

The Role of the Customer Advocate: Contextual and Task Performance as Advocacy Participation

Abstract:

Contextual performance in the workplace has been identified as including relational activities that maintain the broader social and psychological environment in which task performance occurs in organizations. In this conceptual writing, organizational advocacy (OA) is offered as a form of task and contextual performance that is pertinent in the 21st century, especially while serving and working with customers on a day-to-day basis. OCB is conceptualized as a component of the contextual performance of OA. OA and customer advocacy are defined and models are provided, suggesting that what is thought, said, and done by organizational members must receive expanded attention, in this case, in dealing with internal and external customers.

It is now assumed that failing to manage service strategically not only leaves customers angry, but also costs profits (Gale, 1994; Schneider, 1980). Customers now define and decide the fate of companies. Yet, the importance of customers continues to be taken for granted (Blanding, 1991). Pertinent to this issue, the following statement by Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz and Niles-Jolly (2005) is a step in the right direction: “[C]ompanies should seek employee display of motivated behavior in pursuit of important organizational outcomes—like customer-focused OCB” (p. 1029). This paper adds to the call for concern regarding what members “display” through what they think, say, and do inside the task and contextual performances of involvement with customers.

According to Schneider (1980), “[O]rganizational dynamics have a direct impact on the people the organization serves, as well as on employee performance and attitudes” (p. 53). Ultimately, the organization dynamics and choices of members result in the focus of this writing: members’ willingness to do the work well and the demonstration of concern for the customer pay dividends.

In a study by Motowidlo and Van Scotter (1994), task and contextual performance was shown to involve different patterns of behavior and these patterns “contribute independently to supervisor’s judgments about an individual’s overall worth to the organization” (p. 479). *Task performance*, the work-related activities performed by organizational members that contribute to the technical core of the organization (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997), has long been a focus of research. In recent years, *contextual performance*, the activities performed by members that help to maintain the broader organizational, social, and psychological environment in which the technical core operates (Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997), has also become a focus of researchers.

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to define and discuss, through the lens of task and contextual performance, the concepts of organizational advocacy (OA), customer advocacy, and advocacy participation as performance factors in the workplace. (Workplace advocacy issues also include self-advocacy, leader advocacy, member advocacy, customer advocacy, community advocacy, and inclusion advocacy [see Table 1]). “Boosterism” and “going-the-extra-mile”

exists in the literature as dimensions of OCB. The author discusses organizational advocacy as task and contextual components of which OCB is part of the contextual dimension, as described in Figure 1.

---Insert Table 1 here---

In the following, first, task and contextual performance is briefly highlighted, then, second, customer advocacy, a subset of organizational advocacy (Seiling, 2001), is introduced. Third, a model of organizational advocacy (OA) is offered (and, thus, customer advocacy) and organizational citizen behavior (OCB) is briefly discussed as it relates to OA. Fourth, customer advocacy and the role of the customer advocate are described as advocacy participation activities. Then, expressive activity approaches are described as they relate to customer advocacy. Finally, implications for theory development and future research are offered.

The author acknowledges the risk of writing in somewhat contradictory ways regarding the highly researched and valuable OCB activities that have proliferated across multiple academic disciplines. Although slowly moving into the literature upon introduction in the late 80's (Organ, 1988), in the 1990's OCB burst onto the academic scene with enthusiasm. Podaskoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) states, "The literature also indicates that there are a number of occasions where essentially the same idea or concept [as OCB] has been given different labels by different researchers" making it "difficult to see the overall patterns that exist in the research literature" (p. 515). It is not the purpose of this writing to add to the confusion or to go in depth regarding Podaskoff et al's and others identified common themes or dimensions regarding OCB that include: "(1) Helping Behavior, (2) Sportsmanship, (3) Organizational Loyalty, (4) Organizational Compliance (5) Individual Initiative, (6) Civic Virtue, and (7) Self Development" (p. 516). The purpose is to locate advocacy participation as verbal and actional performance activities that proliferate in the contextual performance of the above common theme behaviors.

CUSTOMER ADVOCACY

Customer advocacy, the focus of this writing, is noted as: "member actions of positively representing the company to the customer and the customer to the company" (See Table 1) (Seiling, 2001: 92). These actions are linked to performance with both internal and external customers (Motowidlo & Van Scotter, 1994). This linkage spreads across work activities in the communications and behavioral area (contextual) and the performance of the work (task). Unless otherwise noted, the term "customer" is related to both the internal and external location of customers. Of importance is the realization that task and contextual performance in the role of the customer advocate as service provider requires the intentional orchestration of willing choices that consistently reflect purposeful and beneficial service performance.

Customer advocacy is a subset of *organizational advocacy* (OA) (See Figure 1). OA includes ongoing, intention-based, value-added verbal and actional activities of workplace members significant to expanded achievement and the furtherance of the wellbeing of the members and the organization (Seiling, 2001). Advocacy activities noted as *advocacy participation* (see Figure 2), is the *ongoing use of language and energy to perform through words and actions in ways that advance the welfare of self, others, and the organization as a whole* (Seiling, 2001). This is supported by Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch's (1994) description of the term advocacy participation, which they note as occurring within OCB. Advocacy participation in OA includes *everyday* task and contextual performances, as well as

expansive activities of innovation, and maintenance of high standards, (part of what is represented in Podaskoff et al [2000] as civic virtue), and making suggestions for change. As noted, all are part of and significant to routine performance. This moves customer advocacy past the occasional OCB moment into everyday activities of service.

The Activities of Advocacy Participation

Schneider et al (2005), in expanding on what has been called “linkage research” pertaining to customers (Wiley, 1996), suggested that “what employees experience in their work worlds is correlated with the experiences they provide for customers” (p. 1017). In this writing, customer advocacy is offered as a conceptual extension of Schneider et al’s study of climate-customer satisfaction. Although customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction are not discussed in this paper, it is proposed that customer satisfaction will be enhanced by activities of the advocate producing a dynamic outcome and/or a reaction by the customer to performance that creates a working framework of connection and partnership between the advocate and the customer. Thus, the customer can ultimately become an advocate for the company. The Activities of Advocacy Participation, Figure 2 are discussed below.

---Insert Model here—Figure 2---

The location of the advocate, whatever the advocacy issue involved (see Table 1), is inside the intersection in Figure 3, identifying the advocate as representative and intermediary of the company with the customer, and as a representative and intermediary of the customer to the company. As noted in The Activities of Advocacy Participation, (Figure 2), advocates perform *verbal* and *actional contributions* that promote and balance the needs and welfare of both the customer and the organization to and with the other, activating advocacy participation efforts. *Responses* of the customer to advocacy participation efforts are both a response to the approach of the advocate in the moment and the history of impressions experienced in the past—yet responses can be revised by the performance of advocacy gestures by the service provider.

--Insert Figure 3 here---

Performance as an advocate is influenced by (1) the willingness to beneficially represent the company, (2) an understanding of the ramifications of contextual and task performance within the role through ongoing education and training, (3) customer expectations of performance by the company representative, (4) the existence and experience of accountability with the company representative, (5) the relationships developed through performing the role of advocate over time, and (6) the *outcomes* that occur as a result of performance of the role. The model emphasizes the ongoing interactive and performative nature of advocacy gestures pertinent to influencing impressions and the activation of assumptions regarding future performance activities in the workplace.

Expectancy Theory

Pertinent to the model, *expectancy theory* suggests that member advocacy responses are governed by a set of expectations about what is permissible and what is not (Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder and Penner, 2006), both in task performance and contextual performance. The basic idea of expectancy theory was described by Vroom (1964) suggesting that people “are motivated to behave so that they obtain the outcomes which they believe will provide the results they desire” (in Foster, 2000: 311). The theory assumes leader behavior and organizational climate are relevant to subordinate conceptions about how to attain rewards (House, 1971), ultimately influencing the motivation to perform one’s assigned role (Organ & Bateman, 1986; Schneider et al, 2005). The three elements of expectancy theory significant to contributions of positive customer advocacy practices and customer outcomes are: *expectancy* (belief that positive verbal

and actional effort attributed as beneficial will result in performance), *instrumentality* (belief that effortful performance with customers will be rewarded), and *valence* (how much the reward is valued) (; House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974; Shackleton & Wale, 2000). These elements are relevant to the willingness of members to perform collaboratively with to internal and external customers.

Of note is that few actions, once they are performed, are really reversible (Cummings & Anton, 1999). Observers (customers) consider that actions are *volitional*, made by choice. They are attributed as thought through and purposeful (Salanick, 1995) and made at the direction of the company represented by the performer. Thus, what the service provider does and says is experienced as the voice and actions of the company.

Two Locations of Advocacy Participation

In organizations today, there are two views of the role of customer advocate for the external customer: the *assigned role* and the *routine (everyday) role* of customer-contact person. An assigned role is typical of what has been termed *corporate advocacy* and has typically been the role of the public relations department of organizations. Yet, based on this writing, temporary assignment as a customer contact role to a specific person is noted as performing as a customer advocate. An example of the assigned role of the customer advocate occurs at Xerox, a company with a history of customer focus starting with the founder, Joe Wilson, Xerox President from 1946 to 1966. Today at Xerox, an “Officer of the Day” at the corporate staff level deals with issues that reach the attention of the CEO. This Officer of the Day focuses on the problem and is the champion for the customer with the company. He or she works with the Customer Relations area or others who can identify resolutions (research and investigation), and then completes the circle by contacting the originator of the complaint (the customer). According to Zemke and Schaaf, “The priority today is to continuously and carefully listen to customers, understand what they’re saying as it applies to the business of serving them, and then respond creatively to what they tell you” (1989: 29).

Also present at Xerox is an active program to train customer contact employees in good customer-contact skills and how to take care of customer needs, an example of the second role, the everyday customer-contact advocacy role. According to Dave Maskens, Customer Experience Manager – Xerox Services,

The goal is to identify and listen to customer concerns and to quickly address those concerns. Of course, each contact is situation based, but we encourage and train [employees] to effectively meet the needs of customers. Many of our training programs include a focus on four contact employee behaviors identified through our own research as important to meeting customer needs. They are: accessibility, responsiveness, follow through, and ownership of the issue” (personal communication, July 2007).

Xerox demonstrates that listening is productive when there are active efforts made to understand the “moments of truth” identified through active efforts of the customer advocate.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

People naturally put energy into adjusting the world around them to represent what they perceive as important. In doing so, they express themselves and perform in ways in order to put their distinctive personal thumbprint on everything they do (Culbert, 1996). Advocacy activities are expressions of that thumbprint, acting as a contextual performance factor of the work. These activities include actions and activities significant to the dictionary meaning of the word *advocacy*: an act of pleading for, supporting, and recommending. In order to *plead for* and

support, inquiry must be included as part of the activities of advocacy and *participation* at a level of successful contribution is essential. Senge (1990) and Argyris (1985) note that a balance of inquiry and advocacy is necessary suggesting that “pure” advocacy (strong challenging behavior) does not include inquiry. Thus, successful advocacy participation includes activities of inquiry occurring inside exchanges of information, support, and innovative verbal engagement.

Advocacy participation also includes being attentive to task performance, first, by paying attention to effectiveness and what needs to be learned to do the job well, and, second, by being alert to the elements of customer care. The expansion of technology and the demand for more information by customers continues to impact task performance (Burke & Cooper, 2002), causing the need to more deeply merge task performance with contextual performance in order to meet the needs of customers.

THE ROLE OF THE CUSTOMER ADVOCATE

Social role theory defines role as “an organized set of prescriptions and/or expected activities that can be associated with a given position” (Gottlieb, 1998: 130; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Sarbin & Allen, 1968; Shaw & Costanzo, 1982; Thomas & Biddle, 1966). A role includes categories of activities that are recognized and expected by others as existing in a certain category of persons (Thomas & Biddle, 1966). Goffman (1961) notes that a person’s values, personality, and aptitudes, as well as the expectations of one’s employer, adjust the ability of the person to perform a given role. Additionally, according to the theory, the environment in which one performs the role may “preclude some role behaviors, partially permit others, and force others into being” (Gottlieb, 1998: 130). Yet, behavioral and task activities previously not seen as assigned roles have recently been moved into the expectations of performance. It is now assumed that all realms of performance cannot be described regarding role performance and members are responsible for active participation in stretching the boundaries of what was previously assumed as “top performance” (Seiling, 1997). Innovative customer service is expected and no longer is perceived as OCB behavior.

Contextual Performance at a Deep Level

Hockey’s *compensatory control model*—“an adaptive regulatory process, which helps to maintain output for high-priority task goals within acceptable limits, at the expense of other (low-priority) activities” (2000: 219)—addresses the need to make choices as to how to work effectively. Attention and intention is given to how fast to work, how much accuracy is needed, and how to continually adjust activities for performance based on attributions that impact choice (Shackleton & Wale, 2000). In the case of the customer advocate, although routine patterns of performance exist, there is attentiveness to effective performance on an ongoing, complementary basis. Advocacy participation is part of ongoing effective performance.

Energy level is a factor. As noted by Hockey, “[O]perating at a very high level for any length of time is likely to be uncomfortable, and to impose considerable strain and give rise to fatigue” (2000: 222; (Hockey & Meijman, 1998; Hockey, Briner, Tattersall & Wiethoff, 1989). This is especially significant in customer engagement activities—and advocacy practices in general, again requiring ongoing attention to effective levels of engagement that can be utilized without strain or fatigue production over time.

As represented in the literature on *emotional labor* (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Fineman, 1993; Hochschild, 1983; Putnam & Mumby, 1993), in the case of serving customers, suggests that organization members must be prepared to offer experience, knowledge, expertise,

and skills that can support organizational effectiveness in order to compete at a higher organizational level than in the past. These activities can be demanding and stressful. According to Hochschild (1983), frontline customer service people engage in emotional labor at the ‘surface’ or ‘deep’ level, depending on the circumstances (Fineman, 2000). Since the advocate works with *intention*, the emotional labor of advocacy participation can be noted as ‘deep’ emotional labor, demanding a level of commitment and representation that requires advantageous connection with the customer. There is a conscious effort to produce best results, in this case, to do the work and serve the customer.

Customer advocacy gestures include asking questions and going deeper into the needs of the customer, rather than only addressing expressed needs, in order to identify the real problem. It is suggesting solutions that may not be particular to other situations or may be beyond the service parameters of the advocate. It may include telling the customer about other, cost-saving services of the company, etc.

Customer Advocacy as an Interdependent Activity

Activities of the customer advocate are performed as interactive exchanges that support, confirm, affirm, and validate the representative as an effective, accountable, interdependent actor representing the organization. A company of beneficial representative/advocates reinforces expectations of the organization to perform to its fullest in order to be as reputable, profitable, and as effective as possible. This requires exchanges of information and worth within activities of work.

Moving Beyond “Doing Enough”

Pine and Gilmore (1998: 117) state, “Process excellence—at least in the sense of truly engaging customers—surfaces only when a worker decides to enrich *how* he or she performs each activity” (*italics in text*). Doing what is necessary to meet job description designations and occasionally doing “a recognizable modest, trivial extra-role performance” (Morrison & Phelps, 1999: 403; Organ, 1988), is no longer enough. In the role of customer advocate, it is the presence of intention, energy, and engagement *everyday* that matters—what Glasser calls *organized behaviors*, noted as “*all we know how to do, think, and feel*—that are presently available from our behavioral systems... We use them day-after-day to maintain control of our lives” (1984: 88; *italics in text*). The level of engagement and belief in *how to do* and *what to do* regarding serving others demonstrates whether advocacy is a part of one’s “organized behaviors.”

OA emphasizes that every member participates in the success of his or her organization. This is especially significant to beneficially serving customers (Schneider, 1980). The advocate, when needed, actively calls for change regarding serving the customer. In the organizational context, each person constructs the context of the organization with others. Addressing issues of needed change are pertinent to the role of customer advocate.

In summary, in the case of customer advocacy, advocacy participation suggests purposely working with energy, cooperation, collaboration, and appreciation of the customer being served—whether it is an internal or external customer. The role of the advocate includes the willingness to inquire and advocate, when needed, to expand the abundance of resources and results pertinent to serving one’s customers. It is part of the everyday activities of “working well” with others.

ORGANIZATIONAL ADVOCACY AS IT RELATES TO OCB

Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) labeled the occasional higher level of employee activity as *organizational citizenship behavior* (OCB). Organ defined OCB as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization.” He also says, “By discretionary, we mean that the behavior is not an enforceable requirement of the role or the job description, that is, the clearly specifiable terms of the person’s employment contract with the organization; the behavior is rather a matter of personal choice, such that its omission is not generally understood as punishable” (1988: 4). Following his lead, in recent decades researchers and writers have highlighted the benefits of citizenship behavior as a social exchange model of innovative and spontaneous activity that goes beyond role prescriptions in organizations (Konovsky & Pugh, 1994; Organ, 1988; Bolino et al, 2002). Konovsky and Pugh agree, “Citizenship behavior is employee behavior that is above and beyond the call of duty and is therefore discretionary and not rewarded in the context of an organization’s formal reward structure” (p. 656). Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, and Chen (2005: 421) also note that OCB supports task performance by enhancing a social and psychological activities in the work environment (Organ, 1997), suggesting the importance of contextual performance.

OCB was especially salient in the 20th century when leading was based in the “leaders think and employees do” approach to performance. In this approach, job descriptions define the job. OCB activities, going beyond the job description, could be seen as going the extra mile with the assumed permission of those in charge. When doing so, it was noticed and noted, and, since it was occasionally expected, it could also be noted when not doing so. The person who occasionally makes an OCB gesture could be seen as being a high performer. As noted earlier, Morrison and Phelps state that research on OCB “has concentrated almost entirely on what Organ [1988] referred to as modest, some would even say trivial, behaviors that sustain status quo” (1999: 403). Moving past “the trivial,” the difference between OCB and OA, as emphasized in advocacy activities, is the persistence of member performance at a higher level. Occasional acts of OCB are no longer sufficient.

Other Noted Dimensions of OCB

Noted in Chen, Chen and Meindl (1998), Tjosvold (1988) identifies four interaction dimensions of OCB associated with the cooperative goal relationship. They are: “(1) exchanging and combining information, ideas, and other resources; (2) giving assistance; (3) discussing problems and conflicts constructively; and (4) supporting and encouraging each other” (Chen et al, 1988: 287). Tjosvold (1988) also notes the similarity of Graham’s (1989) four-dimension model of OCB: “(1) interpersonal helping, (2) individual initiative in communications to others in the workplace, (3) personal industry in performing specific tasks beyond the call of duty, and (4) loyal boosterism—that is, the promotion of organizational image to outsiders” (noted in Chen et al, 1998: 287). “Boosterism” can be seen as the verbal activities and “personal industry” can be noted as within the task performance activities of OA.

Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine and Bachrack (2000), in a review of the literature, notes that within almost 30 definitions of OCB there is a great deal of conceptual overlap that can be organized into seven common themes: “(1) Helping Behavior, (2) Sportsmanship, (3) Organizational Loyalty, (4) Organizational Compliance (5) Individual Initiative, (6) Civic Virtue, and (7) Self Development” (p. 516), many of which fall into the dimensions of “innovative and spontaneous” behavior suggested by Katz (1964), and noted by Podsakoff et al as “including (1) cooperating with others, (2) protecting the organization, (3) volunteering

constructive ideas, (4) self-training, and (5) maintaining a favorable attitude toward the company” (p. 526).

Many of these dimensions are also evident in the contextual performance of advocacy participation, suggesting the inclusion of OCB as contextual performance gestures within OA. However, the *reoccurring* (ongoing efforts) and *spontaneous* and *purposeful* (intentional) nature of advocacy striving that is recognized and rewarded in order to express, affirm, and act on organizational and personal goals is pertinent to the expressive and instrumental activities of OA, suggesting divergence from the occasionalness nature and lack of recognition and reward of OCB. For this reason, advocacy is suggested as a contributory aspect of performance in which OCB is embedded as a segment of contextual performance (Figure 1).

EXPRESSIVE CUSTOMER ADVOCACY APPROACHES

Galbraith (1967) states that human energy is not like other scarce resources: humans have a basic need to use energy for *expressive activity*. Expressive activities include contextual and task activities, thus, people attempt to express themselves in constructive ways in order to be actively contributive. Organizational roles offer opportunities for the use of energy in channeling expressive activities into the accomplishment of effectiveness and efficiency in different activities and functions within the organizational environment (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

Expressive activities are present in the activities of the advantage-producing role of the organizational advocate. The advocate can be described as an *institutional intermediary*. Institutional intermediaries have typically been described as high-status actors having a strong influence on an organization’s prominence (Kuran & Sunstein, 1999; Rao, Davis, & Ward, 2000; Rindova, Williamson, Petkova, & Sever, 2005) specializing in disseminating information about their organization and potentially influencing an organization’s prominence (Fombrun, 1996; Rao, 1998).

Moving the intermediary concept to the customer contact, service providers can be seen as institutional intermediaries who influence the thinking of customers regarding the company through verbal (contextual) and actional (task) activities. As intermediaries, they are local disseminators of information about the organization and the products or services offered, whether performed consciously or unconsciously. FedEx takes this a step further by using both managers and employees as speakers at external conferences. The in-house speaker’s bureau uses rigorously trained company volunteers to give presentations. It is felt that this reinforces FedEx’s corporate reputation and builds relationships with new and existing customers (Gronstedt, 2000). These activities of advocacy participation influence current and future decisions of the customer regarding the particular organization.

Customer advocates demonstrate effort and motivation that represents, from the organization’s viewpoint, a system of effective production of action and/or service. Energetic, expressive activity, as it relates to serving internal and external customers, can be approached through Boccialetti’s (1995) three basic style orientations (although he was not at the time talking about serving customers): accommodating approaches, autonomous approaches, and adversarial approaches. Translated to advocacy approaches for serving customers,

- *Accommodating approaches* are those used when the contact person is attentive to, listens to, and generally performs to deliver the message of interest, concern, and accommodation while staying within the guidelines of productive service.

- *Autonomous approaches* are those in which the contact person steps beyond normal authority when it is necessary to do so. Broader guidelines are assumed by the advocate in order to meet expanded needs while delivering the voice and actions of the company.
- *Adversarial approaches* are activated when the person sees the customer as a problem (potentially holding an extreme mindset of judgment and intolerance; Rindova, Becerra & Contardo, 2004). Unfortunately, this viewpoint is delivered as resistance to the requests/needs of the customer. Performance may spurn guidelines provided by the company regarding beneficial service.

Accommodation theory suggests that persons tend to adjust their language to lower barriers to working effectively with others (Haslam, 2004). This suggests that the desire to use expressive approaches which enhance (or diminish) effectiveness in interpersonal exchange activities with others can be adjusted in order to address the other's needs. Bolman and Deal highlight Argyris and Schon's (1974) argument that an "individual's behavior is controlled by personal 'theories for action,' that is, assumptions and ideas about the nature of effective action. A theory for action ... informs behavior and tells a person what to do" (1991: 136). Argyris and Shon suggest this theory-for-action (approach) is a self-protective model of interpersonal behavior utilized to get what is wanted while protecting the performer in various situations (Bolman & Deal, 2000).

THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Working in an organization automatically *assigns the role of corporate representative to each person* suggesting that what this person says and does is assumed by others as organizationally permitted activity. Thus, advocacy performance practices cannot be ignored. As demonstrated by Xerox's previously noted focus on training, the role of the organization is to expand the meaning of effective performance (advocacy) and its impact on service to customers, whether internal or external. To do so, the organization (1) commits to serving its own people in ways that make it safe and desirable to be an advocate of the customer to the organization and to advocate for the organization to the customer, (2) hires advocacy-oriented people—those who care about customers, (3) clearly defines what a successful customer advocacy role is, (4) emphasizes the message of advocacy through education and accountability while tying it to the organization's overarching purpose, and (5) clearly understands that the place where marketing for the organization really happens is at the place of customer contact (Seiling, 2001), with both the internal and external customer.

The question, "Is this organizational member a positive or negative advocate for our company?" is of importance to contextual and task performance assessment. This question is always answered within the context of the organization. As stated by Trevino and Brown (2004), "Most people are the product of the context they find themselves in. They tend to 'look up and look around,' and they do what others around them do or expect them to do" (p. 72). Awareness of the need to continually inform, educate, and train on an ongoing basis around the consequentialist framework (Schneider et al, 2005)—consideration of the benefits and/or harms that come to organizations because of the presence of or lack of constructive contextual and task performance activities—is important to effective and productive internal and external customer activities).

Summary and Conclusion

This writing focuses on the issue of customer advocacy within the model of OA (Figure 1) and the Activities of the Organizational Advocate (Figure 2). Advocacy participation expands the contributions of verbal and actional advocacy participation into the realities of 21st century contextual and task activities of work. It is suggested that activities of dynamic, intentional, and ongoing advocacy participation, especially with customers, must become the norm in order for members to be effective contributors in the organizational context. Effective organizational performance requires members to understand the ramifications of both task and contextual performance. When willing to reorganize, acknowledge, and perform behaviors that reflect ongoing advocacy participation, the members and the organization benefit.

Organizational advocacy and *customer advocacy* call for the shifting of paradigms in how serving others occur in internal and external organizational customer relationships. Of importance is the understanding that systems of relationships are dynamic, that making small changes in relationships (in this case, with internal and external customers) has the potential of orchestrating positive ripple effects in the relational system.

Implications for Theory Development

What are the implications for theory development for OA in general and customer advocacy in particular? From the perspective of this author, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of this area of study and theory development. First, the *motivational implications* cannot be ignored. Organizations struggle with providing reasons for connecting with internal and external customers. Second, customer advocacy *provides a reason and purpose* for members to verbalize the positive attributes of their organization, ultimately helping people to see their companies in a better light (self-fulfilling prophesy). Third, advocacy gestures, especially with customers, provide *moderating influences* that shape attributions and interpretations of events both in the moment and over time by the customer; and, fourth, customer advocacy can, as accommodating and autonomous expressive and performative activities, recursively reduce negative attributions and gain support for *the development of positive connections and membership affiliations* inside the workplace—and with customers. To continue to ignore advocacy participation is to ignore these dynamics and is done to the peril of organizations.

Future Research

Research is necessary for further conceptualization of the model of OA, and, as Schneider et al also suggest, it must be undertaken in order to “untangle when and under what circumstances the relationships in these extended-links models will appear” (p. 1027). The study of OA and customer advocacy (as well as the other advocacy issues in the workplace) has much to contribute to organizational psychology and other disciplines. Research regarding OA’s relationship to OCB and prosocial behavior would be a step in that direction. Thus, this writing proposes a model of OA, a broad road map for future study, suggesting the interrelationships of advocacy with in contextual performance and task performance. Also, given that the theories of OCB and OA appear to be intended to insinuate the level of involvement and commitment of organizational members, empirical attention to theoretical discrepancies between the two theories is warranted.

Future research could include testing of the model of OA offering insights as to the validity of recognizing advocacy participation as beneficial both individually and organizationally. Questions might include: What are the role expectations for organizational advocates? What expressive approaches/activities are most beneficial to internal and external customers? How does organizations recognize positive advocacy as it relates to customers? How are these verbal and performance activities measured against performance? Do these activities

promote performance? How can these activities be promoted in a new organization/in an established organization? What are the other effects of advocacy performance? What context effects would occur regarding organizational behavior, and how does advocacy participation effect/adjust inferences about this behavior?

Why should researchers study advocacy issues in the workplace now? Importantly, the voice of organizational members as they talk to customers regarding the organization represented has been addressed in the past with little success. The voices and thoughts of members as they relate to working and serving others on a daily basis, although no longer seen as irrelevant to promoting organizational performance, is not adequately emphasized as a performative and reputational factor for organizations. Unfortunately, until positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship emerged as a beneficial approach, what organization members had to say about their organizations both on and off the job was ignored and was often less than pleasant—a member’s reputational impact has remained mostly outside the investigational realm of organization behavior.

Although the basic transaction cost economics viewpoint emphasizes the transference of goods and services (Bigley & Pearce, 1998), there has been little emphasis on the power of the promotional activities of the organization member in the context of face-to-face contact with customers. The sense that what-one-thinks-says-and-does-matters, as it relates to internal and external customers, is seen as important, yet the focus remains on *how to treat the customer* without emphasis on the power and responsibility of organization members to impact the welfare of the organization they represent. With few exceptions, the verbal and actional elements of the issues of advocacy have not been sufficiently incorporated into the research of academia or into the education and training of organizational members.

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Table 1:

Organizational Advocacy

Organizational advocacy is defined as ongoing, intention-based, value-added activities of workplace members that are significant to expanded achievement and furthering the well-being of themselves, their comembers, and the collective organization.

Advocacy participation influences the performance and achievement of the organization and the contributing individual and his or her group. Being willingly responsible and accountable for one's workplace performance is significant to performing as an organizational advocate. Organizational Advocacy includes the following workplace issues.

Self Advocacy: Actions of workplace members who appropriately promote themselves and their comembers and organization as capable and reliable contributors to organizational achievement.

Leader Advocacy: Member actions and activities that promote organizational leaders as competent, desirable leaders whose actions are beneficial to organizational achievement. Leader advocates also encourage and support the learning of those leaders who have much to learn about leading.

Member Advocacy: Leader actions and activities who promote individuals and groups to others as beneficial performers, leading to expanded opportunities for group contributions to organizational achievement.

Customer Advocacy: Member actions of positively representing the company to the customer and the customer to the company.

Community Advocacy: Member actions that promote the existence of an inclusive, integrative, and flexible internal workplace community while encouraging their organization to respond to the needs of the outside community.

Inclusion Advocacy: The responsibility and accountability of the individual, whatever his or her role, and the organization in the quest to include and respect the worldviews and voice of all members in the expansion of individual and organizational potential.

From *The Meaning and Role of Organizational Advocacy: Responsibility and Accountability in the Workplace* (2001), Jane Galloway Seiling, Greenwood Publications, Westport, CT.