

# Standardization of labor, american as a single serving, deep fried, apple pie

[Nutrition](#), [Fast Food](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Give an inviting welcome. Go out of your way to make a customer's day-surprise them by lifting their spirits. Greet every customer immediately to make them feel welcome and valued. Smile at every customer and teammate. Make eye contact with every customer and put a smile in your voice. This is a small excerpt from page seven of Little Red Book: recipes for Hospitality, by Pizza Hut a book that is only fifteen pages long. It is roughly four inches tall by three inches wide give or take a few centimeters. This whole book is filled with these little recipes for providing outstanding customer service.

That word outstanding is really important. If a person is given this book and they read it, a process that should take no more than five minutes, they will now be the world's leading foremost authority on customer service, and supposedly will be able to provide customer service on levels unmatched by anyone else. If this sounds asinine, it's because it is. A fifteen page pocket book cannot possibly train anyone on something as complex as customer service, but every Pizza Hut employee, from the delivery driver to the area district manager, is told, and is expected to believe that this book will make them an authority on the subject.

It is but one of many examples of how standardization has dominated the American, and even the world's job market. In businesses across the world employees are being handed books just like the Little Red Book and being told this will make them an authority on a subject. This standardization, in areas such as policy, technology, and extreme paces is exactly the kind of

thing that is deskilling the labor force. This is a completely dysfunctional effect on humanity in general.

It is often seen in our society that jobs like fast food, retail and food service industries are a teenager's introduction to the work force. These jobs are a place for a young person to "cut their teeth," to learn skills that will prepare them for life, and their future careers. This was once true, when jobs like these taught several different skills that could be applied in many other jobs. Now, you learn to make Big Macs or Whoppers, or how to stock a shelf at Wal-Mart. These skills do not translate into other forms of work that are outside of this sort of business model.

Robin Leidner noted, "It makes workers increasingly interchangeable" (quoted in Fast Food Nation) the only skills that these jobs teach are show up - on time - do your task, and shut up. Karl Marx argued that a skilled labor force was needed for the world to thrive. (lecture 2/1/11) His argument was that humans could not just become a part of the machine, that it was unhealthy, and that it was just a generally miserable way to live. Skilled labor was important to maintain a healthy and vibrant life.

If you walk into any fast food establishment you only need to stand there for a moment and you will start to hear the bells and buzzers and see the flashing lights, and you will witness the human cogs of the machine stop whatever they are doing, to run and handle whatever it is that buzzer is requesting they do. This is usually only focused on fast food. However, in Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser gives many examples of how the demands

for more food and lower prices have influenced areas of business that used to be the most skilled jobs.

While the examples of how agriculture has been nearly whiped out by corporate farms and the standardization of labor in the meat packing industry is easily the greatest examples of how the ideals of efficient labor processes are deskilling the workforce. Having completely replaced skilled meat packers with low income, migrant workers all focused on a single task, meat products can now be produced quickly and efficiently. This focus on efficiency is what produces the need to remove the skill from labor.

Max Weber calls this Formal Rationality, meaning that it is rational to do things efficiently, cheaply. (lecture, 2/2/11) Formal Rationality is a concept that explains how these ideas slowly start to influence how everyone thinks. Weber argues that this rationality will trap us in a cage of rationality. This process that businesses, churches, school, and many other areas of society have adopted is called McDonaldization, a concept pioneered by George Ritzer. McDonaldization explains how keeping an easily replaced, unskilled, powerless labor force available keeps these businesses functioning.

Ritzer argues that McDonaldization has five basic dimensions (lecture, 4/5/11) Four of these dimensions (efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control) are directly related to the deskilling of labor. A deskilled work force is efficient; it's calculable, predictable, and most important, very easy to control. An example of this is how easily companies like McDonalds have been able to squash labor unions every time they have attempted to be established within their restaurants. Eric Schlosser's information on the act

of “stroking” is extremely important to understand when speaking of control.

Stroking is the activity of training managers to quite literally “stroke” the egos of employees, praise and little rewards such as plastic key chains, are given to recognize hard work from employees. This technique promoted by David Novak, the president of Tricon Global Restaurants (the owners of Pizza Hut, Taco Bell and KFC) for use in his businesses. He gave a speech about making the job fun and how plastic chili peppers and rubber chickens cost less than pay raises and inspired team work (Fast Food Nation, page 88).

The Little Red Book that was handed out to the employees at Pizza Huts around the world was accompanied by a pack of cartoony paper tomatoes. On these tomatoes employees were encouraged to write notes to each other about how they were doing a good job. At the same time they were told pay raises would be delayed, for the third year in a row. As standardization slowly seeps into more and more businesses, in the name of efficiency, cutting costs, and maximizing profits, as more and more jobs are deskilled further and further, as workers are slowly culled more and more into becoming skill less, replaceable, cogs in corporate machines.

Where will this leave the society of the world? How long before the Little Red Book on Bed Side Mannerisms, is printed and handed to the score of skill less people that make up a “doctor” is common place. Once in our society you could walk up to a butcher a very well trained, well payed, highly skilled, individual and ask him any question you had about the meat you intended to purchase that day, and he could tell you. The cook at your local restaurant

could tell you how everything you were eating was prepared. In a matter of less than fifty years these people have almost vanished.

It is doubtful that before long your family practitioner will have to answer a question with, “ I’ll have to ask my manager. ” As an employee of a fast food restaurant, I see how standardization has completely removed the ability to think from intelligent and rational human beings. One day the store I work for ran out of boxes for a particular type of pizza, for a minute one of the employees stood there wondering what to do, I calmly stated to put the pizza in a different box that it also fit in, they nodded slowly and did it. That employee, was my manager.