The Public Library Routines Project

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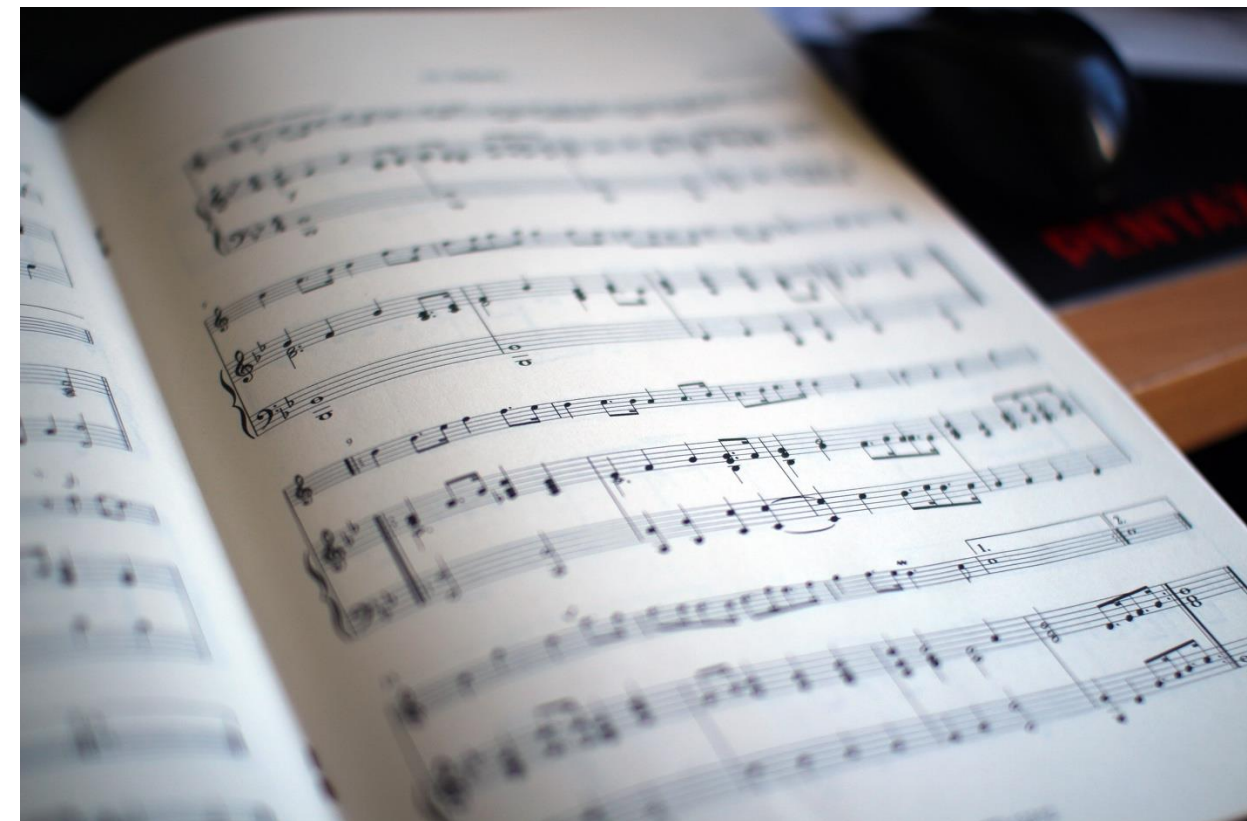INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

Work Routines and Identity

Routine Dynamics (Feldman et al., 2021)

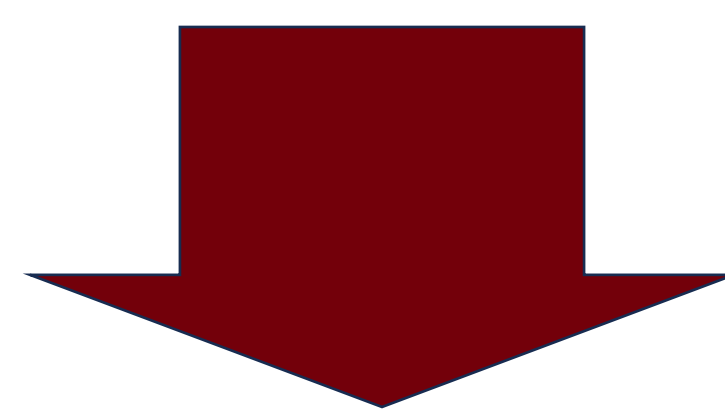Mic JohnsonLP. (2020). Sheet Music. www.songsimian.com

Anton Vakulenko. (2015). Piano Time. Flickr

Ostensive Element "Sheet Music"

How we've done things in the past; Organizational goals; Management expectations

Performative Element "Improv"

How workers play the music

Identity Threats
Petriglieri (2011)

Threat #1: Devalued Identity
Ex: Reducing prestige associated with group membership

Threat #2: Changed Meanings
Ex: Changing how work is done in ways that threaten role identity

Threat #3: Authenticity Prevented
Ex: Blocking workers from tasks that validate their distinct sense of self

Sources of Identity Threat

Management
Productive Followership, a.k.a, "Taylorism"

When this rating system was first made, it was, like, 'Oh, you can only be outstanding by going way, way above and beyond your job duties,' which doesn't really make a lot of sense to me . . . I think if you're doing your work at 100%, then that should be the top rating and you shouldn't necessarily have to go above and beyond.

Colleagues
Compulsive Organizational Citizenship (He et al., 2018)

There's a lot of pressure in my workplace to think of ourselves as a family, which I definitely don't . . . I definitely feel that pressure to be nice to everyone all the time and to offer to help, even when common sense should tell me that I don't have the bandwidth to offer that time and assistance.

Patrons
Enchanting Myth of Customer Sovereignty (Korczynski & Evans, 2013)

[When we closed for a storm], you would have thought that we told them that the moon and the sun switched places . . . Every time we told a new person that walked through the door, they got instantly irate or very snappish.

Technology
Changes work practices in ways that introduce threats to a worker's value-based, competency-based, or authenticity-based self-esteem (Craig, Thatcher, & Grover, 2019)

In all my years of service, I'm so used to things going a certain way and not having any issues. And so, for me, it was more of a trying to wrap my head around that things are changing . . . it gets frustrating because you're in this mindset of, I've been here for so many years that I really shouldn't have to remind myself of little things like this.

Built World
Restricts movement through time and space in ways that suggest a worker doesn't belong (Piazzoni et al., 2022)

Management said I cannot use the ADA accommodations I'm asking for. So I had to take off my headphones. I put in my Loops, because it is ridiculously loud and heavily sensory stimulating during our morning meetings

How Workers Respond

Dominating: Prioritize the self standpoint on identity
I wear on my lanyard little magical homosexual pins and other things that kind of signal some more overt magical homosexuality. . . So much paraphernalia that basically says, 'I am here to support any of the gay people'

Obliging: Prioritize others standpoint on identity
I call it putting on my second face—when I have to be really peppy and people-oriented. . . I had to keep my face from twisting in pain, even though it felt like I was actively getting stabbed in the lower abdomen

Integrating: Merge the self standpoint with the standpoint of others
I've told him before multiple times, like, 'Oh, I'm sorry I don't answer personal questions at work, but I am happy to help you with your library business'

Compromising: Partially violate the standpoints of both the self and others
I have started working earlier so that I can get the prerequisites that are necessary for my job done while being able to use the accommodations that I want but haven't been approved . . . It's kind of skirting the rules

Avoiding: Sidestep identity threatening situations
I recognized this patron and I'm not proud to admit it, but I hung back for a minute because I could see that my manager was about to go out to the desk

References

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