



Harnessing Organizational Frontlines for Effective Customer Connectivity

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The Paradox of Organizational Frontlines



Wiring Organizations for Customer Connectivity

Breakages, Short-circuits, & Trips are Common

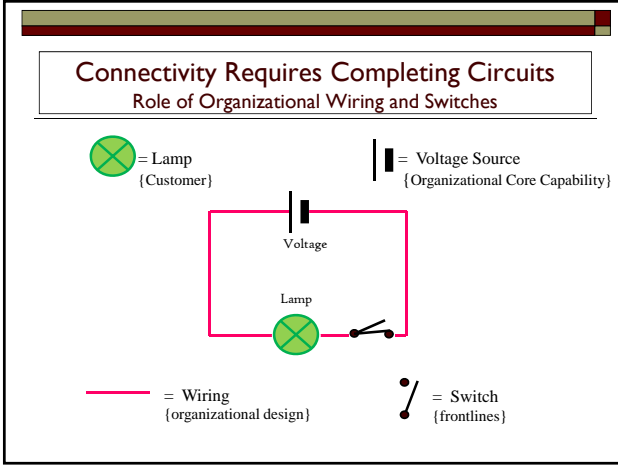


Paul English (GetHuman, 2005)
 Frustrated by automated voice systems
 Cheat sheet for 10 most frustrating firms
 Invited consumers to add bypass tips
 Gethuman.com grows to tips for 959 firms

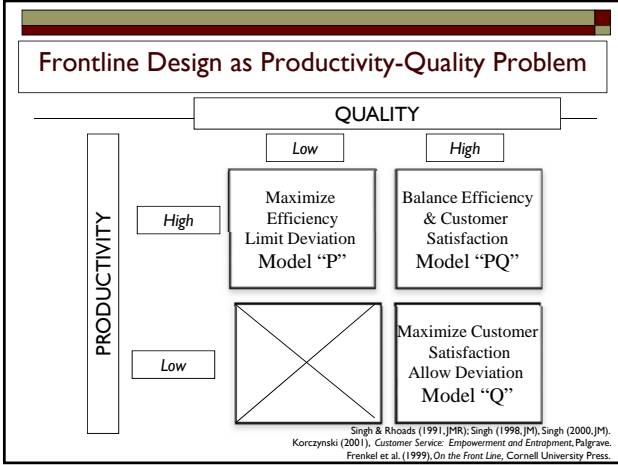
Mona Shaw (75 years old, fine \$345, 2007)

- Aug 13: No show for Comcast install (phone+cable+internet)
- Aug 15: Install started but not completed (third party involved)
- Aug 16: Phone disconnected (to change #)
- Aug 17: Mona goes to local Comcast office to report problem
- Aug 20: Getting no response, Mona slips her husband's hammer in her purse & walks into Comcast office . She destroys several office computers & a phone.

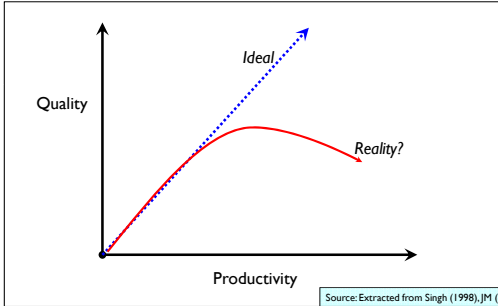




- ### What are the challenges of frontline design (wiring)? How can organizations achieve frontline effectiveness?
- Marketing Institute Funded Studies (1987-1995)
 - *Frontline Employees in Call Centers of US Financial Service Firms*
 - *Customer Service Reps in US & Dutch Industrial Companies*
 - Research Design
 - *Qualitative In-field Observation and Interview*
 - *Quantitative Large Scale Survey*
 - *Grounded Measurement and Competing Model Analysis*
 - Theoretical Approach
 - *Job Design Research (Hackman and Oldham 1976; House 1971)*
 - *Role Theory (Kahn et al. 1964)*
 - *Stress & Activation Research (Seyle 1964; Karasek 1982)*

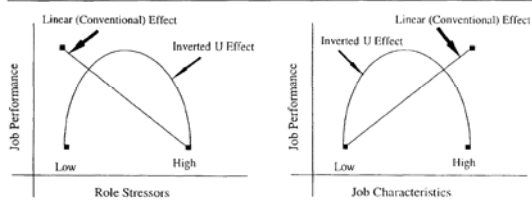


The Reality of Frontline Productivity & Quality A Paradox of Focus



Source: Extracted from Singh (1998), JM (80): 69-86

Stress without Distress: Frontline Design for PQ Model Selye's Experiments of Eustress (1955, 1974)



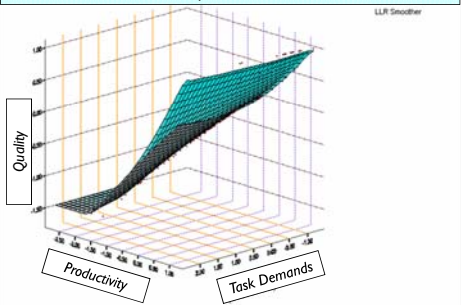
A. Job performance is at the optimal level when role stressors are (1) low for the linear hypothesis and (2) at a moderate level for the curvilinear model.

B. Job performance is at the optimal level when job characteristics are (1) high for the linear hypothesis and (2) at a moderate level for the curvilinear model.

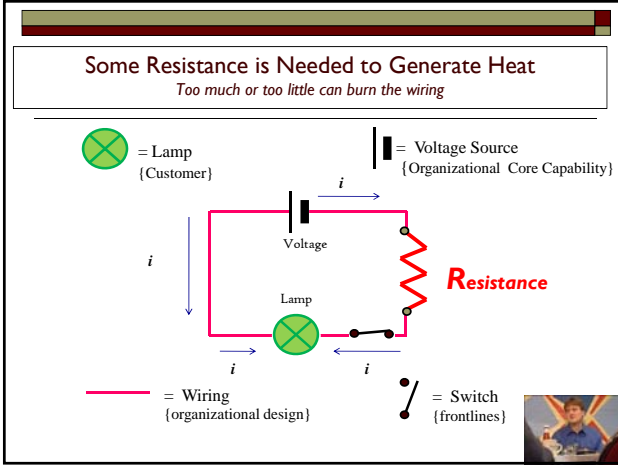
Source: Extracted from Singh (1998), JM (80): 69-86

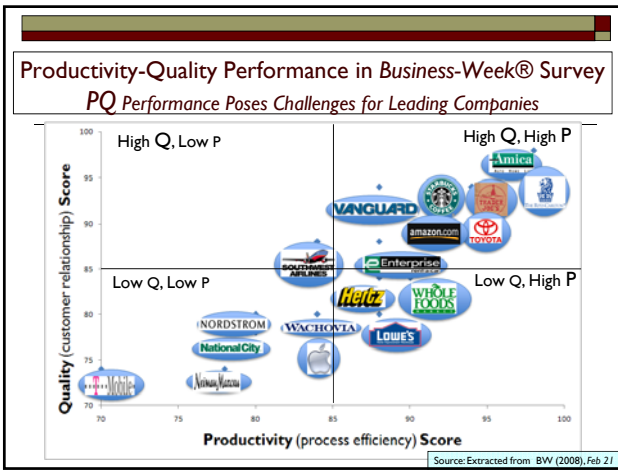
Productivity & Quality High for Intermediate Level of Task Demands

Customer Contact Reps – Financial Services Nationwide Sample; 182 CSRs & 177 BCRs



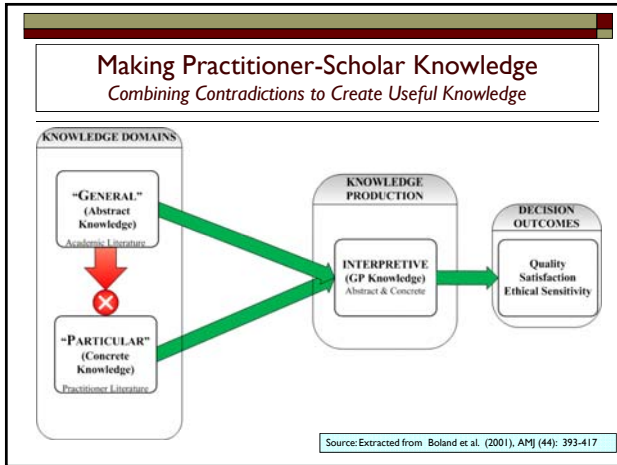
Source: Extracted from Singh & Rhoads (1991) JMR & Singh (2000), JM (64): 15-34

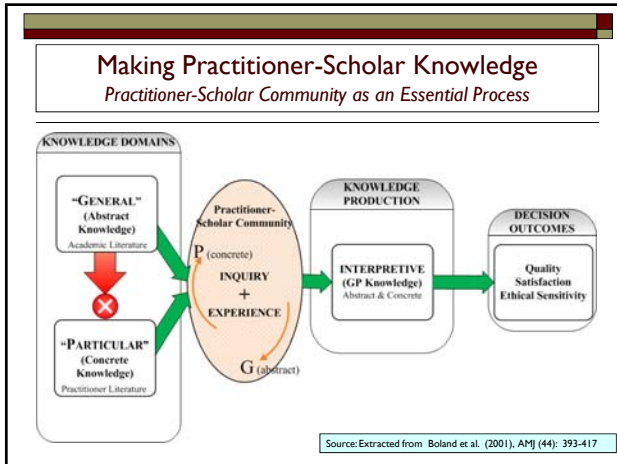




Wiring a Practitioner-Scholar Program

EXECUTIVE DOCTOR OF MANAGEMENT
 The Executive Doctor of Management (EDM) Program, offered by the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, is a unique program that integrates research and practice.





- ### Do frontlines produce “new” PQ knowledge? Can frontline knowledge be captured? Is it useful?
- National Science Foundation Funded studies (2000-2006)
 - Frontline employees in not-for-profit health centers
 - Solving productivity-quality challenges in health care delivery
 - Research Design
 - Qualitative in-field observation and interview
 - Quantitative large scale, multi-level survey
 - Independent outcome assessment (e.g., financial, customer satisfaction)
 - Theoretical Approach
 - Pragmatic Learning Theory (Dewey 1910; Nonaka 1994; Elkjaer 2004)
 - Dynamic Capabilities (Eisenhardt & Martin 2000; Teece et al. 1994)

Fueling a "Bottom-up" Learning Generator in the Organizational Frontlines

A learning "generator" community is fueled by...

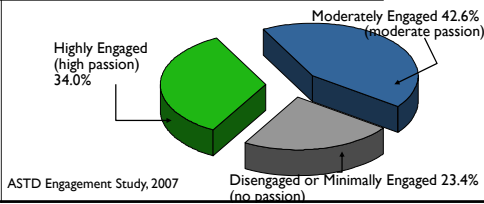
"Groups of people who share a passion for something that they know how to do... interact on a regular basis to learn how to do it better."

- Etienne Wenger

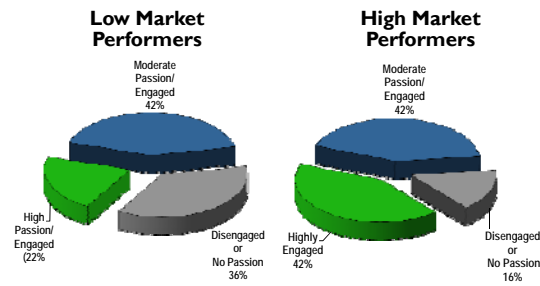
Organizational Frontlines are Devoid of Passion *And they don't seem to be getting better with experience.*

According to Gallup's findings from a Q¹² survey of 700,000+ employees, 70% lack passion for their job ("not engaged") and "the longer employees stay with an organization, the less engaged they become."

Gallup (2006), "The Four Disciplines of Sustainable Growth," <http://gmj.gallup.com>



...But Passion Matters for Market Performance



**What is passion and can it be measured?
How & when does passion mobilize individual action?**

- Sponsored Studies (2005-date)
 - *Entrepreneurs (Weatherhead 100)*
 - *1000+ Retail Managers in U.S. Pharmacy Stores*
 - *500+ Industrial Salespeople in U.S. Companies*
- Research Design
 - *In-field Observation and Personal Interview*
 - *Theory Building using Hermeneutical Approaches*
 - *Quantitative Large Scale Survey + Financial/Customer Metrics*
- Theory
 - *Passions and Reasons (Spinoza 1677/1833; Descartes 1649/2003)*
 - *Emotions and Feelings (Damasio 1999; Pinkerton 1997; Frijda 2000)*
 - *Self Regulation of Action and Emotion (Gross 1999)*

Source: Extracted from Cardon et al (2009) AMR: 34

Passion is...

- intensely positive feelings
- resulting from engagement in activities
- that have identity meaning for the individual (e.g., *I connect with customers*)
- & activate coherent and coordinated action for goal pursuit,
- but is not always functional and
- often a process of discovery.

Source: Extracted from Cardon et al (2009) AMR: 34

Frontline Passion Mobilizes Energy to Cope with Challenging Demands for High PQ Performance

Industrial Salespeople – SIC Codes 12-39
Nationwide Sample; 344 Salespeople; Replication with CSRs

Source: Sohi & Singh (2009), WFP

