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Published: 04/05/2011

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Publication record in CityU Scholars:
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Download date: 05/08/2019
MANAGING EMPLOYEE INTERACTIONS IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICE FIRMS

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Management in Professional Service Firms (PSFs)

Different from traditional management
- Major production factor:
  - Knowledge
  - Physical product

How to manage knowledge workers in PSFs?
PSFs are characterized by
- Knowledge-intensive work
- Frequent customer interactions

Workers are highly discretionary

Focused on facilitating knowledge sharing and knowledge creation
RESEARCH QUESTION

How are employees’ interaction manners managed to generate profits in PSFs?

Especially significant for one type of PSFs that has been under-researched:

- Public Relations (PR) firms
RESEARCH FOCUS

- Exploratory in nature
  - The *types* of interactions in PR firms
  - The *nature* of those interactions
  - The *impact* of those interactions on firm performance
  - *Managerial interventions* governing the interactions
RESEARCH DESIGN

- Participant Observation
  - Being analyzed

- Qualitative Interviews
  - To be conducted

- Case Studies
RESEARCH CONTEXT

- **PR** → manage the communication between an organization and its publics

- Focus on **outcome** (effect), but not output

- Ultimate objectives:
  - sending the right messages to the public
  - changing the public’s perspectives
  - → raise the clients’ brand image

- Main asset of PR firms: **People** and **networking**
PR WORK

- Protect client’s interests
- Develop tailor-made strategic plans
- Understand and familiar with the current trend and issues
- Aware of competitors’ news
- Liaise with various parties, such as key of opinion leaders, hotel sales, production house, media
- Organize appropriate activities or events
SIGNIFICANCE OF INTERACTIONS

- **Clients**: well handle the clients’ expectation.
  - X guarantee any unrealistic output
- **Vendors**: bargain for the best services qualities with the lowest cost
  - X disclosing unnecessary client’s information
- **Media**: deliver key messages
  - X wrong messages / data
- **Colleagues**: maintain good teamwork
  - X violating each others’ interests
- **Every parties could be good news sources!**

*Dr Eddie Law & Ms Nicole Ng, 6th ASAHK, 4 May 2011*
MANAGERIAL INTERVENTIONS

- Interaction skills represent the core professionalism of PR workers.
- Managerial interventions help PR workers to learn the appropriate interaction manners
  - E.g. phone / email manner
  - E.g. confidential content
- \( \rightarrow \) improvisational skill
- \( \rightarrow \) factual knowledge
CONTRIBUTIONS

- Further opening the black-box of managing knowledge workers/PSFs
- Illustrating the significance of managing interactions in PSFs
- Offering theoretical and practical guidance on managing interactions
- Exploring PR firms as one research context of PSFs
CONCLUSION

- To be continued...
- Specific features of PR firms
- Understand more about HRM in PSFs
THE END

Questions & Comments
Thank you!