

From Stravinsky to Starbucks: Learning From Classical Music to Create Better Service Experiences

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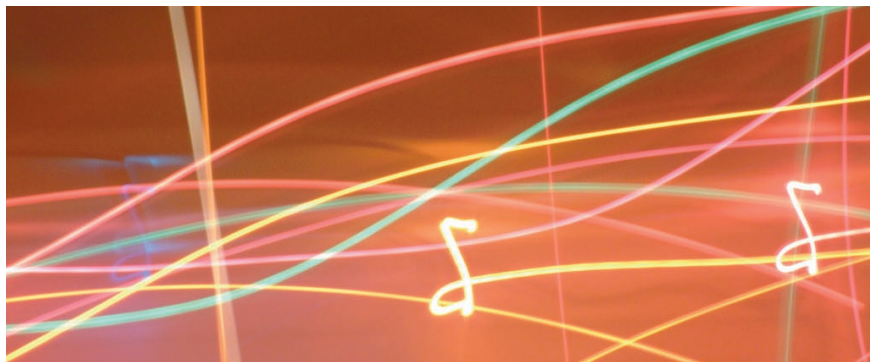
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ABSTRACT

As a relatively new discipline, service design has a lot to learn from various fields that have well-established histories. This paper will explore the field of classical music and draw aspects from it that are useful in thinking about service design. Themes will also be drawn from music in an attempt to provide applicable approaches to service design. The topics that will be paralleled in this paper are the following: how services can be thought of as performances, how the roles inherent to music find similarities to roles defined in service design, and how music notation systems are essential in connecting different music roles together and why service design should adopt a notation system of its own.



A BACKGROUND ON SERVICES

We live and breathe services. From the minute we wake up in the morning, to the moment we go to bed at night, services surround us at every time of the day. Eating out at restaurants, picking up office supplies at the store, dropping mail off in the mailbox, watching TV, talking on the phone... it is no wonder that the service sector has become nearly 65% of U.S. GDP, and comprises 80% of U.S. employment (USTR Focus on Services, n.d.). Before the service industry took over the economy, it was the manufacturing industry that was dominating. With the manufacturing industry so globally important, so too was product design. Products became successful when they were consciously designed by someone who understood what it took to make a product useful, useable and desirable. Everything from the product's materials, form, and color, to thinking about how a user would interact with the product; when artifacts were designed from the start, it was easy to see why people liked to use them, or wanted to have them. While

the purpose of this paper is not to talk about products, it is important to note that product development is an established process by most manufacturing companies.

The question now is, if products have such an extensive design and development process, why are service design and development processes so lacking? Because of the differences that exist between products and services (which will be discussed in the next section), it is not in service design's best interest to adopt the development processes that have made product design so successful. However, services are not new, and yet it has only been in the past decade or so that designers have started to think about service engagements, and how we can bring design methods and tools to improve or redesign services, or create new services from scratch.

So, what is service design?

To answer this question, it may first be helpful to define what a service is. Services have been defined differently across many different fields, but to designers and for the purposes of this paper, services have a set of core concepts that distinguish them from products.

First, services involve both tangible and intangible aspects. While products revolve around the artifact itself, services encompass a number of different pieces, and are not just limited to physical artifacts. The take-away for a service is usually not something physical, and is instead an intangible experience. For example, with a hotel service, at a very basic level, the customer is paying for the use of a place to sleep. This customer will take away nothing but the experience of their stay at the hotel that night. This is unlike products, where the customer is paying for a physical artifact to take with them.

Second, services are co-created. First, they require the existence of a customer in order for them to exist. A hair salon would not be able to offer hair cutting services if customers never showed up. In contrast, a manufacturing plant can keep making tables and chairs even if no one wants them.

Third, services are produced and consumed at the same time. When a hair cutting service is given to a customer, the customer is at the same time 'using' the service.

Lastly, because services most often revolve around the customer interacting with the service provider, it becomes the responsibility of the service provider to provide value for the service to the customer. With products, the product designers design a product as close to what they believe a customer wants, but in the end, the customer can do whatever they want with the product. In contrast, with services, the service provider generally has control of their service offering throughout the entire engagement.

Because of these differences between services and products, it becomes clearer that designing for services requires a different set of approaches than with product design. As people began to realize this, the field of service design grew into a new discipline. Being a new discipline, it is important for service design to establish a more grounded view of services and its constituents so that designers know best about what they are designing for and how best to design them.

A different way of looking at services

Services are often discussed in terms of the delivery of a set of actions or products from the service provider to the customer. If thought about in this way, services are much like disciplines in the performing arts, where they focus on a successful delivery of a performance to an audience. If services are thought of as performances, the performing arts are a perfect place from which to draw inspiration. Dance, theater, film, music—all of these disciplines focus not on a specific product, but more on the successful interactions between people, much like in services.

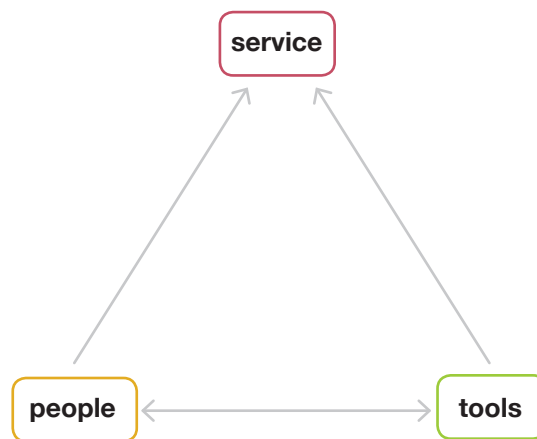


Figure 1 /Relationship between service, people, and tools

In the performing arts, the creation of the final product depends on two important aspects: the relationships between the people involved in the performance, as well as the tools involved in creating and maintaining the work. For example, it would be hard to create a good movie if there was not a film script for the actors to follow, or if the sound editors and directors never communicated throughout the production process. For this paper, I will be looking at services through a similar lens: looking at the people involved, and the tools used in the creation and maintenance of a service (see Figure 1). In creating any service, one must be aware of the roles involved in a service creation, as well as the relationships between them. The tools involved in creating a service are also important, especially for service designers, as these will be the things that aid them in designing a service. I will also be looking at the relationship between the roles and the tools to see how one can best maximize this relationship to create the best service possible.

While there are many fields to look to in the performing arts, I will be focusing this paper on the field of classical music to introduce and reinforce some principles that are essential to think about when approaching service design. Classical music has had a long and established history in terms of the management of roles and tools in the creation of any musical performance, and many pointers can be taken from music to be applied to service design.

I will be looking at classical music and services in three parts. First, I will be discussing services as performances. As mentioned before, services mostly involve a delivery of action from the service provider to the customer, and so drawing aspects from performance can be useful when thinking about providing enjoyable experiences for customers. Next I will approach the roles contained within music and services more in depth. Once these roles are established, it will then be important to look at the relationships between these roles and how they work together to create a successful service experience. Lastly, it is important to look at the tools behind creating and designing musical performances and services, as successful services can only be created through use of well defined methods and tools.



PERFORMANCE

As explained earlier, one aspect that differentiates services from products is that services contain a delivery of actions from the service provider to the customer, and as such, could be thought of as performances (see Figure 2). If services are thought about as performances, music then becomes a great field to look at when applying ideas that make music performances successful. There are four aspects of music performances on the whole that are applicable when thinking about services: music working as a system, music impressions, music styles, and music lifecycles.

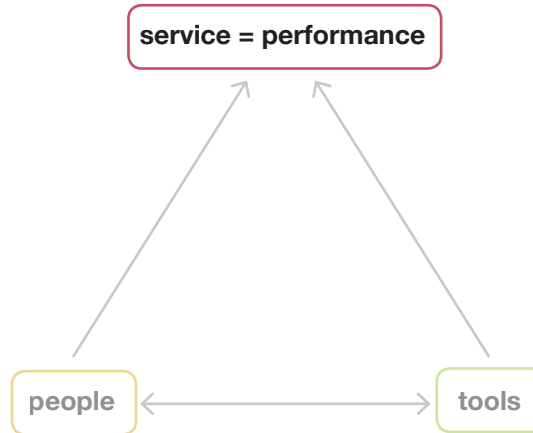


Figure 2 /Service as a performance

Music and service as systems

One of the first parallels between music and service is that both exist as entire systems. Music as a system exists at both the micro level and the macro level. At the micro level, music is made up of a series of notes, pauses, and rhythms, strung together to create melodies. At the macro level, music is made up of those melodies, as well as different themes and patterns. Successful music pieces are those that are able to make all the micro and macro level parts work together. When pieced together properly, an audience gets the sense of the music by the melodies, themes and patterns; that is, the macro level attributes.

This is very similar to services. Where products are standalone objects, services exist as a series of interactions at many different places, called ‘touchpoints’. With services, the micro level could be thought of as each individual touchpoint of a service and the components that make up that touchpoint, and the macro level could be thought of as the connection of all the touchpoints to create the entire experience. Similarly with music, a successful service is one where the customer can experience the service as a whole, rather than a series of disconnected touchpoints.

It is also important to note that in thinking of music and services as systems, they are also time based. “In music, each moment is fleeting; it passes and cannot be completely recaptured” (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.66). Thus, in music, it is important to be able to capture a sense of the music at every point in time to keep the experience coherent. In services, this same idea could be manifested in that one must not only think of each individual moment, but the connection of all moments as an entire experience. The customer should be getting a consistent experience at each moment of the service.

Disney theme parks are a successful example of establishing connection between all service touchpoints to create a unified experience. Not only are the details inside the theme parks designed with an entire system in mind: Disney characters roaming the park, park entrance tickets printed with Disney characters on them, and all staff wearing themed uniforms, but details outside the theme parks are also designed with a coherence of touchpoints in mind. For example, parking isles are named after Disney characters. As another example, the Disney resorts have ‘Character Dining’, where Disney characters dine with guests at their restaurants. All these details serve to enhance the Disney experience: at every touchpoint, every Disney guest feels that they are enveloped in the Disney world. This type of service delivery is what companies should strive for; customers should always feel like they’re a part of the service at every step, to ensure the best customer-company relationship possible.

Music and service impressions

In music, any piece of work will leave a lasting impression on a listener, whether good, bad, or neutral. However, one of the strongest impressions in music is the first, when the listener hears a musical piece for the first time. “And so it comes about that the first impression, which is so important, the first contact of the newborn work with the public, is completely dependent upon the validity of a presentation that eludes all controls” (Stravinsky, 1942/1970, p.133). This notion may be even more important in services. First impressions are always important, especially in services; the minute the customer first interacts with the service provider, that experience will most likely contribute the greatest to the customer’s overall satisfaction with the service. In fact, in customer surveys done by Marriott hotels, four of the five top factors that contribute to customer loyalty occur in the first ten minutes of interaction (Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler, 2006, p.124). If the customer is unhappy within these first ten minutes, it usually takes an enormous gesture later on in the service to remedy the less-than-perfect first impression, and even then, the customer will most likely recount the service experience as a bad one.

A series of actions could be taken to ensure a proper delivery of first impressions. In music, this is done mostly by ensuring that the performer is competent in his skills and is well aware of the composer’s intentions for the piece. This should also be true in services, where the service employees who are responsible for interacting with the customers should be knowledgeable, and well aware of the service and its offerings. This will be discussed in the Roles section of this paper.

Music and service styles

Musical styles are crucial to both the composer and the performer of any musical piece. Style is what differentiates composers between each other, even within

the same musical time period. Each composer has their unique trademarks that differentiate them from others. Music performers use style as a way to mark their own interpretation of a composer's work so that similarly to composers, they can differentiate themselves from others.

Similarly, in services, styles can be a great way for service providers to provide a means of differentiation from providers that offer similar services. Many different aspects of a service can contribute to its style; employee uniforms, physical space and décor, pace and speed of service, each detail has some attribute that can give different impressions to the customer.

For example, what sets Apple apart from other companies that offer the same products and services is that they have a unique style in which they conduct service. All of their stores are clean and modern looking and the display of their products gives off a very "museum-like appearance" (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.323). Contrast this to a store like Circuit City or Best Buy, where the atmospheres are very different. Each has their own advantages, and these styles are what need to be kept in mind when service designers are thinking about how they want their service to be portrayed to a customer.

Music and service lifecycles

The careful planning and creation of music systems and styles that I have mentioned so far are important to the success of a musical piece. However, it is important to note that these change as culture changes in time. "One finds immediately that what was then problematical, sometimes extremely so, has now become assimilated, and that much that is now taken for granted and considered quite harmless would have shocked the musical conservatives of a generation ago" (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.106). It is important to be aware of music lifecycles when creating music; one needs to know the culture in order to create music that will be accepted and successful.

Services, too, have a lifecycle. The need for a service exists only as customers demand it. Aspects that can affect music lifecycles—culture, economy, trends—are also the same aspects that affect service lifecycles, and should be thought about in the same way. Service providers must recognize when their service falls within a certain period of its lifecycle and act appropriately. Service designers too can anticipate how different aspects could affect a service and design ways to maximize success given these influences.

As a small example, consider the case of service cycles in airline services. In American culture, all airlines will have peak fares during all major holidays, when people will travel the most. In this way, airlines have designed the service to

maximize profits—increasing fares as travel becomes a necessity. However, this culture does not only affect airline services. Countries that depend on tourism for their economy have in no doubt designed and managed their tourism services in such a way that will cater to tourist seasons.

The fast turn around of trends in the fashion industry also serves as a good example of how the consideration of service lifecycles are important. Clothing stores must be aware of what the current market need is in order to profit. Being unaware of current trends in the fashion world would mean failure for most stores. Thus, when designing a clothing service, it is important to know and expect that the change in trends every season will affect the service lifecycle, so that one can anticipate how the service will need to adapt in order to succeed.



ROLES

Diving deeper into a musical performance, there are three main roles associated with any performance of a musical piece: the composer, generally regarded as the creator of the piece of music; the performer, the one who brings the piece of music to life; and the listener, the one who takes an active role in listening to the performance. In terms of service design roles, one could see that these music roles could lend themselves fittingly to parallels in service design: the music composer could be thought of as the service designer, the performer could be thought of as the service provider or the frontline staff of a service provider, and the listener could be thought of as the customer of a service (see Figure 3). If thought about in this way, there are many aspects that could be drawn from thinking about music roles as they relate to service roles.

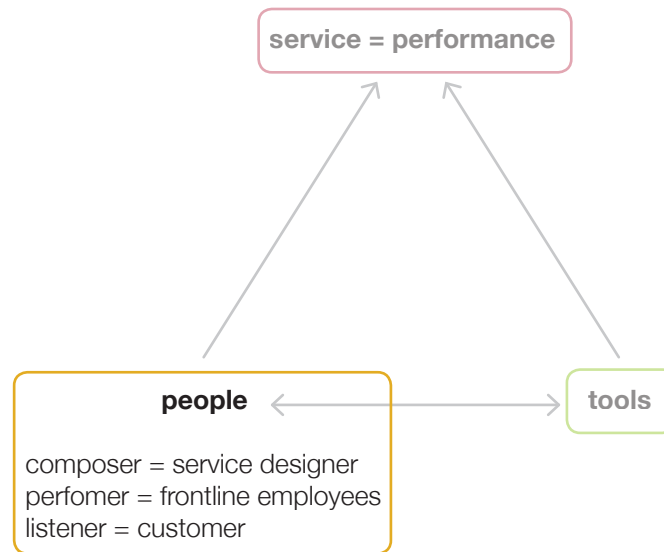


Figure 3 /Comparison of roles in music and services

The composer | service designer

Roger Sessions (1950/1967) believes that:

basically the aims of all composers have always been very much the same, however different the results... Each composer has striven to bring to reality the music which is most truly music for him. The task of every composer is to give coherent shape to his musical ideas (p.43).

The same principle could be applied to service design. As a service designer, the main goal is to provide unity across all ideas they have for a service; to design it in such a way that allows for seamless movements between touchpoints. Consider Apple iTunes as an example. Buying music from iTunes, and transferring this music to an iPod is a very seamless task. A customer can simply buy the music, plug their iPod to their computer, and the new music will automatically be downloaded onto the device. This type of seamless interaction is what service designers need to strive for. Customers using iTunes and their iPod don't often think that they are traversing multiple touchpoints (finding the music, purchasing the music, downloading it onto their iPods), because all aspects of this service connect so well together.

There are four traits of musical composers that are useful to think about as we continue to analyze the role of a service designer. A good composer has always been able to maintain the following four characteristics: giving shape to their ideas, keeping an organic relationship to their work, being a master of musical elements, and creating possibilities for the unexpected. While there are

many other traits that make up a successful composer, these four are especially important for the purposes of transferring ideas to the traits that a successful service designer should also exhibit.

Giving shape to ideas

The most basic role of a composer is to give shape to his musical ideas. “The process of artistic creation is always the same—from inwardness to lucidity” (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.43). A composer takes his inner musical thoughts, and transforms them into something real so that others can enjoy and be a part of what he is experiencing. The composer is responsible for being able to communicate effectively how he wants the music to be played; no one but him knows what the music should sound like, so it is important that the shape he gives to his ideas can be well understood by others.

Similarly in services, while there are many people involved in the creation of a service, service designers are often the ones who shape the idea for a service. They are the ones who will think of how the service will function in both micro and macro ways; thinking not only about the details of each touchpoint in a service, but also how all of these details fit into a whole service journey. Either way, the designers are responsible for effectively communicating and implementing their ideas for the service.

A good example of this is the work of Howard Shultz, the CEO of Starbucks. On a trip to Italy and at the time the director of marketing and retail operations for Starbucks, he saw the cafes that were a central part of the lives of Italians, and wanted to bring this experience back to the U.S. (Gulati, Huffman, and Neilson, 2002). He envisioned:

a company that would become a part of its customer’s lives—that would... become the “third place” in their daily existence—a familiar and welcoming refuge from work or home where they could relax in a safe public setting and enjoy a sense of community (Gulati et al., 2002).

The owner of Starbucks at the time did not share the same vision that Mr. Schultz had, so Mr. Schultz decided to start his own company. In two years, Mr. Schultz’s company expanded to three locations, and raised enough money to buy out Starbucks and became the major shareholder and CEO. This type of action is what embodies the role of the service designer. They think of ideas, and give shape and meaning to them.

Keeping an organic relationship to his work

Once a composer has given concrete shape to his musical ideas, the conversation between him and his music does not simply end. He constantly works at it,

coming back to his musical score and making changes as he sees fit. The important thing to keep in mind for service designers is that they too should keep an organic relationship to their work. This is especially important for services because services are always changing. Depending on a service's surroundings, as mentioned before (e.g., culture, trends, economics, etc), or on employee or customer feedback, details of a service could change. It is important that the service designer always be aware of their design and keep it a living entity, otherwise they may lose control of their service and thus lose track of how to best implement new changes for it. Of course, it is not the service designer's sole job to manage a service; the service provider also plays an important role in keeping a service afloat. However, since design decisions are made by the service designer, it is important that either the service designer be aware at all times of the service and its conditions, or that they properly educate and communicate their service design ideas to the service provider.

Consider the Walt Disney World theme park again as an example. Even though they are known as one of the largest and most visited theme parks in the world, they do not cease to continue improving their service offerings. They continuously gather customer feedback, and do customer research to find out what areas of their park could use improvement. As an example, while doing continuous research on their customer wait times, the company found that customer dissatisfaction still arose with regards to the long wait times at their most popular attractions. This prompted them to design a new system for customer queue lines. After many prototypes, testing, and refinement, the new FASTPASS system was introduced to allow guests to receive tickets for specific times for an attraction, eliminating the need to wait in line for that attraction. Even when prototyping this system, surveys showed that guests using the prototype spent more money, saw more attractions, and had significantly higher satisfaction (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2006, p.278).

Being a master of elements

Anyone can make music. But not everyone can make good, or great music. Making good music takes a certain basic knowledge of musical elements. That in itself is not a huge challenge. The challenge is in making great music. To make great music, a mastery of musical elements must first take place. Knowing musical details; what chord progressions not only work, but speak to the mood and meaning a composer is trying to convey, what rhythms will tell the perfect story, what instruments will best convey a certain voice; being a master of these musical elements will allow the composer to go beyond simply stringing the right sequence of notes together and forming a melody; "the deeper the composer's awareness of the basic elements of music, the more vital his imagination is likely to be" (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.58). When a composer is aware of all the musical details, he begins to have the ability to make the work his own.

In comparing this to service design, service designers need to think about this ability to be a master of elements before taking on the bigger challenge of creating not only a competent service but one that customers will go back to out of personal desire rather than necessity.

The thinkers and designers behind all the Disney Resorts and Parks set a good example of how first mastering service elements can lead to thinking about other aspects that could lead to a better customer experience. Their parks are very similar to many other theme parks. But after implementing all the basics of the park; park layout, ride designs, and ticketing information, just to name a few, they could start thinking about details that they could add to make the experience for guests even better. Offerings like the FASTPASS system discussed earlier, or even seemingly small things, like their talking trash cans that travel around the park and talk to guests are what makes the guest experience special, and cannot be successful until the service basics are not only in place, but implemented well.

Creating possibilities for the unexpected

Perhaps one of the most useful traits of a successful composer is his ability to create music that contains qualities that can connect to the audience in an unexpected, but pleasing manner. While it is the responsibility of the performer to bring out these qualities, the composer must be the one who sets enough foundation for such a trait to occur.

Since music is an art of time, and not of space, its effect must be cumulative and not static. Successive impressions must either maintain the level of intensity, of interest, of movement established at the outset, or they must raise it. Otherwise, in somewhat primitive terms, the tension relaxes, the ear becomes bored, and the music lags (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.60).

It gets slightly more complicated with services; unlike music, services are performances that exist in both time and space. The end goal however, is the same. The service designer must provide room in their designs to allow for the unexpected—something pleasant for the customer that they could not have foreseen. This will help push the service from satisfactory, to outstanding. For example, at every Ritz Carlton, all employees are allowed to spend up to \$2000 per guest to resolve customer problems, or to make a personal impact on a customer's experience (CNN Money, 2004). These gestures were made possible because there was room given in the design of the service to allow for extra money to be given to every employee just so that customers could be offered that extra treatment. Training staff is also another way that service designers can implement opportunities for creating the unexpected. At the Ritz Carleton, every employee is

trained to note customer likes and dislikes, and record them in their computerized guest history profile (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.100). That way, the next time a customer returns to one of their hotels, a more personalized stay can be given to them based on the recorded notes. These unexpected moments are those that customers will remember from their experience with the service and can be the moments that create not only satisfied customers, but loyal customers—those that will continue using a particular service because of that one great moment that they experienced at an earlier time.

The Performer | front-line employee

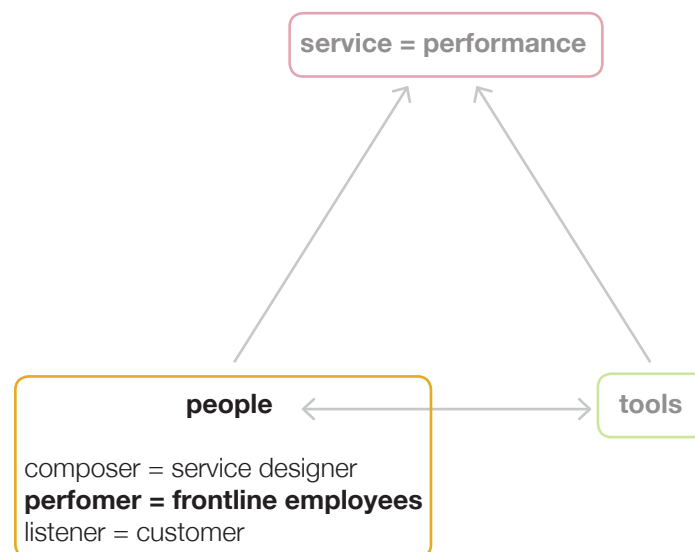


Figure 4 /Comparison of performer and frontline employee roles in music and services

The performer's work is, of course, begun by the composer. The latter not only composes the music, i.e., he conceives a coherent and meaningful pattern of tones and rhythms, but he translates the music he has thus conceived into symbols which enable the performer to bring it into actual being (Sessions, 1950/1967. p.65).

The performer has perhaps one of the more demanding roles in the three-role mix of a musical experience. Taking existing written music that a composer has produced, the performer must then translate it into an auditory performance for the listener. Not only that, but perform it in a way that combines the intentions of the composer with the performer's own personal style, while providing an appeal to the audience.

The role of the service provider is very similar to that of the performer. The service provider is the one responsible for delivering the service to the customer. More important than the general service provider, however, are the frontline employees: “from a customer’s perspective, the encounter with service staff is probably the most important aspect of a service” (Lovelock et al., 2006, p.311), since they are the ones that the customers will interact with. In using music to help think about the role of the service provider and frontline employees, there are six elements that are useful to think about when developing this role: being responsible for giving concrete form to a piece of music, reproducing a composer’s intentions with conviction, taking on the roles of an executant and interpreter, being aware of performance conditions, establishing trust with the listener, and creating the unexpected.

Giving movement to a static idea

If the composer gives shape to his musical ideas, then the performer is the one who brings that shape to life. “It is this essential and inherent quality of music—its fluidity, the fact that it is in an art, even the art par excellence, of time—that has inevitably produced the performer” (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.66). Great performers have a way of making a piece of music flow effortlessly as they perform. They provide movement and spirit to a piece of music that would otherwise sit on a piece of paper.

The frontline employees of any service serve exactly the same function. They are the ones responsible for bringing alive the service ideas that originated from the service designer. They must make their job look effortless. This will in turn make the customers less stressed, and instead of focusing their attention on the details of the service, will allow them to focus their attention on the service experience as a whole.

This is especially important in situations where “the provider has discretion in determining the nature of the service and how it is received” (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.63). As an example, consider education; perhaps not thought of often enough as a service, yet is one of the most important. The idea of teaching a subject to a group of students is standard across any school, but the role of the teacher in delivering an education to a student is the crucial area. The teacher not only has the responsibility to deliver information to their students, but also decides what they will deliver, and how they will deliver this knowledge. As a great performer will effortlessly bring music to life, a great teacher will teach in a way that brings subject content to life. This is why the role of the service provider is so important; they have direct contact with the customer, and will inevitably be the ones who influence what happens to the receiver of their services.

Reproducing composer's intentions with conviction

While the performer exists to bring a piece of music to life, a point must be remembered that in most cases, the composer and the performer of a piece of music are not the same person. Thus, while a performer has some freedom in infusing his own style into a piece of music, the primary role of a performer is to respect the composer and keep true to his intentions. Improvisation is generally not a great tool to use in classical music, unless the performer is exceptionally talented at what they do. It is very easy for seasoned listeners to tell when someone is playing music that does not stay true to the composer's intentions.

Similarly with services, the service provider must follow the original intentions of the service provider. Especially with the less experienced frontline employees, any deviation from the intended service actions could lead to a break in many core service aspects: brand, service offerings, etc. These will in turn have an effect of how the customer views the service. Even small things such as deviating from a phone script can trigger responses from the customer. Thus it is important that all the employees of a service know exactly what it is they are supposed to do. This is not to say that the employees cannot enhance the service by going out of their way for a customer (as was discussed previously with the Ritz Carlton example, and will also be discussed later in this section) but the core concept of the service and the actions that must be completed to perform this service as the service designer had intended should not be changed.

Being an executant as well as an interpreter

The composer makes great music by first being a master of elements. In a similar way, the performer becomes a great performer once they too become a master of their own elements. When this happens, the performer can then get past the technicalities of the performance and instead focus on communicating the elements that give the music its character. "It is [the performer's] task, and I believe his whole task, to apply his imagination to discovering the musical gesture inherent in the composer's text, and then to reproducing them according to his own light" (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.73). In other words, the performer becomes an interpreter for the written music. "The first condition that must be fulfilled by anyone who aspires to the imposing title of interpreter, is that he be first of all a flawless executant" (Stravinsky, 1942/1970, p.127).

These roles of executant and interpreter for a performer are important and translate well to how the service provider should be acting as well, especially for the frontline staff dealing directly with the customers. In order to be successful at what they do, they need to know how to perform their expected duties without having to think about them as much as possible. Only then can they go a step beyond and think about 'interpreting' the service in such a way that provides

for an even higher level of care for the customer. The frontline employee is one of the most important persons a customer will interact with; once the employee is proficient with their job basics, they can start to learning to anticipate for customers' needs, and with that attention to detail, start producing what any service organization would want: a loyal customer.

Consider the role of a nurse in a hospital setting. One of the people most frequently seen by the patient, they are an important aspect of any patient's stay at the hospital. But imagine if you were a patient at a hospital, where you were having blood drawn by a nurse. The nurse could be the nicest person you have ever met, but if they appear nervous, and need to try four or five times to get the needle in, it will no longer matter how nice they are—you will simply remember that the nurse was not competent at the job they are supposed to do. On the other hand, experienced nurses who are expert at the technical aspects of their job will be able to go the extra mile with their patients and have their patients appreciate this extra effort.

Being aware of performance conditions

Before a performer begins to interpret a piece of musical work, it is important for them to also understand and be aware of performance conditions.

In projecting the work, the performer has to exercise individual judgment at many points; a performance is a specific occasion and subject to specific conditions. If he is concerned at all with the impact the work is to make, he will be aware of these conditions and be affected by them (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.78).

Performance conditions can include everything from the background of the composer, to knowledge about the period of time that the music was written in, to knowing what type of room they will perform in which can affect the sound of their instrument; all these details are important to the performer to stay true to the composer's style, and also for the overall success of the performance.

Transferring this idea to the field of service design, it is extremely important for all employees of a service provider to be aware of all the conditions of the service they are providing. Not only should they be aware of the immediate conditions—the space they are operating in, the tools they are using, etc.—but also aspects of the service such as its brand and company history. These things are extremely important in maintaining a coherent service, from embodying deeply rooted company values to keeping coherent interactions and visuals to the customer.

Thinking of all the different things a frontline employee must be aware of, perhaps one of the most crucial aspects of service conditions is being attentive

to the customer's emotions and intentions throughout their service journey. Consider the role of a retail store clerk. Many different types of customers will walk through the store, and it is the job of the clerk to be aware of the different emotions and intentions of the customer so that they can cater their personal service towards these personalities. Their attitude and amount of help will depend on the customer; whether they clearly do not want help perusing items throughout the store, or whether they are in a hurry and need help finding a last minute gift, or whether they are taking their time finding the perfect outfit for a job interview—an attention to detail is often what creates a satisfied customer.

Establishing trust

In order for a music performer to become successful, they must first gain the trust of their listeners. They must establish trust in the way they play, the way that they deliver a composer's piece of work to their audience, and simply ensuring that they can deliver a consistently solid performance every time they play.

Similarly in services, service providers must establish trust with their customers before customers are willing to continue using their services. This is clearly most important for first time customers, as customers do not know what to expect and are probably shopping around for the best provider for their needed service. There are a couple of ways in which to gain trust with first-time customers. Many times a service will provide performance warranties, or money-back guarantees; this will comfort customers as they will get something in return if the service does not go as they planned. A service provider also trains front-line employees in order to establish trust. This is probably one of the most effective things a company can do; since the front-line employees are the ones interacting with the customer, the way they interact with them will have a lot to do with how the customer will see the company. A front-line employee's attitude, tone of voice, use of language, all these things can contribute to how much a customer will trust the service given by the company, and thus it is important that employees be properly trained on how to effectively interact with a customer. Lastly, all of the aspects mentioned previously in this section about a front-line employee contributes to the overall feeling of trust for a customer: employees should bring the service designer's ideas for the service to life, they should be convincing and confident, they should be an executant as well as an interpreter, and of course, be aware of the conditions of the service they are providing.

Creating the unexpected

Musical presentations are all about the unexpected; listening to the interpretations of the performer and enjoying the differences and surprises that they deliver to their performance.

[Mechanical reproduction] ceases to have interest for us, however, the instant we become aware of the fact of literal repetition, of mechanical reproduction—when we know and can anticipate exactly how a given phrase is going to be modeled, exactly how long a given fermata is to be held, exactly what quality of accent or articulation, or acceleration or retard, will occur at any given moment (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.67).

Live music concerts exist because listeners can get away from these mechanical reproductions; they provide a way for listeners to delight in a performer's interpretations and little changes that they make to the music that can create a different experience than simply listening to an mp3 of the same song.

Paralleling this to service design, if a service designer has created the opportunity for the unexpected, then it becomes the role of the service provider and the frontline staff to bring the unexpected to the customer. This is extremely important as this is one big aspect that differentiates between different service providers offering the same service. Frontline employees have the power to “make sure guests' unexpressed wishes and needs are met” (Lovell et al., 2006, p.312). These types of actions are what creates not just satisfied customers, but loyal ones.

As an example, at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, a customer with a room reservation arrived only to find out that all rooms were filled. The hotel receptionist responded by paying not only for a room at the Sheraton for the guest, but all parking fees, the taxi fare to the hotel, and even a free meal at the Fairmont (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.350). This type of action can turn what could have been an awful experience, to one that has the customer happy with the service they have received. It is one thing for a customer to come into an unexpected service experience, but to have the frontline employee give back an unexpected surprise is the key.

As another example, a letter was written to Lands' End from one of their customers. This letter expressed the delight of the customer in receiving a rare collector's item from her boyfriend; this item was no longer sold by the company, but when the customer's boyfriend called to ask if they sold the product, the customer service representative went out of her way to help track down some owners of these items to help acquire one. This is an example of a routine service engagement where the customer service employee could have simply said that they no longer sold that product, but instead went out of their way to deliver an unexpected surprise to the customer. This type of action is what will create loyal customers, ones that will write to the company and express their joy at what the company has done for them.

The Listener | customer

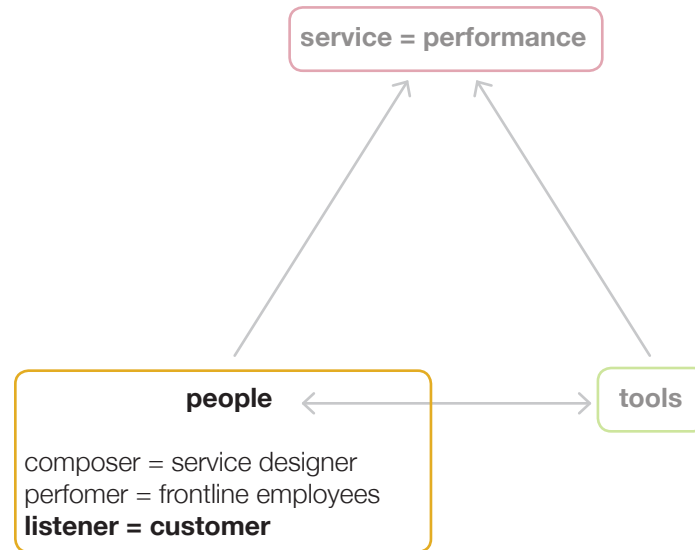


Figure 5 /Comparison of listener and customer roles in music and services

The question for us is rather [the listener's] own experience of music—what hearing and understanding consist in, and, finally, what discrimination involves. What, in other words, is his relationship to music? How can he get the most from it? How can music mean the most to him? In what does his real education consist? Finally, how can he exercise his powers of discrimination in such a way as to pronounce valid musical experience in others and, so to speak, in the world in general? (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.88)

While Sessions is talking about the listener of a musical performance, all these questions can apply to the customer of any service engagement. Here, the listener is not spoken of as a casual audience member or someone who simply hears a musical piece while he walks past the concert hall—the listener is someone who is engaged in the performance, someone who is active in the performance and understands, appreciates, and analyzes the performance in a way that the casual ‘hearer’ would not. Similar to the active listener, the customer of any service engagement is also an active participant in the process—he must fully involve himself in the service journey if he wants the service to be of any value to him. Someone who goes to get their hair done at the salon cannot get the most out of the service if they simply sit there without telling the hairdresser what to do. They need to actively participate in the process, explaining what they want done, watching what is being done and giving feedback when necessary.

The listener in a music performance has three characteristics that are useful to think about when approaching ideas to apply to the customer of a service

provider: the listener goes through four stages of listening, he becomes a discriminator, advocate and educator, and finally, the listener in the end simply wants an experience.

The four stages of listening

According to Roger Sessions, there are four stages of a listener's development: hearing, enjoying, understanding, and discriminating (see Figure 6). First, the listener must hear. Simply taking in the musical sounds;

this initial stage in listening to music is an entirely direct one...
he will hear the music only to the extent that he identifies
himself with it, establishing a fresh and essentially naïve contact
with it, without preconceived ideas and without strained effort
(Sessions, 1950/1967, p.88).

Next, the listener reacts to the music, which Sessions calls "enjoyment". Sessions argues that our primary effort in listening to music will be to enjoy it, unless inhibited by experience. Next, the listener reaches musical understanding. This stage follows the enjoyment in that not only does the listener react to the music, but starts to reproduce it to himself.

The really "understanding" listener takes the music into
his consciousness and remakes it actually or in his
imagination, for his own uses. He whistles it on the street,
or hums it at his work, or simply "thinks" it to himself"
(Sessions, 1950/1967, p.92).

In this stage, the listener does not simply pick up facts, but gathers musical senses, such as rhythm, articulation, or melody. Lastly, the listener discriminates. The listener will learn "to differentiate between lasting impressions and those which are fleeting, and between the musical experiences which give full satisfaction and those which only partly satisfy us... we will learn that music is unequal in quality... we will become critics" (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.94).



Figure 6 /The four stages of listening

Applying this to services, it could become very important when we think about the customer of a service. Sessions' four stages of listening could almost be used directly as the four stages of a customer's experience going through a service (see Figure 7). First, at each service touchpoint, the customer simply takes in and senses the service and its surroundings. For example, if someone goes to a hotel to check in for the night, the customer will first take in many things: the hotel lobby space, the hotel lobby décor, the pamphlets on the reception desk, what



Figure 7 /Comparing the four stages of listening for music and services

the hotel receptionist is wearing, etc. Next, the customer will respond and react to these first sightings: the hotel lobby space may be spacious and may feel very welcoming to the customer, for example. Or perhaps he sees that the receptionist looks a little grumpy, and thus reacts in a way that makes him think that he won't be getting any pleasant greetings from them. Once the customer has passed a touchpoint, sometime in the future the customer will replay this moment in his head. He may reflect upon the receptionist that did not look too happy and was slightly rude to him during the check-in process. At this stage the customer will also reflect upon the whole service as a journey: perhaps the hotel customer will reconstruct his experience during his stay with a lot of grumpy memories, after the less-than-pleasant hotel receptionist, and perhaps a rushed room service staff who mixed up his order. Lastly, a service customer will learn to discriminate. They will learn by experience as to which services will give them satisfaction and which will not. They will become service critics. An unhappy hotel customer from one experience may learn that paying more for another hotel might be worth it after much better experiences that he has had at the pricier hotel.

This type of model is useful when designing or managing services because it gives a sense of what a customer goes through. It also reinforces an earlier stated fact that first impressions are extremely important. These are what will stick in any customer's mind as they learn to critique and analyze different options for services.

Being a discriminator, advocate, and educator

I have just mentioned that the customer, in the last stage of their journey through a service, will become a discriminator. However, even after the service journey, the customer can become much more. After a customer becomes a discriminator and learns about different service offerings through experience, the customer can also become an advocate for a service. This is clearly done with enough positive experience with a service. What is most important however, is not only that a customer becomes an advocate of a service, but then becomes an educator. As quoted before, the question becomes, "how can [the listener] exercise his powers of discrimination in such a way as to pronounce valid musical experience in others and, so to speak, in the world in general?" (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.88). Once a customer becomes a discriminator, they will learn to gather their experiences to speak out to other people. "Service consumers are strongly influenced by the

personal opinions of others... thus, understanding and controlling word-of-mouth communication is extremely important” (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.67).

Knowing that a customer talks about your service is one thing; but knowing what happens before the customer reaches the point of advocating or educating is the most useful. It is this knowledge about the customer that the service designer can use when designing a service. They must be aware of the total experience of a customer.

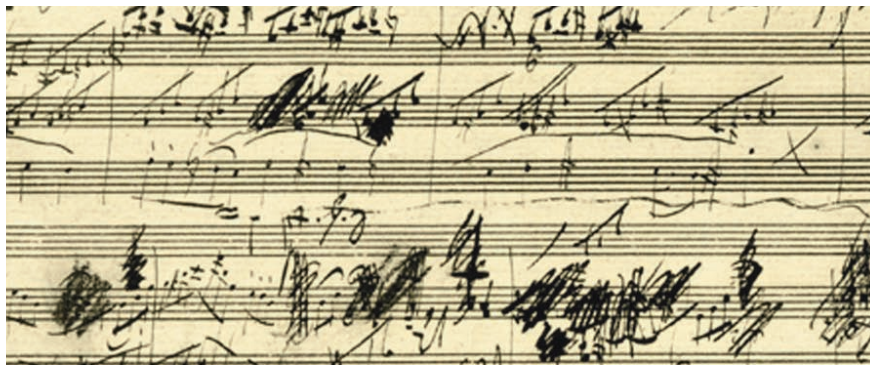
Consider two different restaurant experiences: one where a well-prepared and tasty meal is served in a noisy, uncomfortable atmosphere, versus the same food served in a comfortable, and relaxing environment. The same customer going through both experiences will have very different stories to tell regarding each meal. What is most important to note is what cues the customer takes away from the experience. In this case, the list can be endless: the facility design; servers’ skills, attitudes, body language, choice of words, tone, inflection, and dress; presentation and taste of the food; noise level; smell; texture of tableware; spacing, height, and shape of tables; this is simply a small list of things one must consider when designing the restaurant experience. All of these details will contribute to a customer’s overall reaction and memory of their experience. With a successful design and management of these service qualities, customers will become loyal advocates of the service.

Wanting an experience

In the end, the goal of any listener of a musical performance is to simply have an experience (of course, preferably a good one). As Sessions notes, “inevitably... a variety of listeners want a variety of things. But on any level it may be taken for granted that the listener wants vital experience, whether of a deeply stirring, brilliantly stimulating, or simply entertaining type” (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.100). The same could be said of services. While the goal of a service provider may very well be to increase profits, the goal of the customer is always to not only get something done, but to have a good experience while doing so. “Whether or not the provider acknowledges it or seeks to control this experience in a particular way, it is inevitable that the customer will have an experience—good, bad, or indifferent” (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.62). Composers don’t intend to write boring music. In the same manner, as service designers begin to design a service, they should keep in mind that in the end, a customer will walk away from the service having experienced something—if service designers are conscious of this from the beginning, they have the power to be able to help shape the experience that they want their customers to have.

As seen from the three different roles of a service, it is important that all three work well together to create a successful service. It is not just the composer

or service designer that is responsible for creating the service; the frontline employees as well as the customers are also important in contributing to the service creation. “Not only are the performer and listener, in a real sense, re-experiencing and re-creating the musical thought of the composer, but they are, also in a real sense, adding to it” (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.102).



TOOLS

Music scores vs. service blueprints

Notation tools are often a way to tie all the involved people in a performance or service together. They allow an objective view of the performance for all the stakeholders involved. In music, the score is used by the composer to visually represent what his idea of a musical performance should sound like. The performer then takes the score and follows it as closely as they can. A successful delivery of the performance depends on the performer being able to interpret the composer's work through this music score. Thus, it is important that this score be both well written by the composer, and well read by the performer.

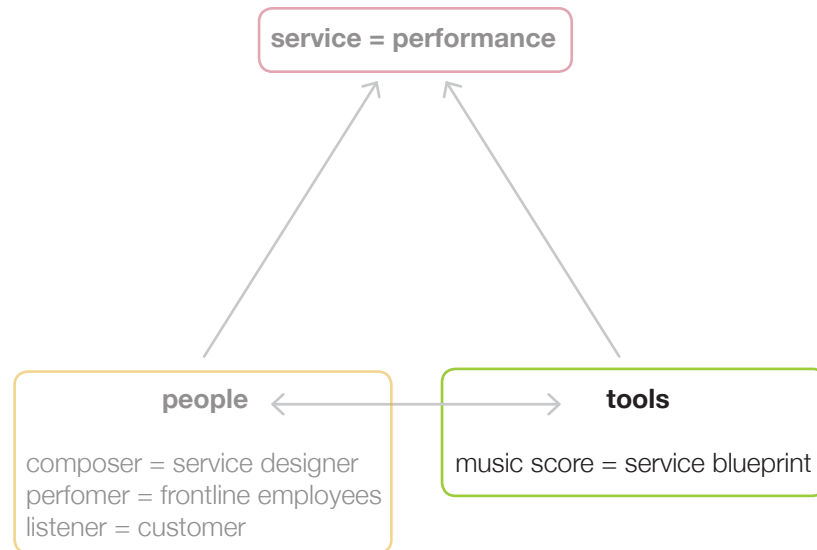


Figure 8 /Comparison of tools in music and service

In services, notation plays a similar role. It allows for the designer to mark exactly what should be included in the service and how the service should be performed. It allows for the service provider to follow this notation to deliver a solid service. The difference, however, between the service notation and the music score is that with service notation, the customer can play an enormous role in how the notation gets put together. Because a well-designed service pays close attention to the needs and wants of their customers, customer input becomes a large part of service notation, whereas in music scores, it is mostly the composer's wishes that are brought to life.

What is a service blueprint?

Composers use the music score as a tool for them to compose and record their musical thoughts. Service designers have a similar notation tool, called the service blueprint (see Figure 8).

A service blueprint is a tool used by service designers to map out the service process. It was developed in 1984 by Lynn Shostack as a process control tool for services (Shostack, 1984). Since then, the blueprint has become more customer-focused, with the introduction of the blueprint as a plot between customer process and organizational structure in 1989. This more customer-focused blueprint is the one currently in use today by service designers and companies alike.

Service blueprint components

Service blueprints are divided into two main sections: the onstage section, where everything that the customer can visually see is detailed, and the backstage portion, where everything that the customer cannot visually see is

detailed (see Figure 9) . The onstage section then contains two main components: customer actions, and onstage contact employee actions. The backstage section also contains two main components: backstage contact employee actions and support processes. The last main component that overarches the entire blueprint is the physical evidence.

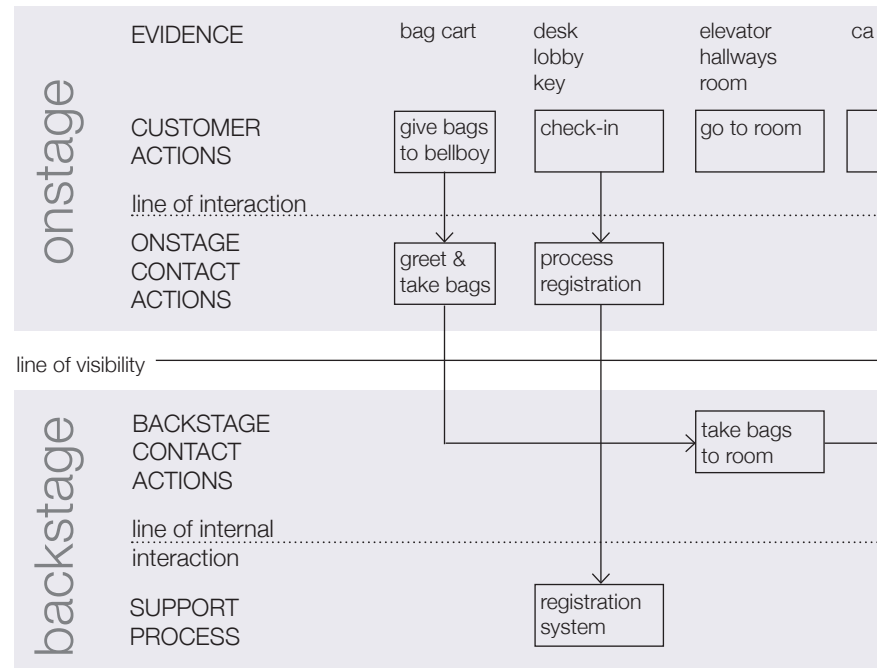


Figure 9 /Part of a simple service blueprint for a typical overnight hotel stay

In the onstage section, the customer actions section details all the steps that a customer goes through chronologically when in a service engagement. This customer action is the crucial part of the blueprint, as it is the only section that deals directly with the customer and what they do during the service. The next part of the blueprint, the onstage contact employee actions, details the actions that the frontline contact employees go through. The frontline employees are those that deal directly, face-to-face with the customer. Any interactions that happen between the frontline employee and the customer will be connected by a straight line. In the backstage section, the backstage contact employee actions details the actions taken by the backstage employees; those employees that are not directly involved with the customer but whose jobs are to prepare or serve customers. The next component, the support processes, details all actions that need to happen that are not related to customer interaction. Lastly, the physical evidence is the section that details all the physical and tangible evidence that the customer comes into contact with throughout their service engagement.

Why use service blueprints?

Blueprints are used for three main purposes: to design new services, to evaluate, or to improve existing services. First, they can be used to design new services, as service designers can map out all the components of a service concept to see what the process would look like. Blueprints are a good tool for designing new services because it forces the designers and the service managers to think about every detail of a service, from the physical items that the customer would need to interact with, to the types of actions that a customer could deal with when talking to a frontline employee, to even the steps that a backstage employee would need to do in order for the customer to receive good service. Second, blueprints are a good tool for evaluating current services; because the blueprints are detailed in terms of both customer and employee actions, designers and managers can use the blueprint to see what the current service looks like, both to a customer and the employee. Service managers can see whether the customer is getting enough interaction with the frontline employee, or whether a specific portion of the service is taking too many steps. Third, after the service designer or service manager has evaluated the service, they can use the blueprint to improve or redesign the service. If a bottleneck has been determined in the service, it can be seen where that is on the service blueprint, and designers or managers can then evaluate how potential changes to that portion of the service would affect the entire process.

There are many benefits to using a service blueprint in service design. As mentioned before, service blueprints are a way to tie the different roles of a service together. This is especially important for all those involved in providing the service, as the blueprint is an objective map that is fact-driven, and not opinion-driven (Zeithaml et al., 2006, p.267). People are no longer biased in describing what they believe the service to be depending on their experience and exposure to the service, the blueprint is a concrete visualization that everyone can contribute to and form a consistent map of the service that everyone can agree upon. With the blueprint, every employee of the service should know precisely what their role is, and how their role fits into the rest of the service process. Since front-line employees are usually the ones who interact most with the customers, they often hold a lot of insight into what customers want most out of the service. They can often be integral in helping redesign a service.

Blueprints are also beneficial when thinking about its use as a guide for service employees. If designed properly, blueprints can be used to show a complete service process. Every action that a service employee should do, or could do, can be mapped onto the blueprint. It then becomes easier for a service manager to direct employees what to do. Without the completeness of a service blueprint, the service performance could become an uncoordinated improvisation of what

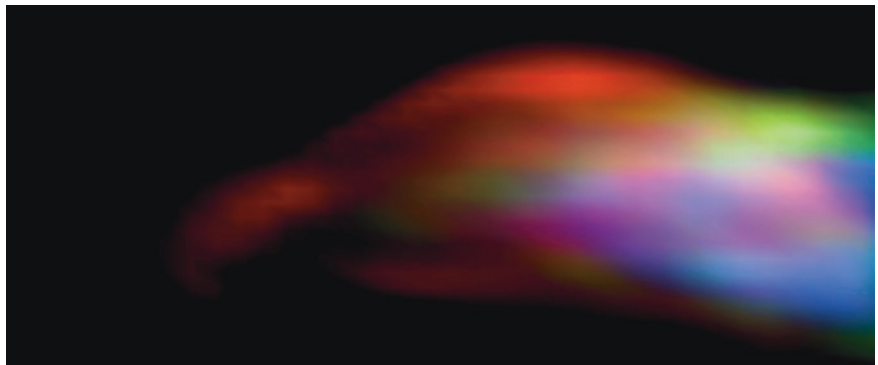
the employee thinks they should do without knowing the effect it will have on the rest of the service.

Another benefit to using the blueprint is that there is a degree of fidelity to the original wishes of whoever designed the service. Again, there is no improvisation of any major service ideas or concepts, instead, they are laid out concretely on the blueprint. As Roger Sessions notes, “Without fidelity, a performance is false” (Sessions, 1950/1967, p.75). While he is talking about the musical performance, the same could be applied to services. In music, if the performer is not following the musical score of the composer, he is no longer performing the same piece of music. In services, the same applies: once the service provider steps out of the original intentions on the blueprint, they are no longer staying true to the original service.

Limitations to service blueprints

As with all tools, service blueprints have their share of limitations. While service blueprints are great for mapping out the service process and flow in terms of customer and employee activities, they are not so good for mapping out the customer experience in terms of emotion and customer feelings. Since success in services depends largely on customer satisfaction and how they feel they were treated throughout the service engagement, it seems natural for the service blueprint to be able to support the mapping of these customer’s feelings.

Being able to map emotions and satisfaction could have huge benefits for any service organization. It could be used not only to map current service experiences from customers to see how the service could be improved, but it could also be used to design new services, taking into consideration how customers might feel at certain points of the service. This could help service organizations plan ahead to design for anticipated problem spots in the service. Preplanning for customer emotions can reduce a lot of problems that could arise once the service is in place, and it is also a good exercise for those involved in the service creation to really think about what the service journey is like for the customer.



FUTURE DIRECTION

The current limitation of the blueprints is that they don't account for how customer satisfaction or emotions play a role in the service engagement. The first problem is to figure out what sorts of notation we could use to best map emotion and satisfaction. Work has been started in this area (Spraragen & Chan, 2008), but this is where music could play a big role; not because music scores reflect any aspects of the listener in any way, but because music scores contain many types of expressive notation. Music scores are written to try and express as much of the composer's intention for musical style and emotion as possible. Thus, it could be very useful to try and draw aspects from musical notation to bring to service notation in terms of customer emotion.

It would also be useful for service design to think about adopting not only a notation system, but an entire language of its own. Classical music has its own very specific language; music is often described in terms of a particular set of

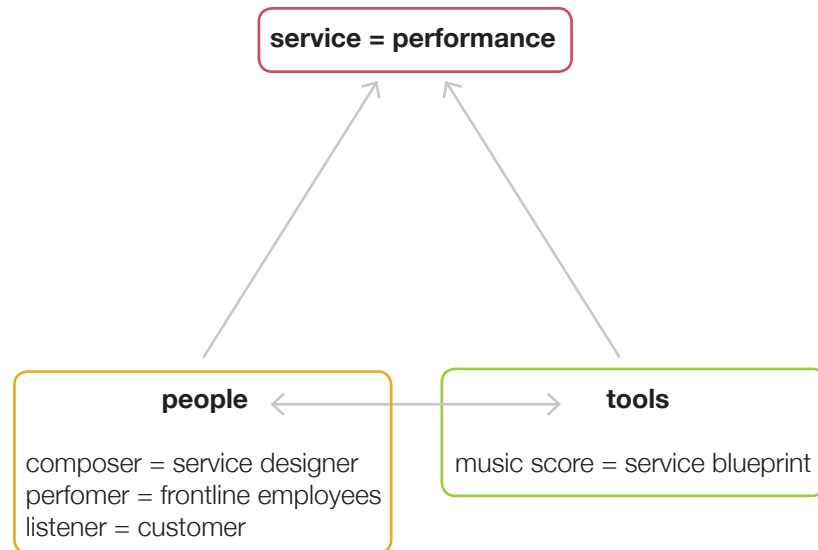
features: rhythm, timbre, tone, speed, character—can we perhaps look to this to try and build our own language? In this way, service design could start to build a standardized method to talk about services; more time could then be spent discussing methods and practices of service design rather than discussing and clarifying meanings of ambiguous terms.

While this paper focused solely on music as a field to look at when thinking about service design, it will be important to look to other fields as well to broaden service design. Music provides a good beginning, but is not the only field from which service design can profit. Fields such as dance, theater and film are also great fields to look at, as they all deal with the complexities of performance, and also have a big connection with roles involved in the making of a performance, as well as the tools used to achieve their goals. Looking to other fields other than classical music will give a good grounding to start refining and solidifying service design as an established field.



CONCLUSION

Services will always exist as a part of our economy. If we want to create the best possible services for the public, then we should start looking at ways that service design could help. In this paper, I focused on music as a field to draw aspects from, to apply to service design. If one thinks about a service as a performance, then many different and applicable comparisons come into play. The role of the music composer can be thought of as the role of the service designers in service design, where they must give shape to their ideas, keep an organic relationship to their work, be a master of elements, and create possibilities for the unexpected. The role of the music performer can be thought of as the role of the service provider or front-line employee in a service, where they are responsible for giving movement to an idea, for being a master of elements, for being aware of service conditions, for establishing trust, and for creating the unexpected. Lastly, the role of the listener can be thought of as the role of the customer in a service engagement, where the customer goes through four stages of ‘listening’,



they become a discriminator and educator, and in the end, they have the simple goal of just wanting an experience in any service journey. In looking at the music score that composers use, it is interesting to see how service blueprints are currently being used by service designers, and how they can be improved to liken themselves more to a music score, offering new ways of notating customer experience aspects such as their emotion and overall satisfaction when designing or improving a current service.

By looking at service engagements in this view, it is interesting to note the similarities between services and music performances. It becomes helpful to apply aspects of music performance that have been very successful over the course of many centuries to the relatively new field of service design. Hopefully in shedding new light on services, service design can look ahead to being a more established and prominent field in the future.

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