving the job, getting promoted, or getting recognized will boost one to the top of the emotional journey graph. Getting a pay cut, having a bad experience with a manager, or worse, getting fired, will cause the emotional journey graph to skyrocket down to the bottom. An average day at work has an employee feeling neutral. Since an employee's journey map is going to cover the most important days of an employee's experience, it is likely that the emotional journey graphs will have a wide range of motion, bouncing back and forth between the highly negative and highly positive. However, the emotional journey for this research will focus more on specific interactions a frontline employee remembers having with certain customers. There are several touchpoints across an employee's career where they have to interact with customers and either deep act or surface act, thus experiencing emotional labor.
- (F) Channels: refer to the means of communication involved within a specific step. This could include face-to-face interaction, websites, apps, social media, TV Advertisements, and print advertisements. Specifying the form of communication the main actor uses helps an organization understand cross-

channel experiences. High-level maps show all possible channels, which provides a comprehensive overview of alternative end-to-end journeys.

- Professional channels in a workplace environment could include face-to-face interactions, email, phone call, conference call, and applications such as Slack. Aligning these types of communication channels with an employee journey map will allow the company to see what method of communications works best with employees. It would be best for a company to customize the approach of communication towards each employee. This is not always possible, depending on company size and resources. In addition, personalizing the communication style between customer and frontline employee will help reduce emotional labor. Whatever works best for the employee in means of communication between them and a customer could significantly reduce emotional labor stress.
- (G) Stakeholders: involved in each and every step of a journey map. Stakeholders help organization's identify potential key actors that could be included in research, prototyping, and experimentation.
 - The stakeholders in this situation would be the leadership team, since they are a part of the frontline employee experience every step of the way. Leadership also makes the decisions on conducting research, prototyping, and experimentation on diverse groups of employees to have a wide range of data on what works with employees, and what does not. If a prototype experiment does not work while trying to implement service design to reduce emotional labor, nothing major was lost, as the

organization did not waste that much time or money. Therefore, the organization can move onto the next prototype and aim for success!

- (H) Dramatic Arc: illustrates the level of a main actor's engagement at each step, from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). These arcs of tension are a common concept in storytelling used in theatre, movies, and books. In service design, these arcs are often used to reflect on the pace and rhythm of an experience.
 - Engagement is one of the most important factors in regard to an employee experience. Empowerment drives engagement. If an employee is engaged, they will have a very high level of engagement. If an employee is tasked with filing papers and busy work that is not challenging their mindset, they will have a very low level of engagement. Low levels of engagement lead to high levels of emotional exhaustion. If a company wanted to operate at maximum efficiency, it would be their goal to plateau at a dramatic arc of 4-5 per each employee.
- (I) Backstage Processes: connects frontstage experience (which are visualized as steps of the main actor), with backstage experiences (which are visualized as flowcharts). The backstage experience consists of departments and systems that work together to target specific steps within the journey map. Journey maps that include backstage processes can often provide the same information that a service blueprint does. Often times, since these two tools are similar from this perspective, one might find overlaps or hybrids.
 - From an employee standpoint, employee operations would be considered frontstage experiences, whereas backstage experiences would consist of executive leadership and the decisions they make, that

affect the employee who ultimately have no voice in those decisions. This point correlates with stakeholders, since executive leadership are the ones who make the decisions, and therefore the ones that can make the decision to implement service design and reduce frontline employee emotional labor.

- (J) What If: exists in every step to ask, “What could possibly go wrong?” This allows organizations to implement service recovery systems for different situations, if there was not already one in place. Important scenarios or problems that do arise can be visualized on separate journey maps.
 - Organizations need to be asking What Ifs about their employees. Questions such as “What should we do if employees do not feel engaged,” “Could we improve our training program in order to make employees feel more prepared to what they are coming into, and in addition, feel more welcome,” “What can we do to reduce emotional labor faced by frontline employees?” If employers were to not only ask these questions to themselves, but find answers for them, the employee experience could improve drastically, and thus reduce emotional labor.

Overall, an employee journey map should be discussed from the employee perspective. Now that journey maps have been discussed in regard to what they comprise of, it is also important to address the different types of journey maps, and the useful factors worth considering when creating a journey map for an organization, which will be discussed in the bullet points below:

- Reliability: assumption-based vs research-based journey maps

- When analyzing a journey map, one wants to ensure its credible and reliable. Therefore, research-based journey maps can better contribute to solving an organization's problem due to the factual nature, rather than an assumption-based journey map, which is primarily the basis of one's opinion. In regard to emotional labor, assumption-based journey maps will be more ideal as emotional labor is not particularly something that can be measured and is highly subjective.
- State of journey map: “current state” vs. “future state” journey maps
 - Journey maps have the capability to visualize a current experience or a future experience, thus where the names of these journey maps come from. Current state maps describe how someone is experiencing an existing service or product, in present time. Future state maps describe an experience someone might have with a not-yet-existing service or product, in future time. While current state maps help organizations find gaps in existing experiences, future state maps help people imagine, understand, and even experiment with ideas and thoughts. Emotional labor applies primarily in the present, so those maps will be most important for the purposes of this study, as it will help prototype the ideal scenario for the frontline employees.
- Main actor/perspective: “customer” vs “employee” journey maps
 - While journey maps are primarily used to visualize customer experiences, they can also be used to visualize experiences of employees, which is a major argument in this paper. Considering well-motivated staff is a key factor in delivering good customer experiences, the

employee experience could be a very valuable exercise for an organization to take on. An employee journey map might cover daily routines or monthly sales cycles, in efforts to best understand how the employee experience could be enhanced. However, the emotional labor employee journey map will cover the employee's emotions over the course of time.

- Scope and scale: high-level vs detailed journey maps
 - Creating the scale for a journey map is one of the biggest questions and most complex tasks. When selecting the scale, many questions may arise such as: Where do you start? Where do you end? What should you focus on? Which “zoom level” should your map have? All of this depends on the progress one has on a project, and the reason they are creating this specific journey map. For example, if one was trying to communicate an idea or problem, it would be best to concentrate on key details that describe how the needs of a customer will match the organizations ideas. Scales of journey maps can be as little as a few seconds, to as long as a few decades. The more one zooms out on an experience, the less detailed it is, whereas the more one zooms in, the more detailed it is. With emotional labor journey maps, the key experiences of frontline employees having interactions with customers will be more zoomed in, since these interactions are so frequent when one works on the frontline.
- Focus: product-centered vs. experience-centered journey maps
 - Product (or provider/brand)-centered journey maps are journey maps containing only touchpoints, which means the only interactions

permitted are between the customer and the service, product, or brand. These journey maps leave out all steps outside the reach of a company. Experience-focused journey maps visualize the overall experience from a customer perspective, and also shows how touchpoints are incorporated into that experience. The employee journey map will illustrate experiences frontline employees have with customers, and potentially the experiences they face due to emotional labor.

Service Design and Blueprinting

As mentioned earlier, certain journey maps can blend with service blueprints. As stated by Alves and Nunes (2013), journey map closely relates to a service blueprint which is a visual representation of a user's perspective which details the service's characteristics.

The definition per Stickdorn et al. is "service blueprints can be understood as an extension of journey maps," (2018, p. 54). One of the more important things about journey maps is their ability to connect customer experiences to the frontstage and backstage, which includes employee and support processes. "Frontstage" refers to the people and processes the customer has the ability to have direct contact with. "Backstage" refers to the people and processes that are invisible to the customer. Support processes are activities executed by the rest of the organization or external partners. A service blueprint builds on the frontstage experience visualized in a customer journey map, but adds layers and depth by showing relationships and dependencies between frontstage and backstage processes. This map is able to illustrate how activities by a customer trigger service

processes, and vice-versa. In Figure 4, one can easily observe the nine components of a service blueprint, which will be explained below in bullet points.

Figure 4

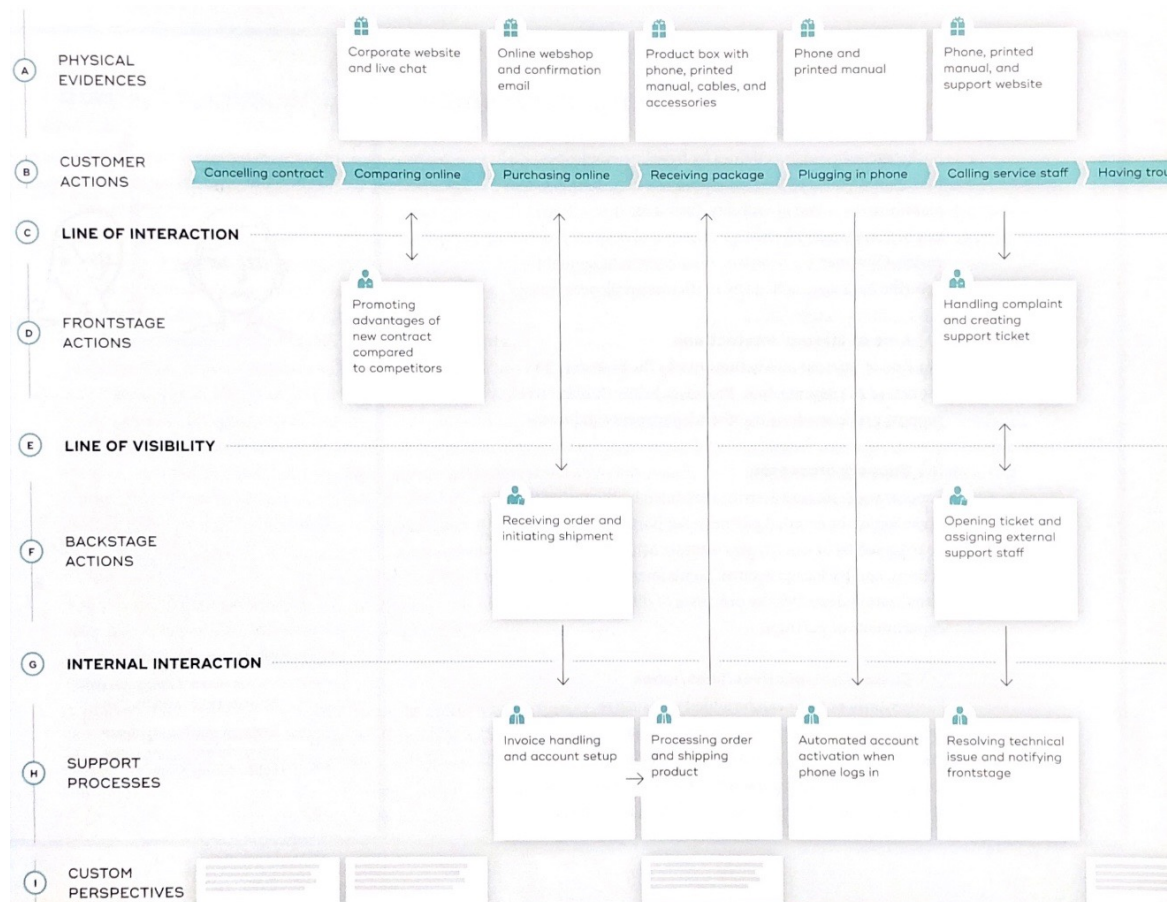


Figure 4: Service Blueprint. Source: Stickdorn et al. (2018, p. 55)

- **Physical Evidence:** physical objects that customers come in contact with, that can be designed. The easiest examples to understand would include channels such as email, text messages, phone calls, etc.
- **Customer Actions:** describes what a customer does at each step of a customer journey map. Examples of customer actions include cancelling contracts, comparing products online, purchasing online, and receiving the package. Customer actions can trigger a frontstage or backstage process.

- **Line of Interaction:** the line divides customer actions and frontstage interactions. When customers interact with frontline employees, the blueprint shows a connection across the line of interaction.
- **Frontstage Actions:** shows the activities of frontline employees that are visible to the customer. Examples include advocating for a certain contract compared to another or creating guest satisfaction through guest service and a smile.
- **Line of Visibility:** this line separates frontstage and backstage actions by frontline employees.
- **Backstage Actions:** activities by frontline employees that are not visible to the customer. These activities take place below the line of visibility.
- **Internal Interaction:** this line marks the boundary to the rest of the organization. Processes below the line are support processes done by other departments and teams.
- **Support Processes:** activities executed by the rest of the organization or external partners. Support processes can be triggered by customer actions, frontstage actions, and backstage actions.
- **Custom Perspectives:** these would be additional lines added to the blueprint in order to visualize project-specific content.

Since a blueprint is an important component of service design, and any organization referencing this research needs to be familiar with the traditional components of a blueprint, not everything listed above is important to a blueprint that is tailored to the frontline employees of an organization. The reasoning for this is there is a lot less complexity in regard to interactions in between frontline

employees (frontstage) and executive leadership (backstage), compared to having customers, frontline employees, executive leadership, and support systems. There are a few components that are vital to a frontline employee blueprint that will be explained below.

Physical evidence is important from a frontline employee standpoint. Typically, this would include forms of communication received from leadership that communicate tasks needing to be done, announcements, meeting updates, and back and forth communication between co-workers. Physical evidence can also include the components of physical environment where the frontline employee works. This would include the frontline employee's office, the furniture in the office, the layout of the space, the noise levels, the lighting, and any other component of the office that is physical. Physical evidence can often insinuate emotional labor demands, specifically if one of the tasks a frontline employee receives includes handling the most complex guest situations, which all include high guest emotions.

Customer actions (or as this paper will call them, employee actions) would include tasks such as preparing a resume, applying to jobs online, interviewing, training, attending meetings, and interacting with clients. These frontstage actions can often trigger a backstage action, similarly to the customer-facing blueprint. Submitting a resume could lead to a job offer, and on the other end, not turning in a report on time or a low-quality report could lead to termination.

Line of interaction will be referred to in the frontline employee blueprint as the line that will divide up frontline employee and leadership interactions. A frontline employee only sees and knows so much, as there is so much the

leadership team does not disclose to the frontline staff, such as financial performance, budget cuts which lead to layoffs, and leaders being unethical when making decisions. The leaders never have to display emotional labor, they only tell the frontline to partake in it as a part of the job requirements.

Those three components to a frontline employee blueprint are the most important. While each component could be integrated into this blueprint, not a lot is known from executive leadership standpoints. While they are the people who make decisions that affect the entire organization, most of that information is confidential. While frontline employees and executive leadership do have a lot of interaction on the most basic level, leaders need to get to know their employees more. Employees want to be empathized with and understood, which is why empathy is the next leading component in frontline employee service design.

Service Design and Empathy

Empathy is often defined as being able to align one's feelings with someone else, often times with that someone else being in a high-stress situation. Empathy is a growing importance within organizations, specifically in regard to service design. Empathy allows employers to design an experience for employees rather than themselves, since they are able to witness the challenges the end-user has to face through the thoughts and feelings of others (Alves and Nunes, 2013). Leaders need to understand the needs of the people (employees, customers, stakeholders), and recognize critical situations (customer problems, team conflicts), in order to provide the support needed (Stickdorn et al., 2018, p. 467). Empathy aligns closely with empowerment, as the more trust employees have with their leadership, the more empowered they will be to get their best work done.

Service Design and Empowerment

Empowering frontline employees involves giving power or authority to them in order for them to make their own decisions on behalf of themselves or the company. Empowerment has been vital to organizations within recent years. Organizations want customers to feel empowered due to how crucial it is to organization success (Stickdorn et al., 2018, p. 6), but often times forget to empower employees, regardless of how many articles they read telling them how much more likely their employees are to support (rather than just comply) with their decisions, the management, and the organization as a whole whenever they are heard in the decision-making process (Brockner, 2006, p. 125).

Service Design and Employee Engagement

Engagement involves frontline employee's attention spans being held while at work, typically through innovative techniques and non-repetitive tasks. When an employee is engaged, they are affected less by emotional labor. In recent studies conducted by Aon Hewitt, employee engagement in the workplace is only getting worse. The study conducted covered more than five million people across 1,000 organizations worldwide, in which they revealed that "less than a quarter of employees are highly engaged, 39 percent are only moderately engaged, and, despite companies' efforts, employee engagement decreased globally by 2 percent from 2015 to 2016," (Hewitt, 2017, p.7). Another factor the Hewitt study brings up is what will be referenced at Figure 5 in this paper, the Aon Hewitt Engagement Model.

Figure 5

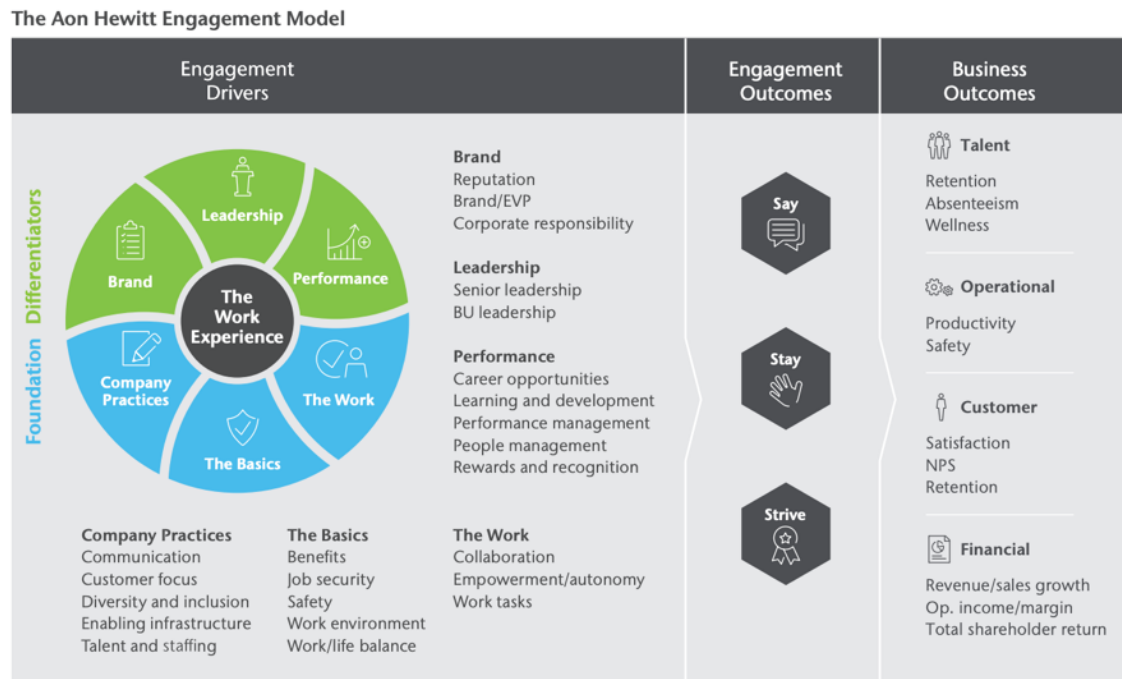


Figure 5: The Aon Hewitt Engagement Model. Source: Aon Hewitt (2017).

As seen in the Aon Hewitt Engagement Model, there are three categories that play into engagement:

1. Engagement Drivers
2. Engagement Outcomes
3. Business Outcomes

All three of these categories relate to emotional labor, since the more engaged employees are, the less likely they are to be affected by the stresses. Going into more detail about the drivers, engagement drivers are what detail an employee's experience with a company, which can include how emotionally drained they feel. Engagement outcomes are measured by a Say, Stay, Strive model. Employees are asked if they *say* positive things about their organization and act as advocates, if they intent to *stay* at their organization for a long time, and if they are motivated

to *strive* to give their best efforts to help the organization succeed. If an organization constructs a design where frontline employees are not constantly faced with intense demands of emotional labor, they are more likely to say positive things about their organization, stay with their organization for a long time, and strive to make their organization the best it can be. The last category of the model is business outcomes which includes talent, operational, customer, and financial objectives. Simply put, a business will have better outcomes if their employees are not constantly drained. To summarize up this section, in order to successfully achieve authenticity in a workplace, employees need to have the freedom to be themselves, employees need to have a voice where they can express disagreement if needed and show what they really care about without fear of being judged or worrying about what they say affecting their career. When all said and done, employees will feel fulfilled on the job, thus creating more genuine and authentic interactions with customers, and reducing stress of emotional labor (Hewitt 2017).

Service Design and Gamification

When implementing service design from an employee perspective, innovation is ideally needed to succeed. There are several ways an organization can go about innovating. However, one up and coming method to co-create an employee experience is motivational design. The idea behind motivational design is to engage frontline employees through unique resources, procedures, and strategies to bring about changes in motivation. This concept can be used to improve student's motivation to learn or to improve employee's motivation to work. Gamification is a great example of a type of motivational design, as the idea behind gamification is utilizing video game elements in non-gaming environments

to improve user experience and user engagement (Deterding et al., 2011, p. 2426). This method provides a unique experience, so frontline employees are not viewing work as work, but rather as a game. There are five different “sample values” that are said to motivate humans. They include pay, altruism, enjoyment, reputation, and implicit work (Quinn and Bederson, 2011). Postma (2013) created a chart through her research that summarized these game elements/sample values used within gamification. Reference Figure 6.

Figure 6

Game Element	Elaboration
Time	Generic timers for rounds of games.
Levels	Use levels to keep players curious. However, if the game has unlimited levels, the players will give up due to the impossibility of finishing, which will result in lower quality work.
Scores	Scoring is based on agreements with managers and co-workers.
Bonuses	Bonus rounds will come into play if players continue to provide the correct answers.
Collaboration	Utilized for players to find agreements on specific tasks.
Competitiveness	Used to motivate players directly.
Taboo Outputs	Forces players to create more detailed input.
Reputation Systems	Allows players to compare themselves with others.
Randomness	Makes player curious and want to continue playing.

Figure 6: Elements of Gamification. Source: Postma (2013)

One reason for implementing gamification into an organization is it keeps employees entertained (Ahn, 2006, p. 94), which in turn makes them more engaged. By working one’s way through levels (promotions), with an allocated amount of time (deadlines), they can achieve higher scores (high quality work) which could ultimately lead to bonus levels (bonuses). Gamification leads frontline employees to reduced amounts of emotional labor stress due to increased feelings of inclusivity within their organization due to the competitive nature of the “game.” Gamification is a great way to keep frontline employees engaged. In addition, it is also a great example of a potential prototype an organization may want to

implement, as gamification could work great for some organizations, and not so great for others.

Service Design and Prototyping

Prototyping is a tool used for testing the design of the service through observation of the user interacting with the service. Prototyping is primarily used to test the function and performance of the design prior to it going into production. There is also service prototyping which simulates a service experience through role plays. Role plays include active user participation, props, and physical touchpoints. This can all generate a deeper understanding of the service (Alves and Nunes, 2013).

In regard to lessening emotional labor for frontline employees, prototyping and role-playing with service design could lead to less faults down the road with the organization's employee experience. Sutton (1991) did a study on bill-collection agencies in regard to emotional labor in organizations. What this study discovered is managers who understand emotional labor can provide a better work environment for employees. If an executive has experience on the frontline, they are going to know the emotional labor frontline employees endure. Therefore, they are going to be more likely to implement changes into the organization to improve that employees experience. However, most high-level decision-making executives know nothing about the front-line. This paper suggests that every organization should have at least half of high-level executives (this could potentially be the Board of Directors) have worked a frontline job at some point in their career, so they can better implement service design into their organization, to not only benefit them, but also the frontline employee. In addition, executives should

frequently be coming to frontline and interacting with customers and frontline employees to better understand the experience. A great example of this is Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group. There are videos of Branson serving drinks to customers on company-owned airline. While he is not required to do this, doing so allows customers to see how much high-level executives care about their organization, which is important to customers and frontline employees. If an organization is in the beginning stages of launching service design, they can test out multiple designs of the employee experience. This paper suggests testing out each experience within minimal employees (3-5) for about a week. In the case of said prototype failing, the organization will have caught the mistake early on, thus wasting little time and little money. The organization can then move into the next prototype until they find a success. Once the successful prototype has been discovered, slowly implement this over time, until the organization is fully functioning off of service design.

As stated, there are several methods used to implement service design into organizations. The seven methods that link with the framework this research proposes include Journey Maps, Blueprints, Empathy, Empowerment, Engagement, Gamification, and Prototyping. While there is no specific order, every method is vital to the success of a successful service design organization. When done effectively, emotional labor is reduced on frontline employees, thus leading the organization to higher retention rates and more success.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The largest limitation faced while researching was that this paper is purely conceptual. Therefore, there is no new data proving that service design can reduce the effects of emotional labor in a service organization, besides from the secondary data collected from other researchers. In addition, due to service design being a growing and promising field that continues to develop daily, there may have been some important elements, such as other tools or methods, that were overlooked in this study. A more in-depth research suggestion would be to partner with 10-20 organizations, on a scale from small start-ups to large Fortune 500 companies, to analyze what the employee atmosphere is like, how they use service design within their organization (if they do), and compare the employee experience and emotional labor stress levels compared to those organizations that do not use service design as a method to construct an employee experience. The data needed to determine employee stress levels could be collected by asking frontline employees about their experience within their organization. Another method would be collecting employee saliva samples, which would be used to measure specific stress hormone levels, which would then provide numbers and statistics to prove the effectiveness of service design. Once a researcher has collected this data, organizations around the world who do not have service design implemented into their organization will be able to see the benefits the concept would provide to them. This will make the organization more successful through higher retention rates because of lower emotional labor stress levels. This research has potential, and has an even greater possibility to be a game-changer to organizations around the world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research paper has answered the question “*How can organizations use service design to lessen emotional labor at the front-line?*” By analyzing prior literature on emotional labor, and realizing the issue of emotional labor consequences on frontline employees has still not been solved, this paper looked at the concept of service design to address the issue. The proposed framework for this paper included seven concepts which include Journey Maps, Blueprints, Empathy, Empowerment, Engagement, Gamification, and Prototyping. This paper argues that while there are many components to service design that are all important, empathy lies at the core. Executives who possess empathy would allow them to create better experiences for their frontline employees, thus reducing emotional labor stress. Through an even more in-depth literature review on these service design concepts, one can see how service design can not only lessen emotional labor stress on frontline employees, but also bring the organization to more success. While there is still a lot of research that could be done regarding this concept, this paper brought readers to a basic understanding of how much change this could make in the future.

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