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IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT: THE ART OF SELF-SELLING TO IMPROVE SUBORDINATES COMPLIANCE IN WORK CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the intricate nature of impression management as an art of self-selling to improve on subordinates compliance in the workplace. The paper holds that the workplace is a social context inhabiting a broad spectrum of relationships between and among managers and subordinates, which tend to determine the form and nature of outcomes in the workplace. The paper theoretically examined the nexus involved, and suggested downward impression management through ingratiation, exemplification and self-promotion as means of improving the charisma that manager needs to drive the necessary subordinate compliance in the workplace.

KEYWORDS: Impression Management, Self-Selling, Subordinate Compliance, Political behavior and Work Context.

INTRODUCTION

The management of the human's effort in the context of work is one of the most challenging responsibilities of managers. The challenge arises from the difficulty to have accurate and reliable understanding of man. In some ways, the processes of understanding of man are often marred by the dynamic nature of man's socio-psychological existence. This is often summarized in the expression that, "man is a minding animal". Considering this, the challenge of making gainful use of man at work spring from difficult of understanding the mechanism of his mind (Katz & Kahn, 1978, and Ferrari, 1991).

However, there are a plethora of theoretical, philosophical and research attempts to explain gainful workers' disposition that contributes to workplace productivity. For instance such criterion organizational values embedded in the workers organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, pre-social behavior, employee involvement etc are largely triggered by inter personal stimulants identified in the personality traits of the manager. In this regards, studies have shown that the ability of the manager to deal with the self to stimulate subordinates appeal is a necessary capability to attract compliance.

This managers' impression management to enhance self-selling helps to make-up the managers' self-worth that becomes a social asset in his everyday interaction with his subordinates (Batman & Ogan, 1983). This is achieved through ingratiation, self-promotion and exemplification that may be demonstrated through verbal and non-verbal tactics. In this paper, impression management has been discussed as an art of self selling to improve on subordinate compliance to their

managers. The paper concludes that impression management as an art of self-selling is a political behaviour necessary to improve the manager's appealing capacity to enhance workers' compliance.

Previous research on Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) suggests that employees who engage in such behaviour are "good soldiers" acting selflessly on behalf of their organizations (Tang & Ibrahim, 1998; Smith & Near, 1983; and Sullivan 2004). However, such behaviours also may be impression enhancing and self-serving. Impression management concerns may motivate citizenship behariour and address the consequences of citizenship in this context, as well as the interaction of impression- management motives with motives identified in previous research on citizenship (Ogan, 1990; Ogan & Konovsky, 1989; Jones & Pitman, 1982; and Coleman & Borman, 2000).

CONCEPT OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

While little children are taught not to tell lies, as they age, they learn that instances arise when not exposing the entire truth might be advantageous. Impression management is the act of slightly bending the truth so as to ensure that others are not harmed or insulted by your statements as well as to make yourself appear in the best possible light. Through the use of impression management, you can control how others perceive you. Effective impression management is useful both in professional and in social situations (http://www.ehow.com2012).

However, the sociologist Erving Goffman is often described as the founder of the theory of impression management. The sociologist, Goffman (1959) was the first to look at impression management as an object field of study.

He defined the concept of impression management as the idea that people consciously manage the impressions they convey to others in interpersonal interactions. Goffman believed that people would make conscious decisions about the appropriate role to play or the appropriate part of themselves to display in interactions. According to Goffman, actors also constantly manipulate their behavior; because they are always aware of the way that their behavior can be interpreted and the way others can view them. Their relationships to others can be important also in determining the facet of their identify they wish to portray.

Metts and Grohskopf (2003) summarize impression management and self-presentation quite well by stating, "selfp resentation refers to the process by which individuals, more or less intentionally, construct a public self that is likely to elicit certain types of attributions from others, attributions that would facilitates the achievement of some goals, usually to acquire social rewards or advantages or to prevent loss of self-esteem when future failure seems probable".

The concept of carefully communicating information about ourselves and managing the information others receive about us has inspired a significant amount of work in the area of social psychology. Jones was a leader in conducting experimental research focused on impression management or self-presentation. Jones and Pitman (1982) define selfpresentation as, "an actor's shaping of his or her responses to create in specific others an impression that is for one reason or another desired by the actor". In some ways, impression management could be viewed as strategic self- disclosure, as individuals make careful considerations about what information they should share about themselves in specific contexts, based on the. audience present and the goals that the individual has in interacting with that person. Jones and Pittman outline five major strategies by the desired impression of the actor.

According to Chenjing (2010), the term "impression management" is usually used interchangeably with "selfpresentation". Self-presentation as conceptualized here builds on Goffman's (1959) theories of identity and social performance. Goffman's thesis states that self-presentation is the intentional and tangible components of identity. Social actors engage in complex intra-seif-negotiations to project a desired impression. This impression is maintained through consistently performing coherent and complementary behaviours. Chenjing (2010) terms this process impression management. Impression management refers to the process of influencing the impression an audience forms about oneself. Other people's perceptions of us play a significant role in our lives; they influence our relationship, shaping the rewards we receive. He stated that virtually everyone thinks about other people's impression of him or her from time to time and some people worry a great deal about how others regard them. Our daily behavior is more or less, deeply influenced by impression management. Impression management holds various applications in social behavior; as well as many factors that have been hypothesized to relate to it.

Chenjing (2010) also conceptualized a model to explain the motivation and style that people manage their public image. The three-stage model introduced two components would be considered in the integrated impression management process: impression motivation arid impression construction, and they are discrete but interrelated. O'Sullivan (2000) developed an impression management model to outline the

functional and strategic role of communication choice in social relationships.

Chenjing from Mnooking study of online impression management in her online community study stated that impression 'need not in any way correspond to a person's real life identity; people can make and remake themselves, choosing their gender and the details of their online presentation'. He observed that researchers also believe that certain social and material goals push people to manage impression in the real world, such as securing a job at an interview or attracting someone enough to get a date, development of identity and maintenance of self-esteem. While in the online world, researchers have examined the online impression management motivation to include a desire to build up relationships, express unexplored parts of identity or aspects that are inhibited in face-to-face interactions. That people are driven more by this desire to develop identity than a wish to deceive or manipulate. And these goals appear to be self-acknowledge. The high degree of freedom in online community gives users the opportunities of alternative presentations.

Further studies reported that misrepresentations were more likely online than offline and were most often related to physical appearance and age. Some of the scholars noted that impression management online offered opportunities are present highly desirable self-image and provided a chance for wish-fulfillment. Studies have shown that people, who have social anxiety in real life, will be more likely to manage their desirable impression online to make up for their dissatisfied impression in offline world.

Consequently, from the sociologists and social psychologist, the subject came under the attention of scholars in organizational behaviour. In contemporary organizations, impressions play an important role. For example: applicants try to make a good first impression at a job interview, salesmen must make a trustable impression to sell products, managers, must look like they are in control, boundary spanning personnel must represent their company, and consultants are strongly concerned with an image of rationalism and professionalism. The importance of impressions for different people in an organization draws attention to the manageability of these impressions. Several researchers (Jones and Pittman, 1982; Wayne and Ferris, 1990) identified important tactics of impression management and demonstrated that the use of these tactics can be beneficial to the actor in a wide variety of situations (Stevens and Kristof, 1995; Wayne and Ferris, 1990; Wayne and Liden, 1995; Higgins, and Ferris, 2003).

Impression management is a goal-directed conscious or unconscious process in which people attempt to influence the perceptions of others people about a person, object or event; they do so by regulating and controlling information in social interaction (Piwinger and Ebert 2001, Pp 1-2). It is usually used synonymously with self-presentation, in which a person tries to influence the perception of their image.

Similarly, it is commonly accepted that individuals in organizations use impression management tactics to control the information available to others about themselves in order to control the image presented. In recent years, more and more research attention has been placed on how (i.e, what tactics are used) individuals can manager or manipulate the impressions others hold of them (Kurmar and Bayerlein, 1991; Schriesheim and Hinkin, 1990; Yaki and Falbe, 1990).

Consequently, supervisors or superiors focus on impression management tactics when dealing with subordinates. Research on downward impression management has become even more critical with the introduction of 360 degree performance appraisal systems. That is, managers can use impression management tactics to help insure that their subordinates view them as competent and proficient in their jobs in order to guarantee strong, positive subordinate evaluations (Tukc and Falbe, 1990).

Further, when managers have the respect and admiration of their subordinates, they enjoy more degrees of freedom when attempting to get subordinates to perform needed tasks (Podsakoff and Schnesheim, 1985; Witt, 1995; Yukl, 1989). For example, if a manager needs a subordinate to move up a deadline, he or she could request it as a personal favor, but only if the subordinate holds a positive impression 'of the supervisor.

Furthermore, impression management (TM) has been defined as an attempt by individuals to control the image they project in social interactions (Schienker, 1980). The goal of TM is to manage the impressions of specific targets by manipulating the information available to them on which their impressionsare based (Schneider, 1981). The influence process can be accomplished in a variety of ways such as the impression manager highlighting his or her positive qualities (i.e. self-promotion) or offering oneself as a role model (i.e. exemplification).

However, managers may use IM tactics as a means of increasing their subordinates respect and liking for them. This increase in respect and liking also may be reflected in the subordinate's view of the manager's credibility and ability. A high level of credibility or ability attributed to the manager may in turn increase the subordinate's acceptance of the feedback provided by the manager (Ilgen et al. 1979).

(Ilgen et al, 1979). TYPES OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Impression management concerns an extremely broad range of behavior, ranging from small things like choosing the music one listens, to straightforward bragging about one's performances. Research and theorizing into the use and effect of impression management behavior has largely dealt with only a part of the whole range of possible behaviors. In organizational settings, especially a limited number of verbal impression management behaviors have been researched. In order to be able to isolate and investigate specific forms of impression management behavior, several dysfunctions and taxonomies have been made. A first distinction can be made between verbal and non-verbal tactics.

Non-Verbal Tactics

Non-verbal impression management can be split up between the displaying of artifacts and expressive behaviors (Schneider, 1981). Artifacts can be explicitly designed to represent a certain status or past performance. Examples of these are uniforms and medals. They can also implicitly limit at values, a person has, or social categories a person belongs to. For example, offices and even bedrooms can be decorated to display a certain image to visitors (Gosling et al, 2002) and many commercials are based on the implicit link people have between certain products and a desired image.

Similarly, handshaking, frowns, eye contact, and smiles are examples of expressive behavior. They are demonstrated to be' perceived by others at least a momentary moods and feelings of the actor and they may even be taken as evidence of personal dispositions (Schneider, 1981).

Verbal Tactics

Verbal impression management has often been split up between protective tactics and acquisitive tactics. Protective tactics are used in response to poor performances, while acquisitive tactics have the purpose of establishing a certain identity (Tedesehi and Melburg, 1984). Protective tactics are usually applied for cowing predicaments.

However, acquisitive impression management differs from protective tactics in that it is not only aimed at saving face after predicaments but at actively creating a specific image. Acquisitive tactics have mainly been distinguished by the purpose they serve. A first distinction has been made between ingratiation on the one hand and self-promotion on the other. The ingratiatory has the purpose of being liked or seen as attractive while the self- promoter wants to be seen as competent (Godfrey et al, 1986; Jones and Pittman, 1982).

Consequently, TM behavior often is a mix of verbal as well as non-verbal behavior. A client, entering a professionally decorated office of a business partner, may encounter a person wearing an expensive business suit who smilingly shakes his hand while making him a compliment.

DIMENSIONS OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

According to Shou (2010), the dimensions of impression management can be obtained from three sources. The first source is the impression management taxonomy proposed by Jones and Pittman (1982) which includes five tactics (ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication). The scale was developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999) and has been widely used and validated (Bolino and Turnley, 1999, Kacmar, Harris and Nagy, 2007) in a Western context. The second source is assertive versus defensive impression management tactics (Tetlock and Manstead,1985). The third source is other (supervisor) focused versus self (job)-focused tactics (Fletcher, 1989, Stevens and Kirstof, 1995; Wayne and Ferries, 1990). This study will only focus on the five tactics (the taxonomy proposed by Jones and Pittman 1982).

Ingratiation

The first strategy is ingratiation, which can be shown when the individual is driven by the concern that others like him or her. Ingratiation is the most theoretically developed of the strategies identified by Jones and Pittman (1982). Ingratiation strategies can be driven by a number of goals and motivations, but is largely determined by the time, the place, and the nature of the relationship. For example, if the selfpresence is of higher status than their target, then he or she may use flattery as a strategy. Ingratiation is also driven by three major attraction seeking behaviours. The first is incentive value or why it would be important for the communicator to be liked by the particular target. Power is also an important determinant of incentive value. If the target has some sort of incentive power over the self- presence, then there is more reason for the self-presenter to insure liking from the target. Subjective probability is the second of the three determinants.

Basically, subjective probability is the likelihood that a particular strategy will be successful on the intended target. This is especially important, because if the strategy backfires on the self-presenter, there could be significant implications for the self-presenter, based on whether or not the target has power over the self-presenter. The final of the three determinants is perceived legitimacy. Perceived legitimacy is

related to the consistency of the self-presenter's strategies with his or her true self and how appropriate the strategies used is given the specific situation. If likability was the goal of the self-presenter, ingratiation strategies are likely to be used.

The tactic of ingratiation is a set of linked acquisitive impression management tactics that have as their shared goal making the individual more liked and attractive to others. It could in other words also be called "attraction management". The task and challenge of the ingratiatory is to find out what the audiences finds attractive in and individual and then provide it to them (Schlenker, 1980). In today's dynamic organization it can be said that ingratiation is a common element.

Furthermore, Jones identified four tactics that the actor can use to ingratiate him/herself with the target: self-enhancement, other-enhancement, opinion conformity and favor doing. The type of ingratiation to be taken will depend in a complex manner on the nature of the setting and the resources available to the ingratiatory (Jones and Pittman, 1982)

Self-enhancement is the tactic whereby directly using acquisitive, impression management strategy one makes oneself be seen as more attractive (Schlenker, 1980). Other enhancement, this ingratiation strategy is all about flattering and complimenting the target audience. The principle that guides and supports this tactics is that we tend to like others who supply us with positive compliments (Tedeschi and Riess, 1981).

Opinion conformity, the individual that engages in opinion conformity does so to achieve an increase in the target's attraction towards' him or her (Tedeschi and Riess, 1981). Favor- doing, the principle behind this tactic is that 'people who do nice things are likely to be considered as caring, friendly and considerate.

Self-Promotion

Self-promotion is the desire to be seen as competent. In an earlier version of this typology, self-promotion had been included with ingratiation, but upon further review, Jones and Pittman (1982) felt that self-promotion needed its own' classification. Self- promotion can merge qualities of both ingratiation and intimidation. The self-promoter wants to be seen as competent. This can either be on general ability dimensions, for example intelligence, or on specific skills, like playing the piano (Rosefeld et al, 1995).

Godfrey et al., (1986) found that self- promotion is a more proactive process than ingratiation which is relatively reacts to the responses of the target by means of nodding, smiling and agreeing. Self-promoters on the other hand, cannot afford to be too reactive because they must make claims about their own competence or find away to somehow display their competence to the target.

However, self-promotion may seen in first instance another form of ingratiation, but the self-promoter wants to use the self descriptive communication to be seen as competent instead of as likeable. Aggressive and successful self-promotion has the risk of causing others to feel jealous. Godfrey et al, (1986) argue that it is actually easier to be an ingratiation is more a relative process. The individual using ingratiation can react to the target by engaging in nonverbal positive actions such as smiling or nodding. While the self-promoter has to actively say things to show the competence or at feast undertake actions so that the competence in displayed to the target. The occurrences of self- promotion

increases when individual have the opportunity to openly impress someone with a higher status about their competence (Giacalone and Rosenfeld, 1986).

Exemplification

One of the piece of the typology is exemplification, which means that the self-presenter wants to be idealized by the target projecting, "integrity and moral worthiness" (Jones and Pittman, 1982). Those attempting to use exemplification want to be seen as "honest, disciplined, charitable, and self-abnegating". The exemplifier wants to be admired and respected for his integrity and moral decency. They want to be seen as' disciplined, honest and charitable (Rosenfeld et al, 1995). The exemplifier is the boss who turns up early at work hand leaves late or the colleague that never takes up holidays. These individuals are willing to suffer to help others but in reality also attempt to make others feel guilty because they are not acting in a same morally and integer manner (Jones and Pittman, 1982).

Similarly exemplification constitutes managing the impressions of integrity, self-sacrifice, and moral worthiness (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Exemplifiers let others know that they work hard and engage in self-sacrifice, but with this behavior, they take the risk that others view them as arrogant or even hypocrite (Gilbert and Jones, 1986; Rosenfeld et al, 1995; McFarland et al, 2003). Exemplifiers are more likely to be seen as dedicated and are unlikely to be perceived as lazy by peers, since exemplifiers work harder and are more committed when others pay attention to them (Turnley and Bolino 2001). He wants to be seen as disciplined, honest and charitable. To be effective at this strategy the individual must actually be an exemplar of morality (Rosenfeld et al, 1995, p. 54)

However, ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification are all tactics employed by people who want to make a positive impression on others.

CONCLUSION

The paper contended the impression management is a veritable political behavior necessary to improve the bridging and bonding capacity of managers with their subordinates, whereas the bridging helps to attract subordinates to their managers, bonding helps to sustain the manager-subordinate relationship. The paper also holds that motivation through pay, promotion, incentives and other favourable conditions of service is inadequate to make care of the intricacies embedded in the person conduction the motivation process. As such, the manager's self-appeal through impression management takes care of charismatic influence expectedly embedded in the manager's personage. Thus, when compliment with attractive pay, promotion, favourable policies and competitive condition of service, subordinates compliance is enhanced and subordinates motivation is gainfully achieved.

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