

Frontline Employee Inspiration: How Inspired Frontline Employees Impact Customers during Service Encounters

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Abstract

Although the service and marketing literature has extensively studied the link between established employee and customer constructs (e.g., employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction), empirical research has yet to investigate the link between employee inspiration and customer-level outcomes during service encounters. Indeed, extensive research in social psychology suggests that feeling inspired makes individuals more efficient, creative, and positively minded—all of which are key competences that frontline employees (FLE) need to interact with customers successfully. Drawing on an experimental study with 231 customers, we show that FLE inspiration positively affects customer attitudes and behaviors. We extend previous work on FLE and customer behavior, by proposing inspiration contagion between FLEs and customers as a new mechanism in the service marketing literature. Our research also contributes to service management by highlighting alternative ways to motivate FLE to bring their best to service encounters every day.

Keywords: *Inspiration; Frontline Employees; Inspiration Contagion*

Track: Retailing & Omni-Channel Management