



Presentation

Lisa Sharp and Maree Roche: Saturday 6th June

Title of Presentation: Retaining the Authentic Self in the Workplace:
Authenticity and Work Engagement in the Mass-Service Industry

Presenter Name: Lisa Sharp and Maree Roche

Abstract:

Involving over 70% of New Zealanders, the service sector is the predominant employment of the New Zealand workforce, and where the service interaction involves fulfilling a role, some degree of acting is common. While promoting well-being in highly skilled workers has been the subject of much research, well-being in mass-service workers remains under-examined. Like mass-production, mass-service refers to a customer service environment in which interaction is highly standardised and regulated. Mass-service roles typically lack the crucial ingredients we identify with workplace well-being such as task identity, variety, opportunity for development, and autonomy, in addition, an environment in which 'the customer is always right' promotes inauthenticity. However, in the face-to-face service context where the state of engagement is visible to customers, it is crucial for customer and organisational outcomes, as well as for the well-being of workers themselves, that workers become engaged in their work. Drawing from Positive Psychology research in emotional labour, authenticity and self-efficacy towards service workers' engagement.

We examined the workplace wellbeing of 140 service workers. Standard requirements for robust statistical analysis were achieved and using SPSS, statistical analysis from Pearson's correlations, moderated regression, ANOVA and t-tests revealed a number of positive relationships to wellbeing including: (1) authenticity is positively related to work engagement, (2) surface acting is negatively related to engagement (3) self-efficacy moderates the relationship between authenticity, deep and surface acting towards engagement.

While these results will be discussed in terms of their implications for service workers' well-being, overall results suggest that workers who are able to display their true selves at work (i.e. are authentic) will be more engaged, and that self-efficacy has extensive involvement as a positive moderator. Where there is scope to integrate personality with the expectations of

the service role, we recommend the training and development of service workers to learn how to achieve their role while maintaining a sense of authenticity, as well as promoting authenticity within the organisational culture, and designing interventions that increase workers' sense of self-efficacy.

Presenter Biography:

Lisa Sharp

Lisa Sharp is completing a Masters in Applied Psychology (Organisational) at the University of Waikato. Her research interest in authenticity and engagement in service workers has led to the thesis topic title: Retaining the Authentic Self in the Workplace: Authenticity and Work Engagement in the Mass-Service Industry.

Dr Maree Roche

Dr Maree Roche is Senior Lecturer in Organisational Psychology, School of Psychology, University of Waikato. Her research focus is in positive psychology and leadership including the psychosocial environments created by leaders, followership theory, and leadership contagion. She has a particular interest in positive leadership, and has research publications in this area in the following journals: Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, International Journal of Human Resource Management, Personnel Psychology and Leadership & Organizational Development. She has numerous journal and refereed academic publications, as well as providing consultancy to organisations in these areas. She is also currently the co-editor of the New Zealand Journal of Human Resource Management.