

## AZ ÚJ GAZDASÁG: SZOLGÁLTATÁSOK ÉS MENEDZSMENT

Hogyan alakulnak, alakultak a munkaerővel, annak képzettségével szembeni követelmények a XX. század végén, a XXI. század elején? Két angol nyelven közölt cikkünk egyikének szerzője – mintegy kiegészítve Makó Csaba ugyanezen számban közölt írását – állítja: túlzó az elméleti szakemberek és a vezető gazdaságpolitikusok körében képviselt nézet, miszerint az Új Gazdaságban kizárólagos tendencia, hogy nő a több gondolkodást, szellemi tudást igénylő munkahelyek száma. A szolgáltatások körében, ahol a leggyorsabban bővül a munkaerő iránti kereslet, például a személyi szolgáltatásokat nyújtókkal szemben egyre fontosabbak az esztétikai követelmények. Nemcsak a termékek kinézete, márkája, minősége, hanem a szolgáltatást nyújtó személy külleme, hanghordozása stb. is fontos versenyképességi tényező. Ahogy a szerző fogalmaz, a munkaerő-piacon a munkaerővel szembeni – technikai, motivációs és esztétikai – követelmények hármásából az elsőt lényegében a munkahely adottságai határolják be, a második eddig is ismert és fontosnak ítélt volt, a harmadik ellenben csak az utóbbi években vált, válik az alkalmazás feltételévé.

Másik írásunk szerzője szintén egy új jelenségre hívja fel a figyelmet. A japán vállalati szervezetben végbemenő változásokról számol be, négy esettanulmány példáján. E változások lényege, hogy a termelési folyamatok szervezetenként elkülönülnek az értékesítéstől, a fejlesztéstől. Ennek egyik, a tanulmányban említett formája, amikor egy társaságon belül nyerne szervezeti önállóságot e tevékenységek. A másik lehetőség, és a tanulmány erre is hoz példákat, amikor a fejlesztő mintegy alvállalkozásba adja az általa kifejlesztett termék gyártását, független beszállítóknak. Ezzel megszabadul a gyártás technikai, technológiai gondjaitól, erőforrásait a minél gyorsabb termékfejlesztésre tudja összpontosítani, továbbá azokat a szükségleteknek és a keresletnek megfelelően képes átcsoportosítani.

A két tanulmányban bemutatott folyamatok egy irányba mutatnak: növelik a versenyképességet.

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### SKILLS, SERVICES AND THE 'NEW' ECONOMY

In the style labour market, employers require a matrix of skills – technical, social and aesthetic. The first is provided „in-house”, the middle and the last filtered into companies through recruitment and selection processes. It is the middle and last skills that are encompassed by the term person to person skills. For employers, however, the aesthetic skills that also comprise the person to person interaction can be of crucial importance as a criterion for entering employment. Moreover, such skills are essential to the process of service and the product that companies are keen to portray.

The driver of the new economy and its job creation is said to be knowledge. In the context of this economic restructuring, a general consensus exists within current policy debates about the importance of 'thinking' and IT skills as the key to employability. The future is of Californian-style cyber workers with high incomes and high job satisfaction.

This consensus omits recognition of some key skill developments in the new economy and its workplaces.

Keep and Mayhew (1999) in a comprehensive review of knowledge, skills and national competitiveness make the point that the meaning of the term 'skill' has expanded considerably in recent years, especially with the ever increasing importance of the service sector. They note, 'Many employers...appear to be using the term "skill" to embrace personal characteristics and psychological traits.' Importantly they go on to suggest 'This broad-

ning of the spectrum and mix of knowledge, capabilities, traits and physical attributes that can be grouped under the umbrella term of skills raises a number of major issues for policy makers' (p.10).

This shift is part of a wider one from manufacturing to services that has significant effects for urban economies struggling to shake off their manufacturing heritages. One such city is Glasgow. With the demise of shipbuilding, and its locomotive and engineering industries, Glasgow's new economy is based on business and financial services, retailing and wholesaling, and hotels and catering. Although examples are drawn here from Glasgow to discuss the emergence of what we have termed the 'style labour market', we would argue that the issues are likely to be just as important in other restructuring economies.

This article examines the type of work and employment to be found in the new economy. It suggests that most new jobs will require not 'thinking' skills but 'person to person' skills. This is because most jobs are and will continue to be in more routine interactive service work. Moreover, current understandings of the skills needed in this work have so far omitted acknowledgement and appreciation of an important development – the emergence of a style labour market. This style labour market is important not just because it will feature heavily in future jobs growth but also because it raises significant employment issues. As, what we term 'aesthetic labour', employees are required to be able to present themselves to customers in ways that engage those customers senses; in short, they have to 'look good' and 'sound right'. These 'aesthetic skills', as we call them, complement the social skills required in interactive service work. Recognition of them also expands our understanding of the skills currently being demanded and supplied. Not recognising and addressing the emergence of the style labour market will create serious mismatches between the supply of and demand for labour in the new economy, and constrains conceptualisation of the new economy more generally.

The next section of this article outlines claims made about work and employment in the new economy. It then evaluates these claims on the basis of the available data for current and forecasted jobs growth and the nature of these jobs in terms of the skill needs. The subsequent section identifies the ways in which aesthetics are used by companies and their employees to portray both themselves for their own respective benefits. We then suggest how these benefits are becoming mutually entwined for the purposes of marketing and ultimately of commercial benefit for companies. It is at this point that aesthetics as a feature of human resourcing become ever more important, resulting in 'aesthetic labour'. We discuss this new

development and illustrate how it is manifested within companies in relation to recruitment and selection processes and training and development. Identification of this new concept means that, as Keep and Mayhew suggest, policy-makers increasingly have to reconsider the nature of skills, and we develop this point.

### The new economy: jobs and skills

Policy-makers and pop management writers (for example Blair, 1998; Handy, 1995) would like the jobs of the new economy to be those of Reich's (1993) 'symbolic analysts' who, using their 'thinking' skills, manipulate the symbols and ideas that generate the knowledge-driven economy. These jobs would include marketing, consultancy and research and development. Across the advanced economies the number of such jobs has increased, and there can be no doubt that a massive shift is occurring towards services from manufacturing. Unfortunately, the number of jobs requiring thinking skills has not increased to the extent anticipated or claimed.

The latest available UK data does show that by 1998, services accounted for 76 per cent of all jobs and manufacturing 17.5 per cent. However, the largest absolute increase in the number of jobs to that year occurred in distribution, hotels and restaurants, which includes retail sales. This increase was mainly for women, and split broadly into full-time and part-time jobs. The highest percentage increase in jobs occurred in the manufacturing of office machinery and computers. In terms of absolute numbers, the public sector along with distribution, hotels and restaurants are now the largest employers in the UK (*Labour Market Trends*, 2000).

These developments resonate with the economic and employment shifts in Glasgow – the locale of the style labour market research undertaken by us with other colleagues.<sup>1</sup> Eighty per cent of the city's GDP is now provided by services. Services also account for 84 per cent of jobs, and the trend is upward; in 1981 the figure was 68 per cent and in 1991 it was 79 per cent. Most of the city's new jobs are in retail, hospitality, education, health care and call centres. Manufacturing now only provides ten per cent of jobs (Glasgow Development Agency, 1999a, 199b). As with the rest of the UK, aside from the professional qualifications needed for the mainly public sector health and education jobs, most jobs being created in Glasgow's new economy involve 'person to person' not 'thinking' skills therefore (Scottish Office, 1999).

Never has so much economic policy been based upon so little awareness of the available data. The demand for

evidence-based policy seems to have disappeared as quickly as the dot.com share boom. Eulogies of the new economy are characterised by too much hype, too much conceptual conflation and not enough empirical sensitivity. A more sober examination of the available data indicates four main trends in work and employment at the start of the twenty-first century.

1. There are and will be knowledge workers with 'thinking skills' who identifying and solving problems manipulate symbols and ideas but the extent of such employment will be limited.

- Even in the US – the imputed model of economic transformation – only seven per cent of the fastest growing occupations can be classified as 'real' knowledge work involving the manipulation of symbols and ideas.
- Much so-called 'knowledge work' encompasses fairly mundane professional jobs such as teaching. In some accounts, other occupations have become relabelled as knowledge workers, for example librarians and musicians.
- Also, most current and future growth in those jobs labelled as knowledge work in the UK will be in the public sector – employment often with high skill and involving considerable and continuous training.

2. The old economy might be dwindling but it remains a provider of an important source of employment and GDP.

- Taken together, manufacturing accounts for between 20-25 per cent of GDP and jobs across the UK and in Scotland. This percentage is higher in some countries, for example Germany. Manufacturing includes some key sectors in terms of a country's exports and indications of productivity.
- Some old economy jobs will even expand, for example in the oil and gas industry, and require strategies to address traditional skills retention and shortages.
- In the concern about the share price of the dot.coms, less attention has focused on the attendant job losses. In the US, those losses rose 55 percent between October and November of 2000 and more people are turning again to large dot.bams (bricks and mortar) companies for their employment.

3. The delineation between old and new economy jobs is blurred and the linkages between the sectors are not appreciated.

- The symbols and ideas manipulation of marketing, consultancy and other business services requires the manufacturing of cars, electronic office equipment and white goods, for example.

- The 'debundling' by manufacturing companies through subcontracting and outsourcing of catering and cleaning services, for example, accounts for two thirds of lost manufacturing jobs since 1991, particularly in the US but also across the other advanced economies (OECD, 1994).
  - Again, there is an attempt to relabel some old economy industries as part of the new economy, for example banking, because of their propensity for product innovation and high IT usage.
4. Most actual and forecast jobs growth has occurred in more mundane services, again in both the US and the UK. There has been a conflating of the expansion of service sector employment and the rise of knowledge work.
- Most growth in the service sector is not in knowledge work, but in the low-paid routine interactive service work of serving, guarding, cleaning, waiting and helping in the private health and care services – both in the US and UK.
  - Many of these jobs are part-time, involve little training, are low skilled, highly routinised and stringently monitored, are predominately female and often low paid with high labour turnover, for example call centres. It might be said that it is these 'McJobs' not the 'iMacJobs' requiring considerable training and involving high skill, wages and autonomy that characterise employment in the new economy.<sup>2</sup>

Because these jobs involve interactive service work with customers, employees are required who have interpersonal and social skills, or what we referred to above as 'person to person' skills.

In the case of Glasgow's new economy, retail, hospitality and call centre based financial services are key industries. However to assume that all interactive service work jobs are of the McJob type would be wrong. Within Glasgow's new economy, we have identified an emerging style labour market that encompasses designer retailers, boutique hotels and style cafés, bars and restaurants. It is in this style labour market that companies require not just social skills from their employees but also what we have termed 'aesthetic' skills.

#### Corporate identity and the use of aesthetics

Aesthetics are a sensory experience through which objects appeal in a distinctive way. This appeal does not necessarily have to be 'beautiful' but rather and more simply 'expressive'. Materialising the concept of a company – what Jones (2000) would call its 'big idea' – requires the transformation of an abstractly defined iden-

tity into the adoption of a style; in practice, the production of an aesthetic experience.<sup>3</sup>

As Witz et al. (1998) note, aesthetics have always been important to companies. Companies past and present use aesthetics to express corporate identity. We might call this use the aesthetics of organisation. These expressive forms are most obvious in the 'hardware' of organisations, such as marketing material (internal and external), product design and the physical environment of workspaces/offices (Olins, 1991; Schmitt and Simonson, 1997).

Aesthetics are a key element of goods and services design, for example, AEG electrical products, London Transport buses and Coca Cola bottles. At the turn of the century, when UK banks were the largest in the world, their sense of importance was expressed in the physicality of their buildings that exuded 'strong' and 'rich' symbolism.

Aesthetics are related to sensory experience, these senses being sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. Organisations can play on any of these senses as part of the customer experience. For example, Jones et al. (1994) report on the use of obvious visual national signifiers such as wood, light and space, and Ikea furniture by the hotel chain 'Swedco'.

Three points are worth noting with regard to the aesthetics of organisation (Olins, 1991: 71, 53, 75):

1. As symbols and artefacts, these aesthetics are intended to influence the perception of people as either customers or clients: organisations 'use these symbols in a vivid, dramatic and exciting way, because they know that symbols have power to affect the way people feel'.
2. They are intended to add value to the company: 'Generally speaking, when companies use identity expressed through design, they use it as a commercial tool; their purpose is to make greater profit out of what they do in the short term'.
3. In highly competitive markets with little to differentiate most goods and services, aesthetics contribute to organisational distinctiveness: 'intangible, emotional. ...The name and visual style of an organisation are sometimes the most important factors in making it appear unique.'

The utility of aesthetics is most prominent in marketing – and continues to be so with the development of 'brand' culture. For supermarkets struggling to retain customers and high street retailers countering the out-of-town clothes warehouses, creating 'brand environments that deliver powerful brand experiences' has become the 'must have' marketing tool. Plus, with e-tailing, if shopping is to retain a physical presence at all, it must provide an experience that cannot be attained through a PC.

Shopping and consumption have now become mainstream leisure activities. Product saturation is a potential problem and companies have to make their products more distinctive to compete. In essence, what are being sold are an experience and a set of emotions. The actual product, no matter how nicely packaged or presented, increasingly becomes a tool, a means to this end of distinctiveness. As emotions and experiences are commodified – a coffee experience, a hotel experience, a retail experience – then employees, particularly those on the front line, need to become part of the product and the experience.

By contrast, there has been little concern with the relationship between employees and organisational aesthetics. The reason is the famous 1920s Hawthorne Studies and Elton Mayo's dismissal of the built working environment as a factor influencing employee behaviour (Baldry et al. 1998). Interest returned in the 1980s for two reasons: firstly, appreciation of the 'non-rational' aspects of organisational life that influence employee behaviour – most obviously in corporate cultures that emphasise the importance of rites and rituals; and, secondly, with the shift from manufacturing to a services based economies, increasing corporate sensitivity to the interaction between the organisation and customer through the service encounter offered by the employee.

Appreciating and analysing aesthetics expands and improves our understanding of how companies organise, and portray both themselves and their goods and services. The point to be noted is that through the use of organisational hardware such as product and interiors and exterior design, companies mobilise and develop the aesthetic experience of their customers to produce a style of encounter that is intended to produce commercial benefit for the company.

### **Aesthetics and employees: getting in and getting on**

This hardware is complemented by the use of aesthetics in the form of organisational 'software'; that is, potential and existing employees. These aesthetics in organisation comprise a range of behaviours, most usually associated with 'getting in' and 'getting on' in organisations for these employees. Emphasis is placed on the ways in which individuals can present themselves through posture, gesture, use of personal space, facial characteristics and eye contact, for example, at interviews and during meetings (Huczynski, 1996).

Popular business literature makes great play of the way in which individual employees can manage their image by engaging in 'impression management' or 'non-verbal influencing' in order to socially negotiate their

interactions with other organisational members. Such management of personal aesthetics is also said to contribute to their career prospects creating or sustaining individuals' employability. How to 'dress to impress' and be 'groomed for success' is the advice offered by James (1999) for example. As Davies (1990:75) suggests, 'in the way that manufacturers pay great attention to the packaging of products in order to get us to buy them, we need to attend to our "packaging" if we want to "sell" ourselves to others, and get them to take a closer look at what's inside.'

This aesthetics in organisation literature, featured in self-help manuals, focuses on how individual employees can use aesthetics to portray themselves for themselves. Employees, potential and existing, are encouraged to regard themselves as software that can be moulded and marketed on the basis that, in the words of Mae West 'It's better to be looked over than overlooked'.<sup>4</sup>

As before, aesthetics are used here to affect the senses of the receiver, and to add value to and create differentiation for those mobilising the aesthetics. However, an important difference exists: the organisational software – its employees – can, do and should use aesthetics within the organisational setting for their own personal benefit. It is career development and the enhancement of an individual's physical capital, rather than for the commercial benefit of the company that aesthetics are being used.

### Aesthetic labour

Companies have used the aesthetics of their hardware for corporate benefit. Employees, as organisational software, too have been aware of the instrumental benefits to be gained from their personal aesthetics. We would argue that there is now a conflation of the hardware and software as companies seek to mobilise, develop and commodify individual employees as physical capital. As a result, the capacity of employees to look good and sound right becomes a highly marketable asset for employers. The purpose being for these employees to become embodiments of the employing organisation and/or simply to attract more customers through the door. Hence employees, as software, have become reconfigured as organisational human hardware, intended to create commercial benefit for their employing company.

The commercial benefit of personal aesthetics as part of the 'software' of companies has long existed but analysis of it remains limited. Existing research on the service sector has focused on a number of facets of the interaction of employee and customer, for example Adkins' (1995) research on sexuality at work, Arkin's

(1997) examination of technical skill, Hochschild's (1983) work on emotional labour, and Leidner's (1993) and Ritzer's (1996) outline of behavioural routinisation and compliance. What is missing in these analyses of management's utilisation of employees' knowledge, skills, behaviour and emotions – and absent too in the current debate about thinking and technical skills – is an overt appreciation of workers' embodied competencies and skills – aesthetic labour.

Whilst awareness and appreciation of aesthetic labour remains conceptually undeveloped, its importance has not been lost on management as company recruitment material and practices demonstrate, in their outlining of person rather than job specifications. We would argue that are two developments. Firstly, the emergence of a style labour market within the service sector that is characterised by companies marketing a lifestyle and employing people to fit the company image, and, secondly, the increasing importance of having to look good and sound right for all kinds of employees working in interactive services who were previously unaffected by aesthetic issues.

The research outlined in Warhurst et al. (2000) explored interactive, customer-contact service work in retail, hospitality, and financial services. This research found that within significant sectors of the new economy it is clear that employers are utilising labour and seek labour markets that do not, in the first instance, require acquired technical skills. Instead, employers rely to a large extent upon the physical appearance or accent of those to be employed. This labour is termed 'aesthetic labour'.

Essentially, these authors suggest, such labour is seen as a supply of embodied capacities and attributes possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment. Employers then mobilise, develop and commodify these capacities and attributes through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into 'competencies' and 'skills' which are then aesthetically geared towards producing a 'style' of service encounter deliberately intended to appeal to the senses of customers, most obviously in a visual or aural way. Although analytically more complex, 'looking good' or 'sounding right' are the most overt manifestations of aesthetic labour. In essence, with aesthetic labour, employers are seeking employees who can portray the firm's image through their work, and at the same time appeal to the senses of the customer for those firms' commercial benefit.<sup>5</sup>

It is with aesthetic labour that companies involved with interactive service work – particularly designer retailers, boutique hotels and style bars, cafés and restaurants – are increasingly seeking new approaches to

the recruitment, selection, training and management of employees. Employer demand for these aesthetic skills and competencies is becoming more prevalent because of their perceived commercial utility.

Lowe (1991) does briefly discuss the importance of appearance and image in the recruitment and selection processes of retailers, particularly high fashion retailers. This leads her to suggest the development by retailers of 'customised service provision' that is provided by suitably 'customised workers'.

Lowe and Crewe (1996) in their discussion of changing trends in retail, note an increased awareness of the importance of people within the overall product. This can be contrasted with the 1980s, when retailers were concerned with seeking differentiation via image based on 'design interiors'. They argue that in the 1990s 'concerns regarding image and presentation have been transferred to the retail workforce' (p.199). As Lowe and Wrigley note: 'Unlike the labour force of many large industrial corporations, retail sales assistants are constantly 'on display' to purchasers of their products...the employment of particular types of individuals to 'front' the retail store is essential...the retail assistants...increasingly comprise the actual product on sale' (1996:24). The rationale for this development is raised by Hatfield and Sprecher (1986:55):

Hiring on the basis of looks may be especially pervasive when a job requires employees to deal with the public. The employer may know there is no real difference in competence between an attractive and an unattractive employee, but there *may* be a difference in how they are perceived by the public or the client that could mean a difference in profit.<sup>6</sup>

This point is important. Many workers can have capacities and attributes that make them perceived to be attractive in the workplace. On the one hand, employing organisations clearly benefit commercially from the perceived attractiveness of their staff. On the other hand, it seems that being perceived as attractive also materially benefits employees. There is evidence that employability and levels of remuneration are linked to perceived attractiveness (see, for example, Hamermesh and Biddle, 1994; Hatfield and Sprecher, 1986; Roszell et al., 1989). Research based on the British Longitudinal Cohort data has found that physical appearance has a substantial effect on earning and employment patterns for men as well as women. Especially in interactive service work, and irrespective of sex, employees assessed as unattractive earn less money (Harper, 2000).

Aesthetic labour is most apparent at the level of 'physical appearance'. But this physicality is a limiting

conceptualisation. Warhurst et al.'s (2000) notion of embodied capacities and attributes then goes deeper than physical appearance. It is better to conceive of the aesthetic capacities and attributes of employees as 'dispositions' – language and dress codes, manner, style, shape and size of the body (following Bourdieu, 1984). Evidence would suggest that designer retailers, boutique hotels and style bars, cafés and restaurants, are aware of these dispositions in drawing upon particular segments of the labour market. Often these companies draw heavily on younger people, especially middle class students, who could often be thought of as having what Bourdieu has also described as the 'cultural capital' required to work in these areas, and so requiring less training.

There is a range of customer senses being manipulated by companies. With aesthetic labour here, we focus here on sight and sound, or visual and aural. Both of these aesthetics are important for companies involved in face-to-face or voice-to-voice customer interaction respectively, for example retail and call centre operations. Although the issue of accent can be overlaid as a feature in the locational decisions of companies, especially call centre operations,<sup>7</sup> both the voice and accent of employees are significant in terms of recruitment, selection and working practices. Voice and accent form an integral part of this communication process, providing this 'aural smile' if deemed attractive to the receiver – a point often referred to in call centre operations. Purportedly, a soft Scottish accent resonates favourably with customers, implying prudence, friendliness and reliability (Glasgow Development Agency, 1998; Johnstone, 1997). The table below is adapted from the employee selection guidelines for a leading financial services company's call centre operation. (*Table 1*)

What denotes a 'good' accent may be increasingly fragmenting. Recognition of this fragmentation would seem to point to the emerging importance of 'accent portfolios', where different accents are used in different settings and with different people. Encouraging 'accent portfolios' could be a useful part of increasing the employability of individuals. This point may have a particular resonance for people from particular backgrounds. Some accents are less acceptable than others. In US call centres there is some indication that companies favoured establishing operations in certain states that were perceived not to have an accent. In other states, 'non-accent' training is provided (Bain, 2000). In the UK, a survey by the UK's Institute for Personnel Development in 1996 suggested that strong regional accents are viewed negatively. This viewpoint reflects the fact that, as one recruitment consultant said: '[An accent] communicates background,

Table 1

## Voice analysis guidelines for employee selection

Volume	Quiet to Loud	The person cannot be too loud or too quiet.
Pitch	Low to High	It is easier to train a low pitched voice than to lower a high pitched voice.
Articulation	Clipped to Rounded	Does the person have a clipped colloquial accent or is their speech rounded.

education and birthplace and frankly, some backgrounds are more marketable than others.' However, as we have already indicated, regional accents are attractive to employers but it is the 'soft and friendly' not 'guttural' versions that are preferred. The implication is that certain versions of accents are not aesthetically pleasing to customers and that employees would be well advised to 'upgrade their accents'.<sup>8</sup>

We would argue that more and more employers, and to an extent this would also include more prosaic service sector companies, now place emphasis on aesthetic qualities such as personal presentation, physical appearance, personal grooming, voice, accent and communication, and style or image. A number of organisations now offer in-house training, not only in technical skills, but also in these aesthetic skills. This emerging style labour market, with its emphasis on employee aesthetics, raises important skill issues for policy-makers and academics.

### The skills that matter

Policy-makers and academics are engaged in a keen debate about the importance of skills for national and firm competitiveness (see, for example respectively National Skills Task Force, 2000; Crouch et al., 1999). They are also concerned with 'employability'. Having employability means an individual is capable of finding and securing paid work, can retain that work and can progress within it (Scottish Executive, 1999). Although seemingly overlooked, most new and future job growth will be concentrated in routine interactive service work; in hotels, retail, cafes and restaurants, personal and protective services. For this reason, it is person to person skills that are required by most employers in the growth sectors of the new economy. Acknowledging the importance of these skills will contribute significantly to an individual's employability.

Policy-makers are beginning to realise that person to person skills are as important to employers as thinking skills and IT. In these jobs, an individual's employability is based upon good communication and listening skills, for example, to interact beneficially with other employees and customers. These skills can be equated with interpersonal or social skills. The skill used by employees comes in the management of their feelings and emotions.

We would argue that what is termed 'person to person' skills, however, needs to be better conceived. Aesthetics skills are clearly the key skills demanded by designer retailers, boutique hotels and style bars, cafes and restaurants as the style labour market emerges. Employees who look good and sound right are commercially beneficial, these companies believe. In the style labour market, affecting a desired service encounter requires the use of both social and aesthetic skills. Employability here relies upon employees' skill in managing not just their feelings and emotions but also their appearance and corporeality.

Moreover, aesthetic skills are not confined to the style labour market but are being increasingly demanded by more prosaic retailers and hospitality companies. There is now clear evidence that aesthetic skills have become an important element of the skills that matter. In a national survey of skills needs in hotels, restaurants and pubs and bars undertaken by the UK Hospitality Training Foundation, the national training organisation for the industry, 85 per cent of employers stated their employees' personal presentation and appearance to be very important. Personal presentation and appearance was ranked third both now and in the future, making it more important than even employees' ability to follow instructions, demonstrate initiative or have communication skills (Hospitality Training Foundation, 2000). Along with social, aesthetic skills then form those person to person skills, as Table 2 indicates.

Of course, acknowledgement of the existence of the need for aesthetic skills is not to suggest that organisations have embarked upon a new wave management strategy that is applicable to all service organisations, but merely to suggest that within the broad range of interactive service work and employment there exists a style labour market – the skills needed for which need to be acknowledged.

Employers in retail and hospitality are not, in the first instance, seeking potential employees with technical skills. Instead, in retail generally, as in the style labour market more specifically, employers seek person to person skills. We would argue that it is here that the failure to appreciate the demand for aesthetic skills is most obvious. Clearly, employers want social skills. They also rely upon the physical appearance, or more specifically, the embodied capa-

Table 2

## Redefining person to person skills

Person to Person Skills	
Social	Aesthetic
<i>key elements</i> management of feelings emotion management	<i>key elements</i> management of appearance corporeal management
<i>examples</i> communication listening	<i>examples</i> looking good sounding right

cities and attributes of those to be employed. Technical skills, such as the use of electronic point of sale systems, tend to be developed once employees are in the organisation, and then usually derived from 'on the job' training.

Thus it is also important to note that aesthetic skills do not replace but complement social and technical skills. In the style labour market, companies need, and employees use, a matrix of skills; aesthetic, social and technical. Previous research has emphasised the first, current research has brought greater attention to the second, but the third – aesthetic – has been overlooked to date.

Acknowledging the importance of distribution, hotels and catering in terms of job growth and the need therein for person to person skills does not obviate need for the thinking skills so beloved currently by policy-makers. Undoubtedly, California-style cyber workers are at the cutting edge of the new economy. Unfortunately, even in California the number of cyber workers is small. Their employment (Campbell, 2000) tends to be more topical than typical. Although important in the UK because they create new computer software and develop new biotechnology, for example, their numbers are likewise limited now and are predicted to remain so.

Person to person skills – encompassing both the aesthetic and the social – and thinking and IT skills are required in the new economy. There will be cyber workers who enjoy their time musing in and able to afford high price lattes and cappuccinos at the style bars, cafés and restaurants. And they will want that environment, its hardware and software, to be pleasing to them.

Equally, the old economy has not faded away. Whilst routine manufacturing jobs will continue to decline, that decline will be less precipitous in the advanced economies than in the 1980s. Indeed, unskilled labouring will continue as a major source of jobs. There are other technical skills required here besides IT. These skills include bricklaying, welding, die-construction, and in the hospitality sector, silver service. It is important to note

that there is a technical skills shortage in the so-called 'old' economy. In the UK this is not surprising given employers' poor record of vocational training for blue-collar employees. For leading edge new economy companies as well as old economy companies, more employees with IT skills are needed, and in old economy manufacturing, more engineering too are needed.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore all employers are concerned with the basic and core skills of employees; literacy and numeracy, time management and the ability to learn for example. A recent survey of UK managers indicated that 77 per cent rated a high degree of literary as an essential skill and 84 per cent thought that employees' work was undermined by poor writing, for example (Fletcher, 2001). Having poor basic skills also effects the confidence of individuals and so their motivation to find paid work. For many of the unemployed, it is core skills such as time management that affects their employability because it indicates their lack of sensitivity and adherence to necessary work patterns demanded by employers. Such problems may be caused by extensive periods out of employment or drug and alcohol abuse (Watt and Warhurst, 2000).

What is required then is a more balanced approach to skills supply and demand. A plethora of discussion papers and reports now offer differing terminology for the range of skills which employers need. The lexicon has grown large: basis skills, generic skills, tacit skills, job-specific skills, vocational skills, cognitive skills, manual skills, core skills and technical skills are but some. As Keep and Mayhew (1999) point out, the range of competencies that can be group under the umbrella of 'skill' has broadened considerably in recent years.

That many of these skills are not easy to accredit with formal qualifications can prove problematic both for vocational education and training (VET) providers and the funders of VET. Giving a set of activities an accredited qualification is not necessarily the answer, though it is a preference of many in government. Too often skill is conflated with qualification, or the latter used as a proxy measure of the former. Already there exists a credentialism throughout the advanced economies in which the qualifications held by the employee – at all organisational levels – exceed the skills actually required to do the job (OECD, 1994).

We would suggest that the skills that matter are can be summarised as follows (and we acknowledge that the categories can overlap or be collapsed depending on the particular example being used);

Clearly some of these skills are not vocational in the narrow sense, but they are the range of skills that employers are seeking and will continue to seek for the fore-

seeable future. Government training policy needs to be balanced and co-ordinated to address this range of skills. Funding bodies should encourage training bodies not to compete in cherry-picking areas of training for new economy jobs, as currently defined by policy-makers, but ensure that supply meets demand by ascertaining and responding to the needs of all employers; in both the so-called new and old economies.

Table 3

The skills that matter

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Example</i>
basic	literacy, numeracy
core	time management, information assimilation
thinking	problem identification, problem solving and brokering between the two processes
technical	silver service, plumbing, welding, IT
social	communication, listening, team-working
aesthetic	appearance, self-presentation, vocal intonation

Concluding remarks

This article has highlighted the misunderstandings amongst policy-makers and academics about the 'new' economy. We have pointed out that although the jobs requiring thinking and IT skills that are said to underpin the development of this new economy are needed, the extent of that need is exaggerated. More job growth in the new economy will be in routine interactive service work requiring person to person skills in the first instance. Moreover not recognising the continued existence of the 'old' economy (and the ontological difficulties disentangling the old and new) obviates awareness of the need for technical skills beyond IT. Finally, all employers need basic and core skills.

Within this framework, we suggested, furthermore, that as service work and employment increases and becomes more competitive, there is emerging a style labour market in which companies require aesthetic skills from employees, and there has also emerged a more widespread demand for these skills, albeit less well developed,

from all employers across the service sector. The aesthetic skills demanded by employers in this style labour market need to be enveloped within the understanding of person to person skills.

In the style labour market, employers require a matrix of skills – technical, social and aesthetic. The first is provided 'in-house', the middle and last filtered into companies through recruitment and selection processes. It is the middle and last skills that are encompassed by the term person to person skills. However, it is only the social so far that has been appreciated by academics and policy-makers (see, for example, the literature on emotional labour as reviewed by Taylor (1998); and Scottish Enterprise (1998) respectively). For employers, however, the aesthetic skills that also comprise the person to person interaction can be of crucial importance as a criterion for entering employment. Moreover, such skills are essential to the process of service (in other words, doing the work) and the product that companies are keen to portray (in other words, employees embodying the image of the company). Thus, the emphasis on technical and social skills in advanced economies' work and employment omits recognition of a key development in the contemporary workplace – a development that affects the employability of much of the labour force.

Indeed, there is scope and a need for a re-assessment of what creates 'employability' if individuals are to be equipped to access the labour market of the contemporary economy and maintain their employment within it. A more grounded awareness and appreciation of the range of skills that matter to employers and employees have consequences not just for academic conceptualisation, but also policy related to VET provision.

Unfortunately, current VET policy tends to be driven by a traditional approach – the technical skill model. Taking a wider view of the economy and actual changes in it suggests a very different prescription. If job growth does continue in routine interactive service work, requiring little formal technical training, there will be supply and demand skills gap between employers' needs and the labour most likely to be employed.

One suggestion would be the provision of better labour market intelligence for all, at the point of exit from schools, entrance and exit from further and higher education, and through the employment service. This intelligence would need to be authoritative, and sensitive to both supply and demand issues. It should be evidence-driven, meaning that academics must engage policy-makers. We would suggest that would result from co-operation between the suppliers, users and funders of labour market information and intelligence, such as

academics, trade unions, employers, training providers, and local and national government agencies.<sup>10</sup> Unless this co-operation is created the linkages between services, skills and the 'new' economy will remain under-appreciated and have deleterious effects for employers, employees and restructuring economies.

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Endnotes

- 1 The initial findings of that research can be found in Warhurst et al. (2000)
- 2 For further elaboration of these points see Warhurst and Thompson (1998, 1999)
- 3 For further and more detailed discussion of the relationship between aesthetics and organisation, see Witz et al. (1998)
- 4 Quoted in James (1998)
- 5 It is important to note that the form of aesthetic being offered may vary from one type of service organisation to another
- 6 Emphasis in the original
- 7 According to recent research conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies at the University of Sussex and to be Published in 2001, in Europe, compaines seek areas of high unemployment when locating call centre operations
- 8 These quotes are taken from Young (1997:5) with further material drawn from Ward (2000:6)
- 9 As reported at the seminar 'Graduate Employability and Education for Business' organised by Scottish Council for Development and Industry (1999) and National Skills Task Force (2000)
- 10 For further discussion on this possibility, see Crouch et al. (1999)

## A HÓNAP GONDOLATA

**„A siker azoké, akik képesek mások által nem azonosított igényeket felismerni, és kellő újtőerővel rendelkeznek ahhoz, hogy ötleteiket értékes termékek és szolgáltatásokká formálják.”**

Joseph Chester Wilson  
a Xerox alapítója, a fénymásoló „atyja”  
(1909 – 1971)

Bár Wilson nem „a garázsból” indult, egy alig ismert, középszerű vállalkozásból épített világcéget. Ennek a folyamatnak a során ő maga is jelentős változásokon ment keresztül. Állítólag félénk fiú volt, aki szinte semmit sem örökölt apja és nagypja vezéregyéniségéből. Számára eleinte egy nyilvános beszéd elmondása is komoly feladatot jelentett. Viszont kellően kitartó volt ahhoz, hogy ami nem ment könnyen, azt akár jelentős plusz energiákat is mozgósítva, de megtanulja.

Azt mondják, egy másolat sosem olyan értékes, mint az eredeti. Ez alapvetően igaz, bár Wilson életútja némileg rácáfol erre a bölcsességre. ő ugyanis másolatokra alapozta világbirodalmát, bár kétség kívül ezt sajátosan egyéni, szinte már utánozhatatlan módon. Ennek a rendkívül figyelemreméltó embernek köszönhetjük az egyikleggyakoribb irodai alkalmazást, a fénymásolót. Hiba volna azonban azt gondolni, hogy Wilsont egy gép megalkotása tette gazdaggá és híressé.

A sikerhez azt is ki kellett találnia, hogyan lehet az első robusztus modelleket értékesíteni.

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