

SMILING

- Trying to establish contact with people by smiling only works with sociable people, according to research at Stanford University (2002). Their brains respond and react with positive emotions but smiling has no impact on negative people, introverts or those more neurotic. The more extroverted you are, the more you allow yourself to be infected by the other person's smile.
- Research by UK psychologists for Comic Relief in 2003 found big variations in the way people responded to smiles. In Edinburgh only 4% responded but in Bristol 70% smiled back (Birmingham was 31%). NB Smiling responses probably depend on the setting and the context.
- Women smile more than men but it is discounted more as it is expected. 30 years ago researchers thought it was because of status differences between men and women but it may be more about relieving anxiety. Generally men only smile to be sociable.
- Smiling is good for you as it lowers your heart rate and improves your immune system eg happier people resist catching colds better than unhappy people.
- Cultural differences need to be taken into account too eg in former Soviet Union countries the older generation tend not to smile at strangers, even in shops and customer service settings (Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Lithuania).
- There is also a cost to smiling when you are required to do it for your job. Emotional Labour, the so-called "have a nice day syndrome", is the cost of appearing happy and reasonable no matter how you really feel. Having to fake it for your job eg in medical settings, teaching and call centres, can make you feel exhausted, detached from other people and your own feelings, and can eventually lead to job dissatisfaction.
- Regulating empathy in this way is taking management control a step further than requiring staff to behave in certain ways. "You can't force people to smile, they have to be satisfied with their lives, their jobs and their performance" HR Manager, IKEA, Russia.
- People make judgements based on your appearance in 1/10 of a second or less eg to know whether or not you are trustworthy. And in any event after a couple of seconds they are distracted by what you say or do.
- There are things organisations could do:
 - Recruit extroverts who are generally more optimistic and positive
 - Give people who aren't, role models to emulate (introverts can learn how to behave in extrovert ways)
 - Help people to get into positive moods through visualisation or by remembering positive events
 - Give people satisfying jobs to do!

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