

such as insurance claims, tax returns, or bank checks will have noticed the machinelike way in which such organizations operate. They are designed like machines, and their employees are in essence expected to behave as if they were parts of machines.

Fast-food restaurants and service organizations of many kinds operate in accordance with similar principles, with every action preplanned in a minute way, even in areas where personal interactions with others are concerned. Employees are frequently trained to interact with customers according to a detailed code of instructions and are monitored in their performance. Even the most casual smile, greeting, comment, or suggestion by a sales assistant is often programmed by company policy and rehearsed to produce authentic results. The management observation checklist used by a famous fast-food restaurant to monitor employee performance (Exhibit 2.1) indicates the degree to which a simple task like serving a customer can be mechanized, observed, and evaluated in a mechanical way.

Machines, Mechanical Thinking, and the Rise of Bureaucratic Organization

Organizations that are designed and operated as if they were machines are now usually called bureaucracies. But most organizations are bureaucratized in some degree, for the mechanistic mode of thought has shaped our most basic conceptions of what organization is all about. For example, when we talk about organization we usually have in mind a state of orderly relations between clearly defined parts that have some determinate order. Although the image may not be explicit, we are talking about a set of mechanical relations. We talk about organizations as if they were machines, and as a consequence we tend to expect them to operate as machines: in a routinized, efficient, reliable, and predictable way.

In certain circumstances, which are discussed in the concluding section of this chapter, a mechanical mode of organization can provide the basis for effective operation. But in others it can have many unfortunate consequences. It is thus important to understand how and when we are engaging in mechanistic thinking and how so many popular theories and taken-for-granted ideas about organization support this thinking. One of the major challenges facing many modern organizations is to replace this kind of thinking with fresh ideas and approaches, such as those discussed in subsequent chapters. Let us turn, therefore, to the story behind the development of our mechanistic concepts of organization.

Greeting the customer	Yes	No
1. There is a smile.		
2. It is a sincere greeting.		
3. There is eye contact.		
Other:		
Taking the order	Yes	No
1. The counter person is thoroughly familiar with the menu ticket. (No hunting for items)		
2. The customer has to give the order only once.		
3. Small orders (four items or less) are memorized rather than written down.		
4. There is suggestive selling.		
Other:		
Assembling the order	Yes	No
1. The order is assembled in the proper sequence.		
2. Grill slips are handed in first.		
3. Drinks are poured in the proper sequence.		
4. Proper amount of ice.		
5. Cups slanted and finger used to activate.		
6. Drinks are filled to the proper level.		
7. Drinks are capped.		
8. Clean cups.		
9. Holding times are observed on coffee.		
10. Cups are filled to the proper level on coffee.		
Other:		
Presenting the order	Yes	No
1. It is properly packaged.		
2. The bag is double folded.		
3. Plastic trays are used if eating inside.		
4. A tray liner is used.		

5. The food is handled in a proper manner.		
Other:		
Asking for and receiving payment	Yes	No
1. The amount of the order is stated clearly and loud enough to hear.		
2. The denomination received is clearly stated.		
3. The change is counted out loud.		
4. Change is counted efficiently.		
5. Large bills are laid on the till until the change is given.		
Other:		
Thanking the customer and asking for repeat business	Yes	No
1. There is always a thank-you.		
2. The thank-you is sincere.		
3. There is eye contact.		
4. Return business was asked for.		
Other:		

Exhibit 2.1 A Management Observation Checklist Used to Evaluate the Performance of Counter Staff in a Fast-Food Restaurant

THE ORIGINS OF MECHANISTIC ORGANIZATION

Organizations are rarely established as ends in themselves. They are instruments created to achieve other ends. This is reflected in the origins of the word *organization*, which derives from the Greek *organon*, meaning a tool or instrument. No wonder, therefore, that ideas about tasks, goals, aims, and objectives have become such fundamental organizational concepts, for tools and instruments are mechanical devices invented and developed to aid in performing some kind of goal-oriented activity.

This instrumentality is evident in the practices of the earliest formal organizations of which we know, such as those that built the great pyramids, empires, churches, and armies. However, it is with the invention