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ARTÍCULOS ORIGINALES

Service as a principle that joins and fosters organizations: A review and conceptual proposal regarding the culture of service

pp. 55-70

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ABSTRACT This article reflects on and reviews the different authors that have presented their concepts of service. It seeks to recover the idea that all organizations offer a service to society. In addition, the article aims to approach service nature, qualities, and features; inquire into service as a human experience, in regards to the customer, and within the company; distinguish the concepts of customer, internal customer, moments of truth, service cycles and maps, to delve into the possibility of creating an authentic service culture. In all this elaboration, the article also inquiries into the possibility of service as a noble principle that brings together and boosts individuals working in organizations with an internal / external customer-oriented culture.

KEYWORDS internal customer, service culture, organizational culture, organizational development, service experiences, service.

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El servicio como principio que une y potencia las organizaciones: una revisión y propuesta conceptual en torno a la cultura de servicio

RESUMEN En este artículo se hace una reflexión y una revisión sobre los distintos autores que han expuesto sus conceptos acerca del servicio. Se busca rescatar la idea de que todas las organizaciones ofrecen un servicio a la sociedad. Además el artículo busca aproximarse a la naturaleza del servicio, sus cualidades y sus características; indagar en el servicio como experiencia humana, de cara al cliente y dentro de la empresa; distinguir los conceptos de cliente, cliente interno, momentos de la verdad, ciclos y mapas de servicio, para luego adentrarse en la posibilidad de configurar una auténtica cultura del servicio. Y en todo este desarrollo, se indaga también sobre la posibilidad que tiene el servicio como un principio noble que une y que potencia a las personas que trabajan en organizaciones que poseen una cultura centrada en sus clientes internos y externos.

PALABRAS CLAVE cliente interno, cultura del servicio, cultura organizacional, desarrollo organizacional, experiencias de servicio, servicio.

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O serviço como princípio que une e potencializa as organizações: uma revisão e proposta conceitual sobre a cultura de serviço

RESUMO Neste artigo, faz-se uma reflexão e uma revisão sobre os diferentes autores que vêm expondo seus conceitos sobre o serviço. Busca-se resgatar a ideia de que todas as organizações oferecem um serviço à sociedade. Além disso, este artigo procura aproximar-se à natureza do serviço, suas qualidades e suas características; indagar o serviço como experiência humana, voltado ao cliente e dentro da empresa; diferenciar os conceitos de cliente, cliente interno, momentos da verdade, ciclos e mapas de serviço para, em seguida, se aprofundar na possibilidade de configurar uma autêntica cultura do serviço. Em todo esse desenvolvimento, questiona-se também sobre a possibilidade que o serviço tem como um princípio nobre que une e potencializa as pessoas que trabalham em organizações que possuem uma cultura centralizada em seus clientes internos e externos.

PALAVRAS CHAVE cliente interno, cultura do serviço, cultura organizacional, desenvolvimento organizacional, experiências de serviço, serviço.

Introduction

Studies on services have evolved quickly in the last years, focusing on management of the customer experience. This journey has required using typical design tools that allow having more control and achieving greater development of internal processes. The authors of this paper aim at contextualizing the service environment based on the foregoing, in order to deliver a human view of service that highlights the importance of people who influence customer's experiences either directly or indirectly. The internal customer is seen here as a unifying factor of the experience and a factor that generates culture within organizations. Such culture is the basis of what is conveyed to the customer through service; it is therefore essential to create a service philosophy that supports and drives human work within organizations.

The following chart explains and organizes the basic terms to be developed throughout this paper (see Figure 1).

Organizations and Service

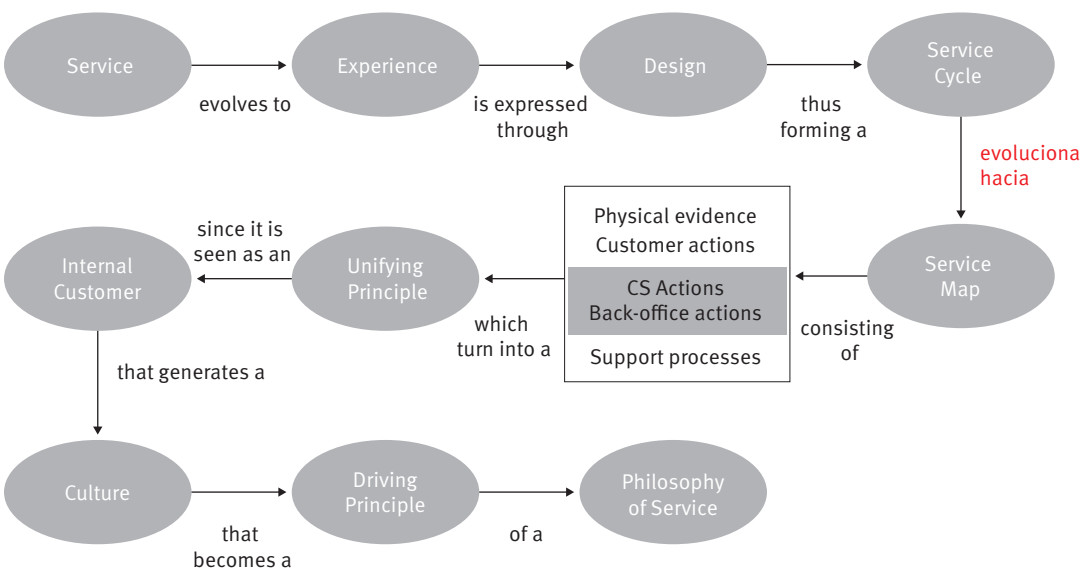
Let us begin this reflection with a quote from Peter Drucker: "The modern organization exists to provide a specific service to society" (1981, p. 509). In other works, the author differentiates an organization from one another based on their "specific" expected achievements. However, Drucker's goal is to make us consider a reality that is increasingly evident: all organizations offer a service.

Horovitz (1990, p. xi) states that "today the offensive focuses on the field of services; services before, during and after product sales, but also services in the service sectors in the strict sense: banking, transport, tourism, public utilities, and many others". The foregoing shows two aspects: a) every company offers services even though they objectively deliver manufactured products, and b) the traditionally-called service companies are now observing themselves to take more advantage of their own nature.

Currently it is no longer important to differentiate an organization from another concerning the product offered: Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry (1993, pp. 1-2) explain that:

> Almost all organizations compete on service to some degree. It is hard to find a service that is not important [...] To the extent that executives from industrial organizations find more difficulties to create technological, competitive, and lasting advantages, they will have to pay greater and more direct attention [...] to the added value that service represents as an actual source of competitive superiority Since industrial organizations are increasingly competing in the service area, there will be less differences between the industrial sector and the service sector.

FIGURE 1. Explanatory chart containing the key concepts of this paper



Source: own elaboration

It seems evident that "service" is determining the *new perspective* on what a human organization means and what they seek ultimately. However, a detailed study of this topic can lead us even further. If all or almost all organizations offer a service to society, it is necessary to study the nature and content of "service", its features, priorities, its relationship with people comprising society and its relationship with people comprising each organization.

Nature of Service

Mattsson (1994) states that studies show that services are processes where customers are continuously involved as "co-producers". Consequently, the customer is part of the system producing the service.

Juran (1990, p. 15) argues that "service is a work performed for another person [...] Service also includes work performed for another person in a company [...]".

Zimmermann & Enell (1993, p. 33.2) explain that "a service is work performed for someone else. [...] 'Services' exist because they can satisfy some specific needs [...]".

Shaw (1991, p. 9) comments that "it is more accurate and efficient to consider service as a factor that changes the condition or position of the consumer essentially".

Graterón (1995) points out that service is an activity performed in favor of somebody else. Service means to take advantage, be valuable, be useful or be of assistance. It is to favor, benefit or be useful to someone else.

Based on these concepts we can say that during the "service" act offered by the organization: a) the thing offered is good or useful;the thing offered may be an action, activity, performance, work, product; c) the thing offered is always for somebody else, not for oneself but for another person; d) the thing offered meets somebody else's need; e) the thing offered necessarily involves the other person who becomes part of the service, and f) the thing offered to such other person may cause some kind of change in them.

An actual relation between both sides is revealed: the service provider and the receiver; the "self" able to provide a service and the "other" who needs the service. We can say that this relation unconditionally includes "people" who interact. To this regard Lescano (2012, p. 41) states that: "The service is not only related to performing a task, but also influences how one deals and relates with the others, depending on the individual's personality. It is not possible to separate the service from the service provider, since the person providing a service shows different features of his/her nature and style".

Carlzon (1991, p. 15) explains that "western economies are turning into service economies since they are increasingly less able to compete based on a product-oriented advantage. We face the historical crossroads where the customer-oriented age has even reached companies that had never seen themselves as service companies in the past".

Similarly, it has also been acknowledged in this sphere of interpersonal relations that "however the service is consumed at the time of production, the service provider (whether an investment banker or Telefonica employee) exerts a greater influence on their quality than that achieved through the finest quality control" (Shaw, 1991, p. 9).

Normann (1989, p. 25) supports the same idea by stating that "most services are the result of social acts performed in direct contact with the customer and the representatives of the company visited by the customer".

Finally, it is worth highlighting that if service is summarized as a specific act based on the aforementioned opinions, there may be some features that provide better knowledge and understanding.

Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler (2009) contribute with four unique service features:

Intangibility: services are performances or actions, not objects, and thus they cannot be seen, felt, tasted, or touched in contrast to tangible goods.

Heterogeneity: services are performances frequently produced by humans, therefore there are not two services that are exactly the same. Employees who deliver the service and customers may differ in their performance.

Inseparability: most services are sold first and then produced and consumed simultaneously in time, unlike products, which are made at a time other than their time of consumption (previously).

Perishability: refers to the fact that services cannot be kept, stored, resold or returned. There cannot be a stock or service inventory. The service exists while the customer is receiving the service.

Rosander (1992) provides the following characteristics that detail the foregoing:

a) Although there are some exceptions, services cannot be measured as the features of physical objects or products. The reason is that a service is dynamic not static.

b) Services cannot be stored. Once the service has been provided, it ceases to exist. It may be repeated, but not recovered. The service is a process, not a product. It consists of a series of related activities commonly dominated by human behavior.

c) Services cannot be inspected. Services can be observed and conclusions may be drawn, but they cannot undergo an inspection in a literal sense.

d) Quality cannot be determined in advance. Services cannot be examined in the same way we examine food before buying at the supermarket. The customer does not know whether the service will be satisfactory until it has been purchased and experienced.

e) A service has no useful life. Products have a useful life. They may be repaired and maintained. Some products break down, thus a failure "test" can be performed. Services are different. They last for a period, but have no useful life.

f) Services have a temporary dimension. Services occur within time. A service may consist of a series of activities related throughout time, where each component is subject to compliance with quality.

g) Services are provided after a request. Services are provided based on the two types of demand: instantaneous demand and scheduled demand. The former must cover a standard of 100% availability and profitability; the latter must respond to scheduled times.

h) Services are more essential in some industries than others. Public services and those provided by companies stand out since an employee's error may not only be dangerous, but fatal. In these cases, the "zero" error goal is a duty.

i) Beyond than reliable products, services imply reliable human beings. Experience shows the need to pay more attention to reliability in people. Human reliability is the complement to human error; thus, the problem is narrowed down to control, correct and prevent human error.

j) The service is provided by the employees who receive the lowest wages. This is literally true. Service quality is partly determined by the individual waiting for the customer. This means that service quality is determined by qualifications, attitudes and behaviors of a single individual or a group of individuals. Consequently, the quality of services is very different from the quality of products.

k) Quality is both objective and subjective. It is objective since it is related to measures, observable elements, facts beyond personal feelings, external material objects, events and objects that may be perceived through the senses by two independent observers who reach the same opinion. It is subjective since it is affected by opinions of the mind, reactions of the nervous system, the result of their interactions.

In summary, we can say based on Lovelock, Reynoso, D'Andrea, Huete & Wirtz (2011, p. 4) that service "is an act or performance offered by a party to another. Although the process may be linked to a physical product, the performance is essentially intangible and it does not normally result in ownership of any production factor".

This search for "service quality" has allowed to understand that the important part is to develop the "ability to serve" as the goal of technology and knowledge.

Evolutionary breakthrough in service experience

To start going in detail about the importance of service in organizations, let us first contextualize the evolution of service. Pine & Gilmore (1998) establish an evolution model for economic value that begins in a competitive position of non-differentiation by means of extracting *commodities;* it then progresses to the creation of goods, reaching a point of greater differentiation through service delivery. There is, however, a higher degree of competitive differentiation: staging experiences. Pine & Gilmore (1998, p. 98) state that:

> An experience occurs when a company uses services as the stage and goods as props to engage customers individually so that memorable events are created. *Commodities* are expendable; goods are

tangible; services are intangible; and experiences are memorable [see Figure 2].

Another definition given by Pullman & Gross (quoted in Zomerdijk & Voss, 2010) is that an experience occurs when a customer has any sensation or acquires knowledge based on an interaction with elements in a context created by a service provider.

Morrás & Polizzi (2002, p. 5) define experiences as: "(self-reinforcing) generative processes that produce corporal, emotional or cognitive effects experienced by people as a response to a set of physical, mental or virtual stimuli perceived".

The correct design of service in encounters with customers thus becomes a core idea to achieve customer engagement and loyalty. Zomerdijk & Voss (2010) establish that engagement may be emotional, physical, intellectual, or spiritual, and different levels of engagement may be reached depending on the level of customer collaboration and connection with the environment. These authors set out six statements about service organizations focused on customer experience, they establish that the design of experience-oriented services involves: a) designing a series of service encounters and signals; b) sensory design; c) top notch employees committed to their customers; d) paying attention to the dramatic structure of events; e) paying attention to the relation among customers during service delivery, since other customers will participate in having the experience; and f) linking *back-office* employees closely to the experience the customer is about to have.

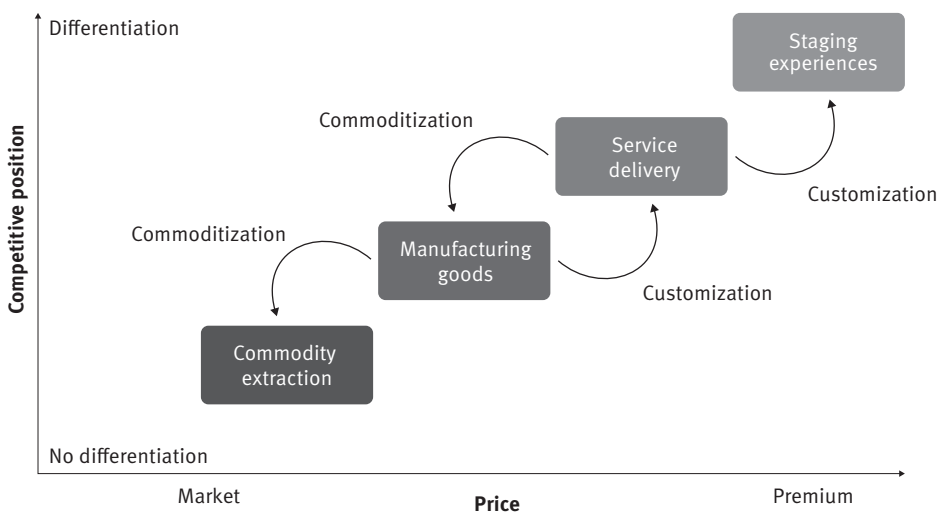
Therefore, we can say that experiences are created by a service provider, externally induced and their design within the organization is essential for such experiences to become memorable and unique, generate value and become relevant for the customer. Although experience is personal, the organization may create actions to model such experiences somehow and achieve proper outcomes.

The customer and "Moments of Truth"

The person who is the target of a specific "service" provided by a human organization is commonly known as "customer". That is, service does not exist without a customer. We previously mentioned two sides in the "service" relation between two people. In that regard, one of the sides has specific unsatisfied needs, which are expressed through a demand of products or services. This side is the beginning and end of the entire process. Their demand initiates the process, which ends once such demand has been satisfied. This side is referred to as "customer".

Horovitz (1990, pp. 2-3) suggests that "service is the set of provisions expected by the customer in addition to the product or basic service as a result of the price, image and reputation of such service". Consequently, each relation at the time the "service" is produced becomes an interaction consisting of a series of steps or processes that determine business success or total business

FIGURE 2. Progression of economic value



Fuente: adaptado de Pine y Gilmore, 1998

satisfaction. Such satisfaction will depend on a set of features that only humans can measure and, of course, need. Senlle (1993, p. 89) explains that "the word customer establishes a degree of loyalty, sympathy, likeness and satisfaction. We feel like customers when our needs are satisfied and they treat us well".

This can be detailed even more if we study the "interaction" or "successive interactions" between the organization and the customer: something happens each time the customer interacts with the company. Specialists have called this the "moment of truth".

Albrecht (1992, pp. 30-31) defines and explains "moments of truth":

> The moment of truth is any situation in which the customer makes contact with any aspect of the organization and gets an impression about its quality of service. The Spanish expression '*momento de la verdad* (moment of truth)', which comes from the bullfighting culture, refers to the final moment when the matador and bull duel alone.
>
> [...] We would rather use the term without allusions to confrontation to suggest that the customer and the service provider come into contact in many critical events and the customer generates an impression about quality of service during such encounters. Collectively, they all form the general image of the company's service.

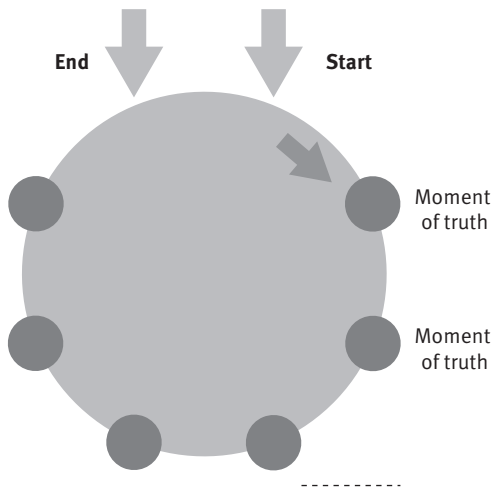
After summarizing the foregoing contributions, we find that the customer is the party who needs the specific "service" of the organization. The "organization-customer" relation comprises several interactions that influence the customer's view about the company, and ends in satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the business, transaction or acquired benefit. Customer satisfaction will depend on the degree of objective and subjective characteristics of the contact with the organization. Generally, careful assistance and friendly behavior have a positive influence that allows increasing the company's goodwill. On the contrary, rude and unkind behavior tends to be enough to generate an unfavorable opinion about the company.

Each contact of the customer with the parties of an organization can be called "moment of truth". There are many critical events that allow appreciating "service quality" and, in summary, the company's image as a whole. The authors state that knowledge about and use of the concept of "moment of truth" by employees and managers would contribute to a more detailed vision of customer satisfaction.

When each of such moments of truth experienced by the customer are brought together, they form the service cycle.

"Service cycle" is an idea introduced by Albrecht (1992); it means to realize that moments of truth are not unique, but are generated in groups or sets (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. Albrecht's service cycle



Source: adapted from Albrecht, 1992

Actually, the customer decides to do business with an organization and undergoes a series of moments of truth, which are part of an experience related to the entire service or service cycle.

The concept of service cycle helps people provide customers with assistance, allowing them to reorganize mental images of what is happening.

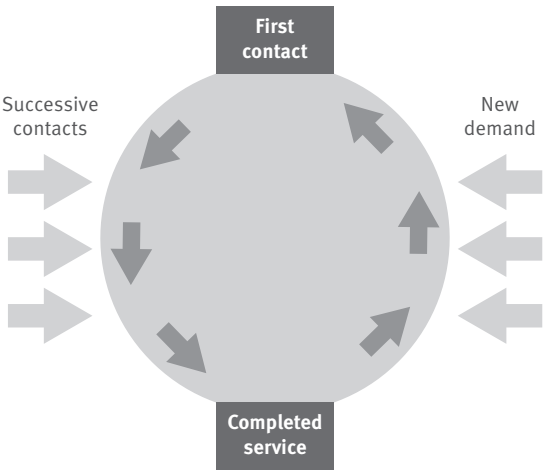
The basic development of service is no longer an employee's duty, but becomes the moment of truth controlled by the employees himself/herself. The employee is no longer manufacturing the product, s/he is part of the product. Quality is no longer means performing a task successfully, but it is now defined as "the moment of truth".

The "service cycle" idea is linked to the renowned opinion that highlights the importance of being concerned about the "entire experience" of the customer-product relation.

Graterón (1995) also talks about the service cycle, but highlights that it is a repeatable sequence of events where different people try to satisfy the customer's needs and expectations at each point in the cycle, which starts on a first

contact between the customer and the organization and ends when the customer considers the service has been completed, only to start again when the customer decides to come back for more (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4. Graterón's service cycle



Source: adapted from Graterón, 1995

It is worth mentioning that when the customer makes a first contact with the organization, s/he is not only assessing a single element, but a full panorama of the organization based on his/her own experience and perception; that is, the customer visualizes the "service cycle".

In summary, according to the foregoing contributions the "service cycle" (figures 3 and 4) is a set of "moments of truth" experienced by a customer while interacting with the organization. It is an experience of successive moments that finally allow having a complete view of the "service". It is used as a means to help the employee modify his/her partial point of view about the organization s/he belongs to. As a result, the employee will be able to consider customers the same way as customers consider the employee. One of its most immediate consequences -as an experience cycle- is the customer's renewed desire to come back to the organization to demand more service.

Evolution of the service cycle: service map

Currently, we can observe that some service design tools have evolved in their specificity throughout time, for example, the service cycle.

A more comprehensive tool that includes the service cycle is the "service map" or *Service Blueprint;* they are useful to contextualize and develop the customer's experience. The development of service mapping requires identifying all the moments of truth and specifying the relations among participants interacting in each of such moments (Lovelock *et al.,* 2011).

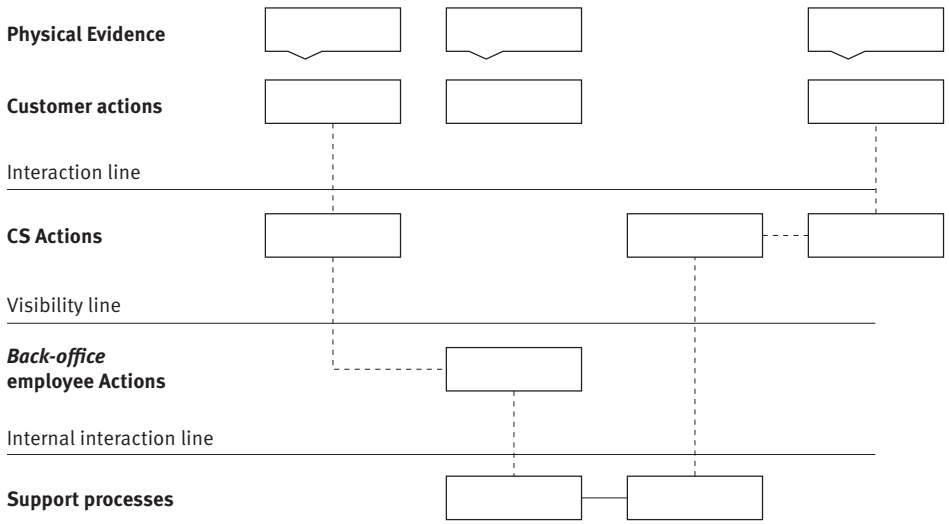
Zeithaml *et al.* (2009) explain that a service map as that shown in Figure 5 contains *customer actions* comprising steps, choices, activities, and interactions performed by the customer during the purchase, consumption, and evaluation of service.

However, there are two areas of employee actions in parallel to customer actions. The area called *contact staff actions* (shown in Figure 5 as CS actions) is clearly visible to the customer. The following area is not seen by the customer and is called *back-office employee actions.* Finally, there are *support processes* required to be able to generate such interactions. Additionally, it shows which elements of *physical evidence* are relevant in each moment of interaction. The four key action areas are separated by three horizontal lines. First comes the *interaction line,* which represents direct interactions between the customer and the organization. Next comes the *visibility line,* which symbolizes the separation of all the service activities visible to the customer from those that are not visible. This line also separates contact staff (CS) onstage actions from backstage actions. Third, we have the *internal interaction line,* which separates the *back-office employee's* activities from other internal activities that support service processes.

Mapping is used as a support tool that visually establishes part of the service operation facing the customer. The organization can identify more clearly the critical points and failures they may be experiencing based on the statement of moments of truth, the actors involved in each moment of truth, and the necessary procedures that must be performed. Therefore, mapping contributes to the design and implementation of the memorable experience that seeks to generate customer loyalty and value, since attention is focused on what is important for customers in each interaction with the service.

Here we can glimpse at the importance of the people whose main role is to foster the implementation and delivery of services. Everything must be performed in a coherent and aligned manner for the customer to be able to complete his/her

FIGURE 5. Service Map



Source: adapted from Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler, 2009

actions successfully. It is necessary to stress that the actions by the contact staff and *back-office* staff, among other aspects, greatly determine the existence of a memorable customer experience.

They are entrusted with the "service" labor during the process, not only to serve the customer, but to ensure that service delivery is based on the most internal processes of the organization, and thus produce a perfect chain reaction, where collaboration among people is the key, and a successful experience is the final outcome.

Service as an Organization's Unifier Principle

The previous explanations and descriptions have been helpful to understand the importance of this innovative concept in which "serving" and "service capacity" are the unifier principle of an organization. Carlzon (1991, p. 15) states that:

> In today's world, the starting point must be the customer -no the product or technology per se – and that means that companies must get organized in a different way to survive. In a customer-driven company, the distribution of roles is completely different. The organization is decentralized, responsibility is given to those at the base of the pyramid, whose responsibility was traditionally to follow orders. The traditional structure of a hierarchical corporation is commencing to yield to a more horizontal structure. This is particularly true in service companies whose focus is clients and no products.

As mentioned, when considering the service to be provided to clients, the whole organization embraces a transforming idea, sot that the company's structure is not just an "organization chart" or a determined number of duties or tasks, or specific expected results. The transformation of the organization stems from the reorientation of its purposes towards "serving the clients" as the core of the contacts or needed quality relations to keep the company "live" in the market, before competitors and in terms of demand.

Reorienting an organization towards "serving the customer" is a value that "joins". And "joining" means gathering, linking, tiding, merging, mixing, assembling, incorporating: words or ideas that are necessary for an organization set by people, each one with their own particular purposes, who "join" together (or at least try) to satisfice personal and social needs; such needs, are related to activities and processes with no other end than making or giving a good or service to another person (customer) and/or the society.

Services "join" because, as stated by Thornely & Lees (1993), it is "a noble cause", meaning that, it is one of the most powerful motivations. Making clear that people can serve others, help understand they work together for "a noble cause".

Another consequence of being together in favor of "serving the customer" is to recognize that the members of the organization help each other and the society when they clearly see they "serve" others with their individual and team work. And also because serving means being a "person" as it is a fact that you "give" yourself to other, you are "at the service of other".

In fact, Frankl (1984, pp. 26-27) calls "self-transcendence" to the capacity man has to give their selves, which:

> Denotes the fact that human beings are always aiming at and addressing to something or someone different than themselves -to give a purpose or achieve a love relationship with their interaction to other human beings -. As long as we live our self-transcendence in an open way, we actually become human beings and fulfill ourselves with ourselves. This make me think of the fact that our eyes can visually perceive the world around us, which, ironically, is contingent to their incapacity to perceive themselves. Each time the eye sees something in itself, its function is perturbed. If I had ye cataracts, I would see a cloud -my own eye will see its own cataract-. Or if I suffered from glaucoma, I could see a beam similar to a rainbow around any light; it is just as if my eye could see the ocular increased tension caused by the glaucoma. The eye that works properly cannot see itself, cannot perceive itself. Likewise, we are human beings in the inasmuch as we are not able to see us, to perceive us, and to forget about ourselves by providing us a cause to serve to, or to another person to love. By working or falling in love, we transcend, and, therefore, we are fulfilling ourselves.

However, this idea of focusing on the clients goes beyond, not only when we look out the organization, but also when the organization itself looks inside. In the pursuit of an "internal synergy", a human organization finds the vital principle of its own development and the development of each one of its members. From there, even more, attending clients with quality would be one of the consequences of such internal revolution.

Internal Customer Service

It has clearly been stated that as an organization focused on the "external customer", it is possible to achieve an unparalleled improvement. In sum, this is about having a concrete vision of the concept of "service", its nature, the concept of "customer", the concept of "experience", the concept of "moment of truth", the concept of "service map", and the conclusion whereby it has been determined that thinking and putting into practice these concepts and ideas help the unity of the organization and the quality of the personnel.

Juran (1990) complements his concept of "service" with the following phrase: "Service also includes the work performed to another person within the company [...]". The author originally putt he word within in italics, so it is possible to conclude that the author is interested in the improvement of quality, pay attention to the company's internal aspects, especially, human resources: the person "within".

Albrecht (1992, p. 26) states that:

> What we have to look for in the management and functioning of excellent service providing companies is just a full internal synergy. This can be achieved by focusing our energy on understanding what the business means at global scale, as well as the organization of the resources supporting the shipment of the product at the moment of truth and team work, which is possible when each member of the team understands which their contribution is to the success of the company.

Understanding the company at a global level -as stated by Albrech- is the purpose of studying the members who work within the company, which means that in certain way it is also understanding how "internal customer service" is achieved. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly define the "internal customer" first, and under the terms in which several authors do it.

Juran (1990, p. 16) explains that "internal customers are affected by the product at the same time they are members of the company producing them. Often, they are called customers, despite the fact they are not, at least not in the way a dictionary defines them; i.e., they are not "buyers".

Then, Albrecht (1992, p. 26), during his conferences to top managers, makes them reflect through jokes by telling them:

> If you don't know who your customers are, you can always discover it by doing the following. Stop doing what you do for two weeks and see who complains. They are your customers. [...]. In fact, this is not an incorrect way to do it, at least not mentally. Start asking yourselves: "who would be affected, and why, if my mi department stops working?" "Which departments or people would have

> difficulties to comply with their mission without the results my department offers?" "Who would be directly and indirectly affected?" Take note of your answers.

According to the above mentioned, in summary, the "internal customer" is the most immediate person to us within the organization. That is the most affected person by the quality of our job. Quality would also indirectly affect other internal customers in the supply chain, either one single person or a group of people.

On the other hand, there are other authors who contradict what has already been mentioned, or who explain it from another perspective. For instance, they think of the organization as a system of processes. And, as mentioned by Scholtes (1991), the concepts of consumers and providers are easily deduced once the concept of a process is understood: people or organizations who respond to the series of activities called process are "the providers", and those who use the product or service, are "consumers".

Likewise, but in a different way, Senlle (1993) presents the definition in figure 6.

Each worker buys (C), transforms (T) the work and sells (V) to the person next to them. If in such chain a person does not work correctly, or makes mistakes or fails, it means the buyer has to put some extra time to review and fix the work of the seller.

> The quality of the service of any human organization constantly depends on the way some deliver others the part (processes) they have had to improve or attend. All of this goes beyond the strict vertical line, as mentioned by Ginebra & Arana de la Garza (1991, p. 99), and leads to the need [...] of paying attention to the horizontal line where quality is measured. One and other line are merged in an indivisible set. We cannot make quality just another area of the company. Everybody in a company is a product, a customer, a supplier, quality, and service.

Summing up, Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser & Schlesinger (1994) contribute what they call in-ternal quality to the work environment to improve employee satisfaction, which means the feelings employees feel towards the company, their job, and colleagues; and on the other hand, the attitudes people show to others and the way those people serve to others within the organization.

Thus, when talking about internal customer service, we are getting deeper into the analysis of the internal processes of the human organization, which in certain way allow, by themselves, to develop the absolute quality of everything covered, especially the people who make it possible every day.

The following is a set of complementary ideas which are useful to guide, in a more concrete way, the organization to the inside, towards its "internal customers", or in other words, towards the unifier principle and the driving principle.

Service Culture

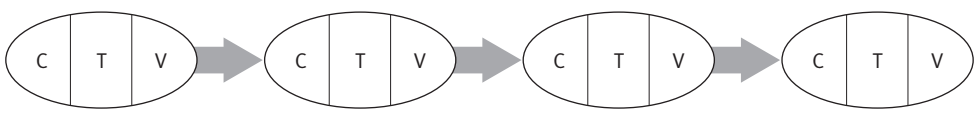
Several authors discuss the basic or fundamental context in which it is possible to motivate, drive, and guide the behavior, actions, and achievements in the human organizations. It seems that the process to establish a culture, within an organization, is what is showing positive results when it comes to find improvements, obtain new results, new ways, new paths.

For example, Albrecht (1992, p. 26), states that:

> It is a challenge to achieve the internal personnel of a service organization thinks, acts, and speaks about its participation in the success of the business from the perspective of a customer. It is not possible that everybody is fully attentive, but in those organizations that provide excellent services, most part of the internal personnel has learnt to include tasks in the success of the company within its market.

It is possible to affirm that in order to make an organization to adopt the foregoing concepts of "service", "service quality", "moments of truth",

FIGURE 6. Purchasing, transforming, and selling



Fuente: adaptado de Senlle, 1993

"internal customer service", etc., it is necessary, apparently, to update the organization's culture, or incorporating ideas and ways to perform in a culture, which would transform the culture of said organization in a "culture of service" or in a "new culture".

However, what is a culture within an organization and what is the importance of a culture of service in an organization?

Lassey & Marshall (1988, p. 243) say that culture "is a long series of implicit assumptions that cover the vision the members of a group have regarding its external relations in their different contexts, as well as their internal relations with others".

By culture, Leal & Valle (1989) understand the set of beliefs and values shared, which shape the meaning given by the members to the organization and that provides the behavior rules, patterns, and the vision of their reality and their surroundings.

Hellriegel & Slocum (2009, p. 458) state that an organizational culture "reflects the values, beliefs, and attitudes learnt and shared by its members".

Robbins & Judge (2013, p. 512) define organizational culture as a "system of meanings shared by its members, which distinguishes an organization from others".

The guiding principle of the relations between the members -or the set of beliefs shared- or the component that guides the work, or what encourages improvement- seems to be the concept of an organizational culture.

According to the above mentioned, culture determines the points of reference that motivate and guide actions. Thus, it is logical to think consider if the value of "service" is a clear point of reference, a cultural value, or a value that creates a culture within an organization.

However, the most important here and now is to think of how to create that Culture of Service. Deal and Kennedy, as quoted by Albrecht (1992, p. 115), more specifically said that "a culture of service is a way to make the things that the service quality value the most, since quality plays a basic role in the success of a company".

These contributions highlight the importance of recognizing that the "culture of service" is just an element to use within the organization organization (with its specific culture) towards "service", and therefore to the "capacity to serve" mentioned above.

Culture, understood as a "set of beliefs, standards, and values that set the basis of the collaborating human behavior [...] may be changed in the following corporate organizations, with fully effectiveness if the right conditions are met", according to Normann (1989, p. 185).

The foregoing is confirmed by Albrecht (1992) when he says that he totally believes in a "culture of service", and highlights which its distinctive characteristics are:

a) A clear vision or concept of service;
b) Executives constantly teach what service is;
c) Managers adopt the idea that customers come first;
d) Quality service is expected from involved people;
e) Quality service is rewarded.

An example of the above, reported by Hellriegel & Slocum (2009), is the case of TDIndustries. The company has been practicing service leadership for over 25 years. TDIndustries is in the sector of mechanics, electricity, and plumbing, and its price is over 250 million dollars. It is continuously ranked in the top 100 best companies to work in the USA according to Fortune. The company has over 1500 employees, and many of them have been working for the company more than 10. Its president believes that the success of the company has to do with its mission, its culture, and service leadership practices. This "service leadership" means that everybody may become a leader if they first serve to others, and then, by their own decision, lead. This means that leaders (servers) are a coach for their employees (leaders) by serving them so that they can satisfy their needs. For instance, the president of TDIndustries, in his role of a server, picks up his own phone, does not have an exclusive space to park and works, as everybody else, in a 3 x 4 m booth.

The Internal Service Triangle

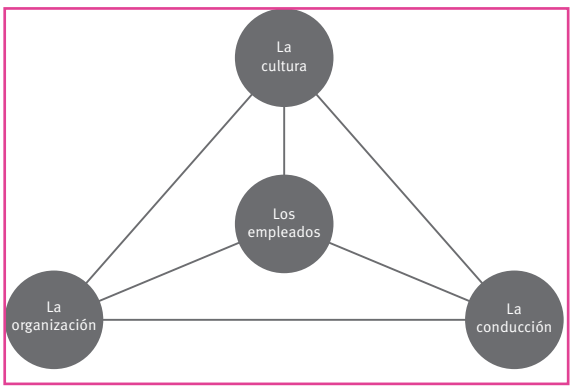
Albrecht (1992) proposes another guiding principle: the internal service triangle (figure 7), which represents a successful services organization, which has employees committed to service, and who make their own decisions based on three elements in their surroundings:

a) The organization's culture;

b) The department they work for;
c) The structure of the organization.

The internal service triangle suggests that the employee of an operational line needs the support of three sources: culture, leaders and structure, and the organization's systems. If all these elements are perfectly aligned supporting employees, they will give the best of them to provide services, either to external or internal customers.

FIGURE 7. The internal service triangle



Source: adaptado de Albrecht, 1992

With such vision in mind, in summary, the human organization places its reality, more than in a context of power relationships, duties, or positions, on a real context of real service towards the people one works with. Even the higher the position, more service must be provided as more internal customers are under our command.

Internal Customer Service as a Fostering Principle Within the Organization

Ginebra & Arana (1991) propose it is necessary to analyze the every-day of employees by asking them: everything you do, whom do you do it for? who buys it? Such questions place a different dimension to actions: it gives them the idea of "serving to…". That is the only link between daily activities and service: my work, my position has a purpose inasmuch as I serve through it and I get part of the external customer needs.

All of the above determines the change of the service relations. But changes are not easy. It is necessary to highlight that every single job position is justified by the existing relationship between people. Therefore, we are all someone else's customers, ad someone else's suppliers. This duality transforms attitudes and facilitates the new approach.

It is necessary to break fiefdoms, change the sense of authority, understand that it is no longer valid to make bosses happy, etc. changing the organization chart implies the boss is to serve the employee, to make their job easier. And the higher in the organization chart, the more important it is to serve, not because the boos "commands many" but because they "serve" many; that is the basic premise of a general manager.

Temple & Droege (1994) also highlight the importance of focusing on the idea to satisfy the needs of the "internal customer" to achieve changes within the organization, a position that has been confirmed by Schneider & Bowen (1993) when they state that it is not only necessary to pay attention to customers, but also to employees, since the internal environment of an organization is directly reflected in the external customers. They justify such an affirmation based on studies conducted in Sears, NCR, Ryder Truck, 30 banks in the Middle West of the USA, and in 200 stores of a large chain store, whose results showed there is a narrow relationship between the internal satisfaction of employees and their positive impact on external customers.

Two recent studies show that employees treat customers in the same way the organization treats them as employees. One of the studies collected information from 292 managers, 830 employees and 1772 bank customers in Japan. Researchers analyzed if companies that provided high performance labor practices, such as service training, sharing of information, self-administered equipment, and autonomous workers, had a better work environment to serve customers, and if such service environment was related to a better organizational performance. Results showed that practices that benefit employees favored a better performance through a positive environment for the customer service practice (Liao, Toya, Lepak & Hong, 2009).

The other study focused on internal "service"; i.e., the level in which employees believe their work units receive a good treatment from the organization as a whole. Over 600 employees of a financial services company in the Caribbean described internal service, and then collected data about quality from almost 2000 customers. Results showed that the service environment

was related in a more positive way to customers' satisfaction when internal service was high; meaning that, in a positive environment for service, customers are more satisfied, especially when the organization provides a positive internal service to its employees (Ehrhart, Witt, Scheider & Perry, 2011).

These ideas and results lead to conclude that a human organization driven to internal customer service has a higher possibility to foster innovations and to develop, as a result, its projects, plans, and strategies.

Fostering means, according to Dictionary.com (Retrieved in 2017), "to promote the growth or development of; further; encourage". Through service and service capacity addressed to internal customer, the aim is to increase the possibilities open to the organization such as making possible, facilitate, and foster the organization's capacity to serve; a capacity, indeed, inherent to humans, and that has to do with the need to be friendly.

Any human organization based on internal customer service, even without considering it in a systematic way, is a medium of relationships, Pérez López (2014, p. 65):

> We do know that spontaneous relationships between the production director and the sales director are really important at the moment of ensure a proper coordination between both functions in any company. If both directors are what we normally call "very good friends", the possibilities for any problems in the sales area are solved due to extraordinary efforts in the production area, and vice versa. All of that would mean an excellent coordination between both sources. If the relationships between both directors were the ones between enemies, the most probable thing is that the relationships between production and sales were a constant battlefield.

Friendly relationships between the members of a human organization can be tracked from ancient times. In the ancient Greek society, Aristotle used to say that "friendship is a virtue or is accompanied by a virtue and is, besides, the most necessary thing in life. Without Friends nobody would choose living, even if that person were greatly rich " (1973, p. 102). The same says about the need for concord and friendship between cities, bearing in mind that "the highest form of justice seems to be a friendly justice". And after that, Aristotle continues discussing the topic in reference to other communities and associations, which by being part of the "political community" he joins them in a form of friendship (Aristotle, 1973, p. 110).

Then, it is possible to say that service within an organization is addressed to the search for a good that human beings need. A good that in certain way fosters the capacities of everyone, and the organization itself as a set formed by those individuals. This refers, with no doubt, to what Juan Pablo II, quoted by Melé Carné (1992, p. 26), in which he mentions that a company "must be transformed in a life community, a place where man coexists with and relates to his fellow men; and a place where personal development is not only permitted but encouraged ".

A human organization addressed to internal customer service can find its dynamism in its service relationships between its members. The organization is then fostered, making it go from a context in which relationships are based on positions or duties, to a context more related to the human nature: a context supported by service relationships, relations in which the benefit of the counterpart is the one that matters, in which giving yourself is the source of creativity, innovation, responsibility, personal maturity, and, as a consequence, the maturity of the whole organization.

The aforementioned suits the tendency suggested by the humanistic approach of the new sensibility presented by Llano (1989, pp.154-155) when he refers to "ascending values within the company culture":

> Four are the purposes of a company: a) providing services to the social community; b) generating enough added economic value (benefit); c) providing its members personal satisfaction and human improvement, and d) achieving a capacity of auto-continuity or permanence.

As a conclusion

Nowadays, people are subject to constant stimuli through advertisement, mass media, social networks, and drawing their attention is an increasing challenge. Reducing customers' effort and generating expectations during service encounters becomes, therefore, in a vital labor, at a strategic level, within organizations. Without loyal and committed customers, the long-term vision of any company becomes a utopia. After developing the concept of experience between a customer and a service encounter, it is understood that for

such meeting to be positively remembered, the experience must involve sensorial, emotional, and tangible elements that make it possible. Thus, generating experiences is not a random activity, but a process that implies planning, organization, direction, and control.

The key players of this mission are the people who are involved, visibly or not, in each moment of truth. Therefore, having an organizational culture addressed to the generation of experiences, and not just to the mere fulfillment of a task, is key. Creating such culture addressed to service, implies aligning its members to a common objective, owned by all, integrated in their actions, and with a real sense: serving others. It is possible to say that the foregoing is a huge challenge, but at the same time, a transcendent objective, that enriches people and make them more integral in their being and way of acting.

Discussing topics related to the importance of people when delivering services, generating "service cultures" from a "service leadership" scheme is vital to structure the way of doing business nowadays. Even if proving this hypothesis in an empirical way means to get deeper in organizations aiming at such end, knowing their systemic structure, getting involved in their people processes and management, there are still cases, quoted above, (for instance, Sears, NCR, Ryder Truck, 30 banks in the Middle West of the USA), in which the concept of "mirror of satisfaction" is real. It means there is an inherent and direct relation between employees' satisfaction and customers' satisfaction, which generates loyalty behaviors among them, and the consequent profitability and growing of the organization. Employees' satisfaction has its origin in the "internal service quality", that covers their work design and the place it is performed, the selection and development of the people in those positions, the rewards and recognition, and the tools to serve customers, explained in the Service Profit Chain model, and builds retention and productivity. This is translated into the generation of a better "external service quality", and, therefore, into customers' satisfaction and loyalty (Heskett et al., 1994).

It is not a utopia to think that a value as service may be used in a positive way to generate a truthful mindset of concord, learning, and encouraging experiences between the customer and the supplier. A utopia would be not to try it. In a competitive world where free trade demands creativity and streamlines to engage customers and satisfy non-satisfied needs, it is necessary to re-invent the way organizations relate to their customers. Customers are "used" and manipulated to fall in the arms of a relationship in which the only important thing is to exchange goods. To overcome such situation, it is necessary to rescue noble and high values such as true service.

Thus, it is necessary to build and live a real service philosophy within organizations, since that is the "root of the organizational culture", and leave behind the belief that service is lived only through by implementing processes, and establishing the importance of nesting the noble cause of "serving others" within the organization structure.

What companies constantly do is to provide human beings the opportunity to work, and somehow, in an implicit manner, serve the society. By working, two levels, which enrich labor, can be experimented: every human work has an objective level and a subjective level. Regarding the objective level, it is possible to say that every single labor transforms the world, produces wealth and wellbeing, and is a setting to relate to other people. In summary, objective work means something tan-gible, measurable, palpable. But, at the same time, every single labor is subjective because it does not only transform the real world by adapting it to human needs, but the one who works fulfills as, grows as, and, in certain way, becomes more human (Burgos, 2003).

The one who serves both the internal and the external customer creates tangible wellbeing which is compensated. Thus, a benefit is received. That is the objective level of work. However, when a member of an organization offers a selfless, generous service, such service internally changes, modifies, enriches that who offers the service. That is the subjective level of work. Showing such genuine behavior, each employee "builds their own character, develops their specific virtues and aptitudes, learns to coexist and cooperate with others, contributes to the wellbeing of society, etc." (Burgos, 2003, p. 267).

Internal customer service, as a driving principle of an organization -it may be concluded- impacts in a concrete manner both the objective and subjective dimensions, but above all, provides the necessary equilibrium: objectiveness is not above subjectiveness, and vice versa. It is necessary to produce and generate wealth, but it is also necessary to ensure each worker learns to be a better person by serving others -both the external and the internal customer- in a genuine manner.

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