

# Work and employee relations in the call centre

[Business](#), [Management](#)



ARTICLE REVIEW By Location The article d “ An Assembly Line in the Head – Work and Employee Relations in the call centre” was published in 1999 and is the work of Phil Taylor and Peter Bain. In the article, they sought analyse how operations in a call centre are organized. According to the authors, a call center focuses on both inbound and outbound calls controlled by a computer system with a high level of surveillance and automatic al distribution serves as the controller of the calls. The most critical aspect is that, the telephone is integrated with VDU technologies. Employees working in call centres have to get used to the system which is highly monitored and constantly under surveillance by supervisors because of the computer technology integrated into telephone use. Notably, call centres exhibit certain characteristics of Fordist organization/ Taylorist organization. The article addresses the different theoretical perspectives governing call centres and goes further to describe a study carried out in a bid to establish the opinions of call centre employees regarding the type of organization and work related tasks. It emerges that, the employees face the pressure of conforming to the highly computerized inbound and outbound telephone services while bearing with the constant surveillance by the management. This is the reason why employees have been described as participating in emotional labour (Taylor and Bain 1999, p. 101).

#### Answers to the Questions

##### Characteristics of a Taylorist (or Fordist) system of organization

A Fordist system of organization denotes an organizational structure that relies on technology for increased productivity as well as ensuring the availability of a great market for the standardized products produced by the

system. This means that employees rely on the use of technology to perform one task perfectly. Employees in a Fordist organization usually perform one task all year round and there is increased labour division within the organization. A superior level of hierarchical control does exist in Fordist organizations, ensuring that each worker in the production line focuses on an individual task. A clear example of a Fordist organization is the call centre described in the article. As the authors describe, a high level of productivity is evident because of the integration of VDU technologies and telephone services. Moreover, employees stick to production lines performing a single task while utilizing all the available technology to register specialized performance (Taylor and Bain 1999, p. 102).

#### Strengths of this System

The fact that a Fordist organization registers a high level of productivity and yields quality products cannot be underestimated. Moreover, workers learn how to use special tools that transform their tasks, making them easier. In the call centre describe in the article a high productivity is registered because of the constant control and surveillance as well as the coordination of all the activities (Taylor and Bain 1999, p. 103).

#### Consequences of this System

One of the evident consequences of the Fordist system is described in the article and concerns the emotional labour that the workforce must address throughout their work. Moreover, the stringently controlled systems may motivate workers to develop resistance as in the case described in the article. Fordist organizations can only be located in cities or urban areas with a remarkable growth rate because the owners prefer such areas in a bid to

tap employees (Taylor and Bain 1999, p. 105).

#### Work Cited

Taylor, P, & Bain, P 1999, `An assembly line in the head: Work and employee relations in the call centre, *Industrial Relations Journal*, 30, 2, p. 101, Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost, viewed 7 August 2014.