



Chapter 4: Human resources strategy: capacities and attitudes required in knowledge service workers

Maturity thinking or to be mature in business, is a state of mind above all. If an industry is known as being matured, it is because the way of thinking it is trapped in its obsolescent knowledge. Common wise or Status Quo supposes thus a barrier to escape from that obsolescence knowledge, because the way they used to do things it may no longer be a guarantee of success.

In Hospitality Collective Management, service employees and back office employees are seen as knowledge workers. I do admit it is very difficult to sustain that degree of responsibility in all people; certainly there may be persons who do not feel comfortable within higher levels of responsibility. Abraham Maslow reflected himself and doubted about how many people or what proportion or working population would actually prefer to participate in management decisions, and how many would prefer not to have anything to do with them. But he was sure, above all, that human beings would prefer a meaningful work to meaningless work. He also said that, if work is meaningless, then life too comes close to being meaningless.

I am not sure what is thought to be a meaningless work in any specific developing country –I have worked in developing countries and treated employees the same

way as in developed ones. However, I am sure that, up to a point of culture development, meaningful work means more than limiting responsibilities, or more than just being there obeying orders, unable to grow together with the organization.

Collective management though sees and seeks for knowledge employees, together with management and proper leadership. I am not talking about super-heroes and super-women. I am talking about just the normal-and-right people to fit in.

What is a knowledge employee?

In my opinion a knowledge employee does not necessarily need to have an MBA, or even a Bachelor's degree. I do not share the elitist way of seeing knowledge in such way though I certainly do not undervalue this knowledge. What I do see is that every worker, even without an educational career, could be the right person for our purposes. Of course I agree that adequate professional education and training it is very positive to any hospitality employee.

What a knowledge service worker means is an operative worker –bottom line, an expert in his job.



Service workers such receptionists, bar attendants, housekeeping maids, and service waitresses...they all could be potential candidates for knowledge service workers, if getting closer to the proper attitudes and aptitudes, although in their limited spheres of responsibility.

A Knowledge employee in Collective Management then should have or be close to having the following aptitudes and capabilities:

1-An attitude to learn constantly.

It is the base of a Socratic thinking; to be aware that you won't be able to know everything, but you should always seek for knowledge through constant learning. Learning happens all of the times when you are working with the proper attitude. Apprenticeship happens when we are able to question our mind-sets and used theories. It requires enough humility to learn although we may be experts in what we are doing.

2-To be a reflective person when working.

More than 2000 years ago the great Confucius, a Chinese philosopher, teacher and political assessor enhanced work, and made us aware that working without reflecting was a waste of energy and would not contribute to knowledge. The Japanese call it *Hansei* and implemented it as a job responsibility to assembly workers. It means that, when working, we should be trained, and have the proper attitude to get to the root in job problems, and constantly question how are we doing things working.

3-To be flexible.

Like bamboo, it means being able to bend but not to break. To be flexible doesn't suppose renouncing to self-principles, but to accept other points of view, and self-adapt to new situations. A flexible employee or manager normally sees things with a wider perspective as a consequence of having more information from the Top. If our vision is to provide constant value to guest, an attitude of flexibility is really necessary, since both the customers and the context change continuously.

4-To have humility.

It was attributed to King Solomon the saying that, there where arrogance and haughtiness appeared, much ignorance happened. To be humble means to be able to listen carefully, to respect another's opinions even if those differ from ours. As we have said before, there is not deep learning without humility. It was the great psychoanalyst and philosopher, Erich Fromm who said in his book *The Art of loving* that being objective meant to use self-reasoning, and that would only be possible with the proper humble attitude.

5-Ability to work as a part of a team.

It means that such person commits with the value of solidarity and what means truly teamwork. He or she will prioritize in work purposes and objectives. To fit in a team means to be able to support others, not to think in the self but also toward the team. Not everyone is capable of working in a team. Proper attitudes are needed such as humility, sense of community, sincerity, and willingness to accept other opinions or mind sets, even if those differ from ours.



Contrary to these values, selfishness, narcissism, or the Ego person, won't fit in our vision of what a team should be.

6-To have self-confidence.

Up to a point of professional expertise, self-confidence arrives naturally. It is very important since being humble is not enough if self-confidence does not fulfil the other part of the balance. We will search for people with good expertise, capable of analysing the job and contributing to its improvement. Thus, having self-confidence in the own professional capacities makes a good base to start for being a knowledge service worker. Paradoxically, only the person with enough self-confidence is more apt to develop its opposite: humility. A person with self-confidence and humility has the ability to work without professional biases, certainties and prejudices.

7-To be committed.

To be committed to the company mission, vision, values, culture, and business objectives... Such a person gets his commitment from within. Motivation is a final stage that someone might or might not have. There are many forms of motivation or different ways to be motivated, but what matters here is a more powerful motivation which comes from inside every worker, since the atmosphere that management has produced should produce this fact.

8-To be sincere.

First, be honest with yourself. And this is the hardest part, since such discipline implies self-knowledge. If this discipline is not possible for all of us, at least -as Erich Fromm reminded us, being able to reflect on how we do things and how our behaviour is

doing. How authentic can we be? Of course, to be honest with your team colleagues, with your manager, with company values...

Are these attitudes and capacities very idealistic, thus unable to accomplish in a big organization? No doubt that, not all people would fit into these parameters, however, if we start a company with these guiding principles, with Top Management first example, defending, promoting and evaluating toward these guiding principles, we may have many workers approaching that level. We should take these principles as a final goal to pursue in order to have fulfilled knowledge service workers. Human Resources though should be totally aligned with top management and middle management to make this goal possible.

