



LEEDS  
BECKETT  
UNIVERSITY

---

Citation:

Dashper, KL (2013) The 'right' person for the job: The aesthetics of labor within the events industry. *Event Management*, 17 (2). 135 - 144. ISSN 1525-9951 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599513X13668224082341>

Link to Leeds Beckett Repository record:

<https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/217/>

Document Version:

Article (Accepted Version)

---

The aim of the Leeds Beckett Repository is to provide open access to our research, as required by funder policies and permitted by publishers and copyright law.

The Leeds Beckett repository holds a wide range of publications, each of which has been checked for copyright and the relevant embargo period has been applied by the Research Services team.

We operate on a standard take-down policy. If you are the author or publisher of an output and you would like it removed from the repository, please [contact us](#) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Each thesis in the repository has been cleared where necessary by the author for third party copyright. If you would like a thesis to be removed from the repository or believe there is an issue with copyright, please contact us on [openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

## THE “RIGHT” PERSON FOR THE JOB: EXPLORING THE AESTHETICS OF LABOR WITHIN THE EVENTS INDUSTRY

KATHERINE L. DASHPER

UK Centre for Events Management, Carnegie Faculty, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds, UK

---

The events industry is an underresearched section of the service sector and can be usefully understood as a “customer-orientated bureaucracy” (Korczyński, 2002). The dual, and often contradictory, logics of customer orientation and bureaucratization coexist and place heavy demands on employees. The concept of aesthetic labor, first conceived by Warhurst, Nickson, Witz, and Cullen (2000), has been usefully applied to recruitment processes in other parts of the service sector, notably hospitality and retail, in order to understand better the complex and embodied demands required of employees in contemporary service organizations. This article presents an exploratory study into the recruitment process in the events industry in the UK. Through an analysis of online event management job advertisements, the implicit embodied attributes required of successful candidates are explored, and the underlying gendered and class-based assumptions of these corporeal dispositions are considered.

Key words: Aesthetic labor; Event management; Gender; Recruitment

---

### Introduction

Service jobs are extremely important to contemporary western economies and may provide the strongest area of job growth in the UK for the foreseeable future (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007a). With the decline in manufacturing and the recent hits to the financial sector, customer-facing service jobs offer a potential avenue for growth and new employment opportunities. Despite the significance of the service sector to economic growth and recovery, service jobs remain underresearched and theorized (Kerfoot & Korczyk, 2005). A number of studies have sought to begin

to address this gap and have explored the varied experiences and meanings attached to a range of service jobs, such as air stewards (e.g., Taylor & Tyler, 2000), call center workers (e.g., Brannan, 2005), and frontline hospitality and retail workers (e.g., Nickson, Warhurst, & Dutton, 2005). These service jobs have been found to require high levels of emotional and aesthetic labor from employees, and these demands have significant gendered and class-based undercurrents (Hancock & Tyler, 2007; Hochschild, 1983; Nickson, Warhurst, Cullen, & Watt, 2003; Warhurst, Nickson, Witz, & Cullen, 2000).

To date, research into service sector jobs has tended to focus on fairly low-skilled, entry-level jobs, and there has been little attention paid to the demands and pressures faced by mid- and high-level service workers. This article begins to turn the focus to such higher skilled service jobs by exploring aspects of the recruitment process for event managers. Events management is a growing sector of the service industry and provides many high-skilled and relatively well-paid jobs in the UK. Events management is a diverse field, and the title “event manager” can apply to individuals in roles as varied as the organization of pharmaceutical events or the technical management of a large-scale outdoor music festival. People 1st (2010) provided a helpful overview of the industry, including lists of many of the skills, qualifications, and attributes required for a variety of event-related roles. The People 1st report is industry focused and so simply reports “facts,” survey results, and interview excerpts, with limited analysis or consideration of some of the implications of these findings. This article turns a more critical lens on the recruitment process within the events industry in order to explore some of the underlying gendered and class-based assumptions of these processes.

The article begins by considering the ways in which the service sector has been conceptualized and how this can be extended to provide a deeper understanding of the events industry. It then presents a brief overview of the concepts of emotional labor and aesthetic labor and the ways they have been applied to service roles. The article then explores event management job advertisements and considers the “type” of person such job descriptions are seeking to recruit. The gendered and class-based implications of these advertisements are discussed. The article finishes by presenting an agenda for ongoing research into the recruitment and selection processes in the events industry.

### The Service Sector

Korczynski (2002) has described the service sector as a customer-orientated bureaucracy. He presents the customer-orientated bureaucracy as an ideal type of work organization in which two competing and potentially contradictory logics are simultaneously present. Service work is driven by customer

orientation and the need to deliver consistent high-quality service but at the same time is subject to the logic of bureaucratization and the need to keep costs down and focus on the “bottom line.” These aspects are often contradictory and require careful management and negotiation on the part of service workers.

The concept of the customer-orientated bureaucracy is a helpful way of understanding the events industry, which is also driven by the dual logics of customer focus and satisfaction and the need to drive down costs and maximize profit. As a result of the simultaneous presence of these two, often contradictory logics, workers within the events industry must possess a broad variety of skills, including (although not limited to) people management and leadership; project management; excellent communication skills, written and oral; strategy and budget management; and the ability to liaise and build relationships with clients and suppliers (People 1st, 2010). Many of these attributes are essential to other service sector roles, particularly the customer service-focused skills, but event managers are also required to possess many higher level business skills as well as extensive industry knowledge. As a consequence, individuals seeking employment within the events industry are required to possess and exhibit a broad range of skills and qualities, and this is reflected in the job advertisements, discussed further below.

Kerfoot and Korczynski (2005) have pointed out that although appearing gender-neutral, both the customer-orientated and the bureaucratized elements of service work can be deeply gendered. In terms of service quality, organizations frequently suggest that customers may have gendered preferences. Many men may prefer to be served by a woman. Organizations are simply responding to customer demand. Yet, even if this is the case, organizations are heavily implicated in reproducing these gendered preferences by employing women in roles requiring deference, whereas men are regularly employed in roles requiring dominance (Ollilainen & Calasanti, 2007). Additionally, male and female employees are frequently evaluated on different terms when it comes to customer service. Due to the gendered assumptions of many managers that women are more “naturally” suited to customer-facing roles and interaction, female employees are often evaluated against both “hard” targets (quantitative measures, such as sales figures) and “soft” targets (such as the nature of the

service interaction), whereas if a male employee achieves his hard targets, soft targets are often not considered important (Pettinger, 2005; Taylor & Tyler, 2000).

The bureaucratized element of service work can also be gendered (Kerfoot & Korczynski, 2005; Trautner & Kwan, 2010). Joan Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organization demonstrates how distinct processes work to gender organizations and render them "masculine." She argues that rather than simply accept bureaucracy as a gender-neutral form of organization, we should examine how implicit masculine norms are often a part of the bureaucratic form, disadvantaging and sidelining women. This may be particularly relevant in higher level service jobs, such as many roles within the events industry, where the managerial demands and working cultures may reflect masculine norms and ways of working and living. As a consequence, the customer-oriented bureaucracy can be a highly gendered form of organization implicitly built around masculine norms that may at times exclude and subordinate female workers, especially within higher level roles such as events management.

#### *Emotional Labor and Aesthetic Labor Within the Service Sector*

The concepts of emotional labor and aesthetic labor have frequently been applied to service jobs in order to understand better the pressures and demands placed on customer-facing employees. The idea of emotional labor has moved on from Hochschild's (1983) early conceptualization, which focused on the alienation and psychological harm that can result from surface or deep acting within the service encounter. It is now recognized that it is the lack of discretion over the performance of emotional labor—the idea that the customer is always right and must be dealt with in a friendly and courteous manner at all times, regardless of the situation—rather than the emotional labor itself that tends to be most detrimental to employee health, well-being, and job satisfaction (Johnson & Spector, 2007; Payne, 2009). Employees within the events sector are required to perform high levels of emotional labor in terms of client interaction and relationship building, often under high-pressure circumstances, and so the potential for alienation, psychological harm, and burnout is considerable.

The concept of aesthetic labor was developed in order to expand the idea of emotional labor and foreground issues of embodiment, revealing how the corporeality and not just the feelings of employees are organizationally appropriated and packaged for commercial benefit (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). Increasingly, employers see appearance and attitude as some of the most important attributes in potential employees. Having employees who have the "right" look, the right sound, or the right attitude to appeal to customers' senses will provide competitive advantage, many managers believe, and so looks, voice, accent, and attitude are becoming increasingly important in the recruitment and selection of service sector workers (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). Managers increasingly consider that customer-facing service workers "physically embody the product and are walking billboards" for the company (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996, p. 304). This places increasing demands on service workers to portray the right look, sound, and attitude in order to gain employment.

Warhurst et al. (2000) found that employers within the service sector wanted young, attractive, and clean employees, not larger than a UK clothes size 16. Voice and accent were also considered important; workers needed to project an "aural smile." These aesthetic requirements have clear gender- and class-based implications. Although both male and female service workers are required to perform aesthetic labor in the course of service work, and thus the aesthetics of both men and women are subject to commodification, this does not decrease the salience of gender in this commodification, as Witz, Warhurst, and Nickson (2003) suggest it does. Rather, male and female service workers' corporeality are appropriated and commodified differently in ways that are heavily influenced by wider gender norms and expectations about gendered behavior (Pettinger, 2005). More research is needed to explore the gendered dimensions of aesthetic labor and the ways that male and female bodies and embodied identities are commodified in both similar and differing ways.

Aesthetic labor also has clear class-based assumptions. Requirements for the right look and the right sound imply a very middle-class understanding of personal interaction and consequently exclude many from customer-facing roles due to their inability to embody these required dispositions (Nickson et al., 2003). Warhurst and Nickson (2007b) suggest that

employers in the retail sector are increasingly seeking “middle-classness” in aesthetic labor. Telephone-based roles require the right sound, and this increasingly means certain accents and ways of speaking are being devalued and excluded from such types of service sector employment (Cameron, 2000). This may exclude those with strong regional accents, further sidelining individuals from lower socioeconomic groups and ethnic minorities (Cowie, 2007; Poster, 2007).

Within the events industry, the commodification of employees’ corporeality and the aesthetics of labor have yet to be explored. The preliminary findings related to event management job advertisements, as discussed further below, suggest that aesthetics are an extremely significant aspect of these jobs, and potential employees are being evaluated on their ability to embody the aesthetics of the organization as well as on their experience and hard skills.

### Method

The following sections of this article focus on a small-scale exploratory study into the underlying aesthetic, gendered, and class-based assumptions of online job advertisements for event management roles in the UK. Due to the growing number of event management degrees and, consequently, graduates, the industry is becoming increasingly professionalized, and so hard skills, experience, and qualifications are important. However, especially during times of limited economic growth when a record high of 70 applicants are chasing each graduate-level job (Vasager, 2010), potential employees need to differentiate themselves from their often equally qualified competitors. A deeper understanding of what employers are looking for is thus essential to achieve this competitive advantage. Although the People 1st (2010) survey provides much very useful information about general skills, a reading of job advertisements in the light of the demand that service sector employees be proficient in both emotional and aesthetic labor as well may help build a broader picture of the right employee sought to fill these highly desired, skilled-service roles.

Websites are one of the key ways in which event management companies recruit new employees, the others being newspapers and informal networking and personal contacts (People 1st, 2010). This exploratory study was restricted to Internet advertisements,

as the focus was on formal methods of recruitment and the discourses that permeate such advertisements. A Google search was performed under the command “event management jobs,” and the two top sites returned were selected for analysis on a single day in July 2010. The two sites selected were [www.eventmanagementjobs.co.uk](http://www.eventmanagementjobs.co.uk) (Site A) and [www.event-jobs.net](http://www.event-jobs.net) (Site B). Each site is dedicated to event industry jobs. A further command of “event manager” was inputted into each site. Site A returned 35 matching jobs, and Site B returned 45 matching jobs. Although it is acknowledged that the title event manager is extremely broad and covers a wide variety of roles, it remains a term commonly used both within the industry and by educators in the sector (Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2006) and so provides a useful umbrella term for management-level roles in the events industry.

Each advertisement was analyzed in terms of the required skills, level of experience, and personal attributes demanded from candidates. These were matched against the report produced by People 1st (2010) in order to consider how this industry report matched up to the stated requirements of employers. In addition, each job advertisement was analyzed in the light of the concepts of emotional labor and aesthetic labor, as discussed above, and for underlying gender, racial, and class-based assumptions. The decision to analyze advertisements on a single day as opposed to over a longer time period means that this study cannot claim to be representative of events management-related job advertisements in the UK. However, as these issues have not previously been explored in the events industry, this study is exploratory and marks the first stage in a wider consideration of recruitment and selection processes. The aim of the study was to provide a snapshot of job advertisements and a preliminary understanding of the right type of person these advertisements were seeking to attract as well as to provide a basis for further research into the recruitment and selection processes of the events industry, as discussed further below.

### Results

#### *Job Roles and Required Skills*

The job advertisements analyzed in this study represented a broad range of job roles related to events

management and indicate the diversity of the sector and the difficulties in defining what is meant by the title event manager. The most common job title was event manager, which returned 29 advertisements and included a variety of roles within different sectors of the events industry. Other common job titles included account manager (12), project manager (13), and event producer (8). A variety of other job titles were also returned, including sales executive (events), event planner, and various unpaid internship opportunities.

The geographical spread of jobs indicated the prevalence of event-related roles in London (30) and the southeast of England (28). No jobs were advertised in either the northeast or the southwest of England. This not only suggests that career prospects within the events industry in England may be limited outside of the southeast of the country but also that there may be room for growth in event companies operating in other areas of the UK. However, as this study only looked at two employment websites on a single day, this alone cannot be taken as evidence of the geographical restriction of event management jobs in the UK.

The salaries offered varied considerably. Many advertisements stipulated that the salary was negotiable (16). The majority of jobs offered salaries in the region £20,000–£30,000 (29) or £30,000–£40,000 (20). Only six jobs offered salaries over £50,000. Event management-related jobs thus offer potential applicants a reasonable wage, slightly above the national average (Rohrer, 2009). However, considering that the majority of these jobs were based in London and the southeast, the most expensive parts of the UK to live, these salaries are fairly modest. Further, these jobs require a high level of skill and experience and carry a heavy burden of responsibility. In the light of this, the salaries offered to event managers are not particularly high at this time.

Although a wide range of job titles were returned, the skills and experience required for the different roles were fairly homogeneous and correlate with the findings of the larger study performed by People 1st (2010). All jobs required considerable experience, a minimum of 5 years in most cases. This is in contrast to most other service sector roles, as discussed in the studies mentioned above, in which appearance, attitude, and embodied corporeality were considered more important by employers than experience (e.g.,

Nickson et al., 2005). This may be a consequence of the job roles in the current study being higher level service positions than those reported in many other studies, and consequently, event managers are perceived to require relevant and extensive experience in a similar role in order to perform the job well.

Other important skills that emerged from the analysis included excellent written and verbal communication skills; leadership qualities and experience; project management; customer service and relationship building; and, strategic, operational, and financial expertise. These skills were all identified by People 1st (2010). Other skills or attributes required that were not reported in the wider survey included attention to detail; knowledge of health and safety regulations and risk assessments; willingness to travel and work long, unsociable hours; and the desirability of fluency in another European language. Potential event managers are thus required to possess a wide range of skills that relate to both the customer-orientated and the bureaucratization aspects of the events industry. Job applicants need to be highly skilled and versatile.

Some of these attributes, when combined, can be used to gain an understanding of the right type of person for the job. This ideal applicant can be understood as embodying certain attributes and skills (in terms of both emotional and aesthetic labor) and to have a certain social position and location (in terms of gender, class, and race/ethnicity). This deeper reading of the job advertisements is developed in the next section.

### *The Right Person for the Job*

In this section, quotes from some of the job advertisements are analyzed in the light of the earlier discussion regarding emotional labor, aesthetic labor, and the gendered and class-based assumptions of the stated requirements. The purpose here is to try and form a broader picture of the type of person these advertisements are seeking to attract in terms of embodied corporeality and soft skills as well as the hard skills, qualifications, and experience set out in the People 1st (2010) report.

*The Right Personality.* As well as listing experience and hard skills, almost all the advertisements

analyzed painted a picture of the type of person required for the role. The ideal event manager would be “confident,” “bright,” “energetic,” “proactive,” “dynamic,” and “enthusiastic.” The requirement to have a sense of humor was mentioned several times, as was the need for “a big personality.” An outgoing and confident personality thus appears to be a vital requirement for an event manager. This seems to match many of the hard skills required in the role—such as people management, client relationship building, and customer service—and relates strongly to the customer-orientated aspect of this sector of the service industry.

Within the event management advertisements analyzed, much greater importance was placed on dynamism and confidence than on friendliness, sociability, and honesty/integrity, which Nickson, Warhurst, Witz, and Cullen (2001) identified as important in retail and hospitality advertisements. This suggests that the embodied attributes required of successful event managers are different from those of entry-level workers in hospitality and retail. Event managers are in a position of seniority over other employees and carry significant responsibility for managing staff, overseeing the successful planning and implementation of an event, and attracting and managing clients. This requires “gravitas” and the outward projection of authority. As a result, a certain type of embodied persona is required, one that exudes confidence and energy more than friendliness and approachability.

As well as being confident, energetic, and authoritative, another strong feature of the advertisements analyzed was the requirement for applicants to be “hungry and career driven,” “ambitious,” and have “an entrepreneurial mindset and be driven by results.” The advertisements analyzed were seeking a particular type of applicant, one who could be seen to resonate with the results-driven and output-focused logic of neoliberalism, focused on success measured against quantifiable outcomes, such as company profits and individual salaries and bonuses. This resonates strongly with the bureaucratization elements of the events industry where, for all the rhetoric about customer focus and fun and enthusiasm, the real driving force is profit. An event manager is thus expected to be acutely aware of the financial imperatives of the business and be motivated by a desire to raise revenue and increase profit.

The advertisements analyzed in this small study demonstrate clearly the appropriateness of understanding the events industry as a customer-orientated bureaucracy (Korczynski, 2002). The dual logics of customer focus and bureaucratization underpin the descriptions of the job roles and person specifications and demonstrate that workers within this section of the service sector must be not only proficient in customer service but also constantly focused on the necessity of maximizing profit.

*Contradictory Requirements.* There are a number of contradictions inherent in these ideal applicant requirements. Although many of the advertisements stressed the importance of being a good team player, there was also an undercurrent of individualism and self-interest. The ideal event manager is a highly motivated individual who seeks to improve the business and the performance of the team but is ultimately driven by a desire to succeed in their own career. Many of the advertisements called for applicants who “must have ambition, be target driven with a desire to succeed,” and this is calling for candidates who “constantly seek challenge and self-improvement.” As a consequence, such candidates may at times put their own career and ambition above the needs of the team.

This individualism has strong masculine undertones. Ollilainen and Calasanti (2007) have discussed the ways in which self-managing work teams tend to reproduce stereotypical gender roles that disadvantage women. Within work teams, family metaphors are invoked and women are encouraged to take on relational tasks rather than more highly valued and visible roles. The competing discourses present in the job advertisements in this study may work in similar ways. The importance of team work to event management is clear in the stated requirement for candidates to be team players, but the focus on ambition and self-improvement suggests that teamwork and the relational aspects of maintaining that team may be devalued in these work environments. Higher prestige and value may be placed on quantifiable results, encouraging a more masculine attitude to the job role. Although this does not mean that all women will be excluded from competing successfully in such a masculine environment, the findings of Ollilainen and Calasanti suggest that

women may frequently be expected to take on more feminine, relational roles within the team, whereas men may be expected to focus on the more highly valued and rewarded aspects, which may lead to enhanced career opportunities. Additionally, there is abundant evidence that suggests that when women do take on masculine norms of behavior in managerial positions their performance is evaluated more negatively than similar performance from a male manager (Hekman et al., 2010). It may thus be more difficult for women to embody these desired masculine managerial attributes and to be rewarded for the workplace performances and behaviors that are implied in the advertisements in this study.

*The "Impeccable" Candidate.* All of the advertisements in this study stressed the importance of communication skills, both written and oral. This matches the findings of People 1st (2010) and is to be expected in high-level service roles. The ways in which this requirement was worded in many of the advertisements is revealing of some of the class-based undercurrents of the event manager person specifications. The word impeccable was used in many of the advertisements to describe the desired communication skills of applicants, and this word suggests a particular embodied oral and aural candidate. Impeccable means flawless and irreproachable, and this implies a high level of articulateness, which is frequently only achieved by individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, the middle-classness that Warhurst and Nickson (2007b) found retail employers were seeking. The requirement for impeccable communication skills may thus work as a way of excluding those from less well-educated backgrounds, those with strong regional accents, or some ethnic minorities who might also have strong accents or different ways of articulating and communicating (Cameron, 2000).

*Unsociable Hours, Willing to Travel.* Many of the advertisements in this study stated that candidates would need to be prepared to work long, unsociable hours. This may be expected within this sector of the service industry, as events often run in nonworking hours and require managers and planners to be there for setup and wind down as well as the event. Many of the advertisements also

stated that candidates would need to be willing to travel. Again, this is probably an expected feature of many of the roles as events, suppliers, and clients are likely to be situated in many different areas.

On the surface, these two requirements are unproblematic and do not appear to be necessitating any particular ideal candidate other than one who is aware and willing to accommodate the demands of the role. However, Gustafson (2006) has shown that managers' gendered perceptions of their employees or potential employees often lead them to assume that women will be unwilling and unable to travel for work but that men will not be constrained in this way. As a consequence, Gustafson argues that work-related travel acts as a career path for men but a barrier for women. Individual women may well be able and willing to travel for work in the same way as many men, but manager's gendered perceptions frequently do not give women the opportunity to express this. The requirement to be willing to engage in work-related travel articulated in many of the advertisements in this study may thus act as a barrier to some female candidates, especially those with young children or of childbearing age, as employers may assume they will be less able and willing to engage in work-related travel than male candidates (Gustafson, 2006).

The long, unsociable hours that characterize many roles in the events industry may also act as a barrier for some women, again especially those with young children or of childbearing age. Despite many changes in societal expectations about the roles of women and men, it is still women who remain overwhelmingly responsible for child care within Western societies (Tang & Cousins, 2005). As a result, it will mainly be female event managers who will struggle more with juggling family responsibilities and long, unsociable, and often unpredictable working hours than male event managers who are more likely to have female partners to take on the primary responsibility for child care. Women may thus self-select out of roles that explicitly state that unpredictable and long working hours are a strong feature of the job. Equally, employers' gendered expectations may work in a similar way as discussed above regarding willingness to travel, and many women may be discounted at this early stage of the recruitment process.

### Conclusions

This small study of online advertisements for event management roles reveals that potential candidates need to have a wide range of skills relating to both the customer-orientated and the bureaucratization elements of the events industry (Korzcynski, 2002). The current research presents only a small-scale exploratory study, presenting a snapshot of job advertisements in the UK on one day, and so cannot claim to be representative of all event management job advertisements, and additional research would be required to extend the analysis further. However, this pilot study has revealed the salience of applying the concepts of emotional labor and aesthetic labor to the events industry.

Employers have sought particular embodied attributes from their potential employees for a long time, and research has demonstrated how physical attractiveness is highly valued in many work environments, especially customer-facing service roles where “What is beautiful is good” has long been a driving logic (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Soderland & Julander, 2009; Tews, Stafford, & Zhu, 2009). However, research in the service sector suggests that employers’ preferences for workers with “the embodied middle-class cultural capital” (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007b, p. 789) desired to perform aesthetic labor in the service encounter has gendered, class-based, and racial implications that may impact on an individual’s ability to compete within an increasingly competitive labor market and may contribute to implicit discrimination in the recruitment and selection processes (Hekman et al., 2010; Pettinger, 2005).

Reading the advertisements through a critical lens offered by the concepts of emotional labor and aesthetic labor, and the gendered and class-based assumptions these imply, helps create a fuller picture of the ideal candidate required for these roles. This more rounded person specification may be helpful for potential candidates in helping them to tailor their applications to each specific job and to fit more fully the image of the ideal applicant sought by employers, thus giving candidates a competitive advantage over other applicants. Such a reading of these job advertisements also indicates that employers are looking for more than just the hard skills and experience set out in the People 1st

(2010) report. Employers are looking not only for a candidate with the necessary skill set and experience to handle the role but also the right type of person to fit in with the company’s image and working culture and to project the desired image to clients, suppliers, and competitors. Job advertisements are just the first step in the recruitment and selection process, and so the final section of this article sets out an agenda for future research to explore further the embodied, aesthetic, and emotional qualities required by employers within the events industry and the ways in which candidates’ ability to personify these attributes are assessed.

### *Recruitment and Selection in the Events Industry: An Agenda for Future Research*

Nickson et al. (2005) have explored the attributes that employers within hospitality and retail are seeking in candidates and found that sociability, self-presentation, friendliness, and honesty were more important than technical skills and experience. The short study of event management job advertisements discussed above reveals not only that experience and technical skills are important in these higher level service roles but that embodied, corporeal elements are also crucial in selecting the ideal candidate for an event management role. The aesthetics of labor within the events industry may be slightly different from those identified in other areas of the service sector, such as hospitality and retail, because, as discussed above, event managers need to be more highly skilled and managerially focused than many of the workers who are the subject of the studies discussed earlier. As a result, further research into the recruitment and selection processes within the events industry may be extremely revealing about emotional and aesthetic labor within these more highly skilled service roles where the contradictory logics of customer focus and bureaucratization must be simultaneously navigated by successful employees (Kerfoot & Korzcynski, 2005).

Future research into the recruitment and selection processes in the events industry could usefully follow a route similar to the research of Dennis Nickson, Chris Warhurst, and their colleagues into the hospitality and retail industries. Surveys and interviews with employers would help shed more light on the embodied aspects of the ideal event manager,

and surveys and interviews with employees would provide a different perspective to the salience of these aesthetic features, gender, and class within the recruitment and selection processes.

A further interesting avenue for future research would be to explore these issues on a cross-cultural basis. As the events industry is a global phenomenon, cross-country comparisons, especially with countries where gender issues are different from those within the UK, would be revealing of similarities and differences between countries and cultures. Luoh and Tsauro's (2007, 2009) research into the salience of physical attractiveness in hospitality work in Taiwan suggests that significant differences in attitude do exist and will impact on the recruitment and selection processes.

Such research would add to the growing body of work exploring aesthetic labor among other sections of the service sector by expanding the focus to include higher level and more highly skilled service workers. This article has demonstrated that aesthetics and emotion are important, implicit assumptions regarding appropriate workers within the events industry. A deeper understanding of these embodied aspects would help potential employees gain a competitive advantage over other candidates and may help the growing number of event management-related courses ensure that they are equipping students with all the necessary skills, attributes, and embodied dispositions to succeed in this highly competitive sector of the service industry.

#### Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Fourth Global Events Congress in Leeds, UK, in July 2010. The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

#### References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender and Society*, 4(2), 139–158.
- Bowdin, G. A. J., Allen, J., O'Toole, W., Harris, R., & McDonnell, I. (2006). *Events management* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Brannan, M. J. (2005). Once more with feeling: Ethnographic reflections on the mediation of tension in a small team of call centre workers. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 12(5), 420–439.
- Cameron, D. (2000). Styling the worker: Gender and the commodification of language in the globalized service economy. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 4(3), 323–347.
- Cowie, C. (2007). The accents of outsourcing: The meanings of “neutral” in the Indian call centre industry. *World Englishes*, 26(3), 316–330.
- Dion, K., Berscheid, E., & Walster, E. (1972). What is beautiful is good. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 24(3), 285–290.
- Gustafson, P. (2006). Work-related travel, gender and family obligations. *Work, Employment and Society*, 20, 513–530.
- Hancock, P., & Tyler, M. (2007). Un/doing gender and the aesthetics of organizational performance. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 14(6), 512–533.
- Hekman, D. R., Aquino, K., Owens, B. P., Mitchell, T. R., Schilpzand, P., & Leavitt, K. (2010). An examination of whether and how racial and gender biases influence customer satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal*, 53(2), 238–264.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: The commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Johnson, H. A. M., & Spector, P. E. (2007). Service with a smile: Do emotional intelligence, gender and autonomy moderate the emotional labor process? *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 12(4), 319–333.
- Kerfoot, D., & Korczynski, M. (2005). Gender and service: New directions for the study of “front-line” service work. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 12(5), 387–399.
- Korczynski, M. (2002). *Human resource management in service work*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Luoh, H. F., & Tsauro, S. H. (2007). Gender stereotypes and service quality in customer-waitperson encounters. *Total Quality Management and Business Excellence*, 18(9), 1035–1054.
- Luoh, H. F., & Tsauro, S. H. (2009). Physical attractiveness and service quality in customer-server encounters. *The Service Industries Journal*, 29(8), 1093–1104.
- Nickson, D., Warhurst, C., Cullen, A. M., & Watt, A. (2003). Bringing in the excluded? Aesthetic labor, skills and training in the “new” economy. *Journal of Education and Work*, 16(2), 185–203.
- Nickson, D., Warhurst, C., & Dutton, E. (2005). The importance of attitude and appearance in the service encounter in retail and hospitality. *Managing Service Quality*, 15(2), 195–208.
- Nickson, D., Warhurst, C., Witz, A., & Cullen, A. M. (2001). The importance of being aesthetic: Work, employment and service organization. In A. Sturdy, I. Grugulis, & H. Wilmott (Eds.), *Customer service—Empowerment and entrapment* (pp. 170–190). Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Ollilainen, M., & Calasanti, T. (2007). Metaphors at work: Maintaining the salience of gender in self-managing teams. *Gender and Society*, 21(5), 5–27.
- Payne, J. (2009). Emotional labor and skill: A reappraisal. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 16(3), 348–367.
- People 1st. (2010). *Labor market review of the events industry*. Retrieved November 7, 2010, from <http://>

- [www.businesspartnership.com/pubs/Labour%20Market%20Review%20of%20the%20Events%20Industry%20January%202010.pdf](http://www.businesspartnership.com/pubs/Labour%20Market%20Review%20of%20the%20Events%20Industry%20January%202010.pdf)
- Pettinger, L. (2005). Gendered work meets gendered goods: Selling and service in clothing and retail. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 12(5), 460–478.
- Poster, W. R. (2007). Who's on the line? Indian call center agents pose as Americans for US out-sourced firms. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 46(2), 271–304.
- Rohrer, F. (2009, July 15). Just what is a big salary? *BBC News*. Retrieved November 7, 2010, from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8151355.stm>
- Soderland, M., & Julander, C. R. (2009). Physical attractiveness of the service worker in the moment of truth and its effects on customer satisfaction. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 16, 216–226.
- Tang, N., & Cousins, C. (2005). Working-time, gender and family: An East-West European comparison. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 12(6), 527–550.
- Taylor, S., & Tyler, M. (2000). Emotional labor and sexual difference in the airline industry. *Work, Employment and Society*, 14(1), 77–95.
- Tews, M. J., Stafford, K., & Zhu, J. (2009). Beauty revisited: The impact of attractiveness, ability and personality in the assessment of employment suitability. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 17(1), 92–100.
- Trautner, M. N., & Kwan, S. (2010). Gendered appearance norms: An analysis of employment discrimination lawsuits, 1970–2008. *Gender and Sexuality in the Workplace: Research in the Sociology of Work*, 20, 127–150.
- Vasager, J. (2010, July 6). Graduates warned of record 70 applicants for every job. *The Guardian*. Retrieved November 7, 2010, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/jul/06/graduates-face-tougher-jobs-fight>
- Warhurst, C., & Nickson, D. (2007a). Employee experience of aesthetic labor in retail and hospitality. *Work, Employment and Society*, 21(1), 103–120.
- Warhurst, C., & Nickson, D. (2007b). A new labor aristocracy? Aesthetic labor and routine interactive service. *Work, Employment and Society*, 21(4), 785–798.
- Warhurst, C., & Nickson, D. (2009). “Who's got the look”? Emotional, aesthetic and sexualized labor in interactive services. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 16(3), 385–404.
- Warhurst, C., Nickson, D., Witz, A., & Cullen, A. (2000). Aesthetic labor in interactive service work: Some case study evidence from the “new” Glasgow. *Service Industries Journal*, 20(3), 1–18.
- Witz, A., Warhurst, C., & Nickson, D. (2003). The labor of aesthetics and the aesthetics of organization. *Organization*, 20(1), 33–54.
- Zeithaml, V., & Bitner, M. J. (1996). *Services marketing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.