

**011-0264**

## **Servant organization: how individual behavior can be expanded to a business approach**

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**POMS 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**

Orlando, Florida U.S.A.

May 1 to May 4, 2009

### **ABSTRACT**

Differentiation through the provision of services has been identified as a growing trend in the world of business. But are companies really prepared to serve? This article, originally of theoretical-reflective character, discusses the fundamentals of management services and shows how a simple concept can cause significant changes in the way of thinking and acting, both individually and organizationally. From the comprehension that serving is "conduct activities that provide benefits to those to whom we serve, attributes for the servant behavior are listed, through empirical research, which include responsibility, simplicity, renunciation, initiative, willingness to help, welfare practices and usefulness. From individual servant behavior, the concept is extended to a servant company, based on a servant strategy, which creates servant products, delivered through servant processes, in a servant culture environment, promoted continuously by servant leadership.

**Key words:** Service management. Service quality. Servant leadership. Servant behavior.

## **1. Introduction**

Along last years frequent reasons have been cited for service growth all over the world, such as similarity in products, population growth, older people increment, a certain increase in available leisure time of urban populations, life complexity, more need for security, (Corrêa, 1994; Grönroos, 1995, 2004; Nóbrega, 1997; Albrecht, 2000; Norman, 2001; Lovelock, 2004; Fitzsimmons, 2005), This situation has led to a greater competitiveness in service sector, or in service activities. The expression “service activities” is absolutely necessary here, once non-service sectors like manufacturing and agribusiness are affected by this need for service. So, differentiation through provision of services has been identified as a growing trend in the world of business.

This situation has contributed to a movement for aggregating services, as adding elementary to core products in any sector company. Late version of ISO 9001 (version 2,000) standards, to certify quality systems, used to make clear the difficulty for manufacturing industry in identifying their scope of services offered, once they understood themselves just as goods producers. Some authors mention the need of a service oriented culture as a basis for developing and delivering high quality services (Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1990; Albrecht, 2000; Zeithaml, 2003; Grönroos, 2004), but it remains an important question: are companies really prepared to serve? (Nóbrega, Ribeiro and Marques, v. 2006).

Moreover, service management has focused attention on the need of a service culture (Berry, 1999; Norman, 2001; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003; Grönroos, 2004; Fitzsimmons, 2005) and service leaders (Greenleaf, 1977; Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1990; Berry, 1999; Albrecht, 2000; Normann, 2001; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003; Grönroos, 2004) as important issues for building a customer service oriented

organization. Since the above service features were listed, their comprehension is absolutely necessary in order to disseminate service principles. But these features do not fulfill requisites to provide conditions to superior services by a business organization, unless their mind and actions are driven by a primary issue. What reason would be sufficient to justify an organization existence unless it exists to serve its customers? Beyond showing good performance in delivering process and products, and getting financial results as result of a good operation, any company should try to answer the question if they operate to serve customers, or if they are to be served by customers, i.e., they produce goods and services to help customers, or they produce goods and services just to earn money from customers?

This question is in the basis of the root problem of this paper – the orientation to serve or to be served. This article, originally of theoretical-reflective character, discusses the fundamentals of management services and shows how a simple concept can cause significant changes in the way of thinking and acting, both individually and organizationally. The aim of this paper is to propose, and to clarify, the sense of serving as a very interesting and necessary concept to be adopted by any organization that wants to achieve excellence in serving its customers.

## **2. Service leadership**

Due to service features like simultaneous production and consumption, customer presence and heterogeneity, people training becomes more and more necessary as a way to increase chance to produce good services. In this sense, an environment where leadership can educate, motivate, disseminate culture elements is highly desirable. Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990) enumerate characteristics for service leaders as: service vision – service quality as a success key, high standards – aspire for

legendary service, in-the-field leadership style – service leaders lead in the field, where the action occurs, and integrity – a personal integrity.

Wilderon (1991) argues for a transformational style of management leadership do service sector, registering that the type of product makes difference, but the client presence, participation and information make substantial difference and can not be ignored.

Edvinsson (1992) suggests a management development program consisting of refining a vision, cultivate knowledge component, develop service labs to test customer interactions, prototype new services, build strategic alliances for distribution and network. Siehl (1992) refers do intangibility and customer contact as the main factor to make different the leadership in service. Due to these features the client becomes part of the service company. Key characteristics to define a service culture are then: formal measurement systems, a need for flexibility; and employees and customers sharing rules. These rules need to be based on a shared culture to enhance commitment of both employees and customers.

Church (1995) conducted a research with 65 managers in an airline service organization, and identified five core leadership values: customer (supporting their demands), employee (build supportive relationships); teamwork (all understand each other's roles); empowerment (delegating authority), and quality (encourage people to prevent problems), and found their correlations with performance indicators. Customer impacts on profitability; employee leads to profitability and turnover; teamwork impacts on turnover and damages; empowerment impacts on customer rating; and quality impacts on profitability.

Bunz and Maes (1998) studied Southwest Airlines to discover their key factor to

motivating people, and they found good managers-employee relations; the company's university for people, with regular training to everyone as a way to decrease hierarchical thinking; managers humors; tolerance to failures.

Rausch (1999) illustrate, through a case study at ABC Communications, the skills necessary to a service leader: participation in decision-making and planning; what and how to communicate both individually and in group; how to set goals for the organization; how to ensure coordination and stimulate cooperation; how to ensure minimum competences; how to ensure intangible, as well as tangible, rewards for staff; and how to ensure an acceptable level of work related stress.

Berry (1999) argues for leading with values in service organizations as a key factor for leading with success. This in an important point, because no company can dictate everybody's standards and procedures, once service operations are not integrally controllable, due to customer presence and simultaneously. So, the author lists some recommendations for service leaders: articulating the dream – the company's mission; defining organizational success – make palpable the dream and define indicators of progress; living the values – they give the example; cultivating leadership – inspiring leadership at the point of service delivery; asserting values during tough times – reinforce values through difficult periods; challenging status quo – assert core values also during normality; encouraging the heart – teaching values that tap into most human's own values.

Prabhu and Robson (2000) identified some attributes for high performance service companies: customer orientation; leadership in developing a service culture; staff responsiveness; and real time handling of service problems.

Testa (2004) conducted a research with cruise employees, in an environment with

people coming from different countries and cultures. One of the main conclusions was that employees identify themselves more with supervisors from the same culture, and so, leadership behavior is an important asset. They prefer, this way, to have these monoculture supervisors. This implies that an environment where shared value tends to provide higher levels of motivation and superior service.

And then it comes a new concept: servant leader. From many of the characteristics cited from service authors, it can be said that a service leader should, at first, be able to serve. This is Greenleaf's (1977) main proposal: "the natural servant, the person who is servant-first, is more likely to persevere and refine a particular hypothesis on what serves another's highest priority needs than is the person who is leader-first and who later serves out of prompting of conscience of conscience or in conformity with normative expectations". According to this proposal, Beazley, Beggs and Spears (2002) inspired in enumerate ten servant leaders characteristics: listening; empathy; healing; awareness; persuasion; conceptualization; foresight; stewardship; commitment to growth of people; and building community.

Andersen (2008) made a good review about servant leadership, and shows a synthesis in Table 1. The author, registers that servant-leadership has been undefined for about 40 years. Due to the generally non existence of an accepted definition of servant-leadership, he recommends advances in clarifying the concept, and concludes his study with a very clear questioning about the reality of servant-leadership, once attaining goals does not seem to be part of the servant-leadership preoccupations.

Spears (1995, 2002)	Russel (2001)	Russel and Stone (2002)		Patterson (2003)	Dennis and Bocarnea (2005)
		Functional attributes	Accompanying attributes		
Listening Empathy Healing Awareness Persuasion Conceptualization Foresight Stewardship Commitment to growth of people Building community	Vision Credibility Trust Service Modeling Pioneering Appreciation of others Empowerment	Vision Honesty Trust Service Modeling Appreciation of others Empowerment Pioneering Integrity	Communication Credibility Delegations Competence Stewardship Visibility Influence Persuasion Listening Encouragement Teaching	Is visionary for the followers Acts with humility Is trusting Is serving Is altruistic Empowers followers Agapao love	Vision Humility Trust Empowerment Love

Table 1: Attributes of servant-leadership . (Andersen, 2008)

So, one question must be brought to this discussion: serving implies achieving no results? Andersen may have been too severe with the concept of servant-leadership. Spear's persuasion should be used in order to obtain what? Russel's Vision neglects goal achieving? Russel and Stone's communication and delegations does no evolve goals? Patterson's visionary skill should not be used to achieve objectives? Dennis and Bocarnea's vision goes nowhere? Wrong or right, Andersen's great contribution was in order to explicit the goals, or results achievement, as a role for also the servant leaders. It is moment to detail the comprehension of service, serving and servant, in next section.

### 3. Service features and definitions

Traditional service features have been listed: , only local producing (Nóbrega, 1997; Corrêa, 2002; Grönroos, 2004; Norman, 2001; Zeithaml, 2003; Lovelock, 2004; Fitzsimmons, 2005). Indeed, some of these features used to make more sense in past then nowadays. Among these features, intangibility, customer presence, simultaneous production and consumption and heterogeneity are treated as the most significant

ones. Advances in technology, as telecommunications, Internet and videoconference have modified the importance of non-transportation and only local production. Other features remain applicable. There are ones, although, that have come from service to manufacturing. Less standardization is cited as a feature from service that corresponds to the idea of making each product at a time – something like a unique production lot. This idea leads to a custom production, what combines with a certain “servicealization” of manufacturing industry processes. This dynamics is useful to illustrate the trend for non-definition of precise limits differentiating manufacturing from service industries, showing, as a result, the need to study these features in both situations. The possible industry “servicealization” leads to the use of the sense of serving as well in goods producers.

In order to a better comprehension of this matter, some service definitions are important. Grönroos (1995) cited some of the principal definitions of service in specialized literature:

*“Service: activities, benefits or satisfactions sold or provided in connection with goods sale” (American Marketing Association, 1960)*

*“Services represent intangible satisfactions directly presented (transport, accommodations), or intangible satisfactions delivered with goods or service sales” (Regan, 1963).*

*“Services are any sold activities that provide benefits and valuable satisfactions; activities which the client can not or does not prefer to do by himself” (Bessom, 1973).*

*“Service is a sold activity that provides satisfactions benefits e satisfactions, without modifying goods or objects” (Blois, 1974).*

*“Service is an activity or a series of activities occurring in interactions of a person and another one or a machine that provides customer satisfaction” (Lehtinen, 1983).*

*“Service is any activity or benefit that one part may offer to another, essentially intangible, which does not result something property. Its production may, or not, be related to goods” (Kotler 1988)*

*“O Service is an activity or series of, with more or less intangible nature – which usually, but not necessarily, during interactions between clients and service employees and/or physical resources and/or systems – in order to provide a solution to clients” (Grönroos, 1995)*

Other definitions follow:

*“an act or performance that creates benefits for clients through a desired change in - or on behalf of the recipient of Service (Lovelock,2001)*

*“Service is a perishable and intangible experience, developed for a customer who plays the role of co-producer (Fitzsimmons,2004)*

*“Service is intangible and perishable. It is the occurrence or process simultaneously or nearly simultaneously created and used. Although the consumer can not hold the service, after it has been produced, the effect of the service can be maintained (Sasser, Olsen e Wyckoff, 1978)*

*“services are deeds, processes, and performances (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003)*

#### **4. Service and the sense of serving**

From the previous section definitions, two key aspects can be stressed: first, the concern with the intangibility of services, and secondly, the understanding of services as either product (result, benefits), either as a process (activity). This is something extremely important: services may represent both the activities that run, as well as the results generated by these activities. This means that when planning or providing a service, one should always have in mind that any and all activities are performed to generate a benefit to someone, may this one be an individual, group, community, entity, company, or any other kind of institution.

This concept use can serve to improve the performance of a simple task such as sweeping the floor. If well understood by those who run, it will serve to show that sweep the floor should provide the benefit of leaving the floor clean. Thus, if sweeping is enough to make the floor clean, the service has fulfilled its role. Otherwise, the person should make use of another task, such as vacuum, scrub, rinse, in order to achieve the desired result.

For example, when writing a text, the author must have in mind clarity, objectivity of ideas, and ease of understanding by the reader. It should bother to make it easy and affordable. The writer's activity is writing, presenting the issues. The benefit for the

reader will be to understand the subjects through the read text. If the author has the sense of serving, he will write the text as clear and easy of understanding as possible.

This discussion, apparently too theoretical, is indeed essentially practical. This can be seen in a musical show. All that the musicians, singers, dancers and stage assistants perform during the presentation of a song are activities. The excitement that the audience enjoys watching the presentation is the benefits that the team gives them. And all the team members' effort will help providing the emotion to the audience. Similar activities can generate different sensations, depending on motivations and intentions of the stage team, and how they planned their service – this involves understanding the benefit to be provided.

The more one can focus on benefits to be generated by activities that performs, the greater the chances of being successful in what we do. "Serve" is certainly one of the oldest concepts of humanity. And maybe this is one of the biggest obstacles to proper understanding and appreciation of services. Serving , is usually related to: live or work as servant, performing the duties of created, put on the table or provide individual food and / or drink, help, help, Holland (1999), as well as abnegated soul, be useful, be appropriate, to provide service, answer, besides other connotations.

## **5. The basics for the sense of serving**

In conducting researches about the meaning of serving, various connotations have been found, such as: do good; be useful, usefulness, performance, help, take care, sense of individual and collective responsibility, inferiority, subordination, provide benefits, value, serve the nation, serving food, give pleasure, doing a favor, listen, give way. From surveys conducted with 1,282 courses and seminars participants,

making use of open questions, like "serving means...", in which respondents were asked to relate five different options, the results obtained are shown were in Figure 1:

Results in Figure 1 were obtained through qualitative groups of participants in courses, lectures and seminars on adoption and practice of serving. In all, 1,282 people have attended those events and acted as respondents. The following instruments for data collection were used: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, individual or collective statements, verbal or written reports. So, serving sense, structured in its 10 main connotations, showed in Figure 2, will be detailed in each of them.

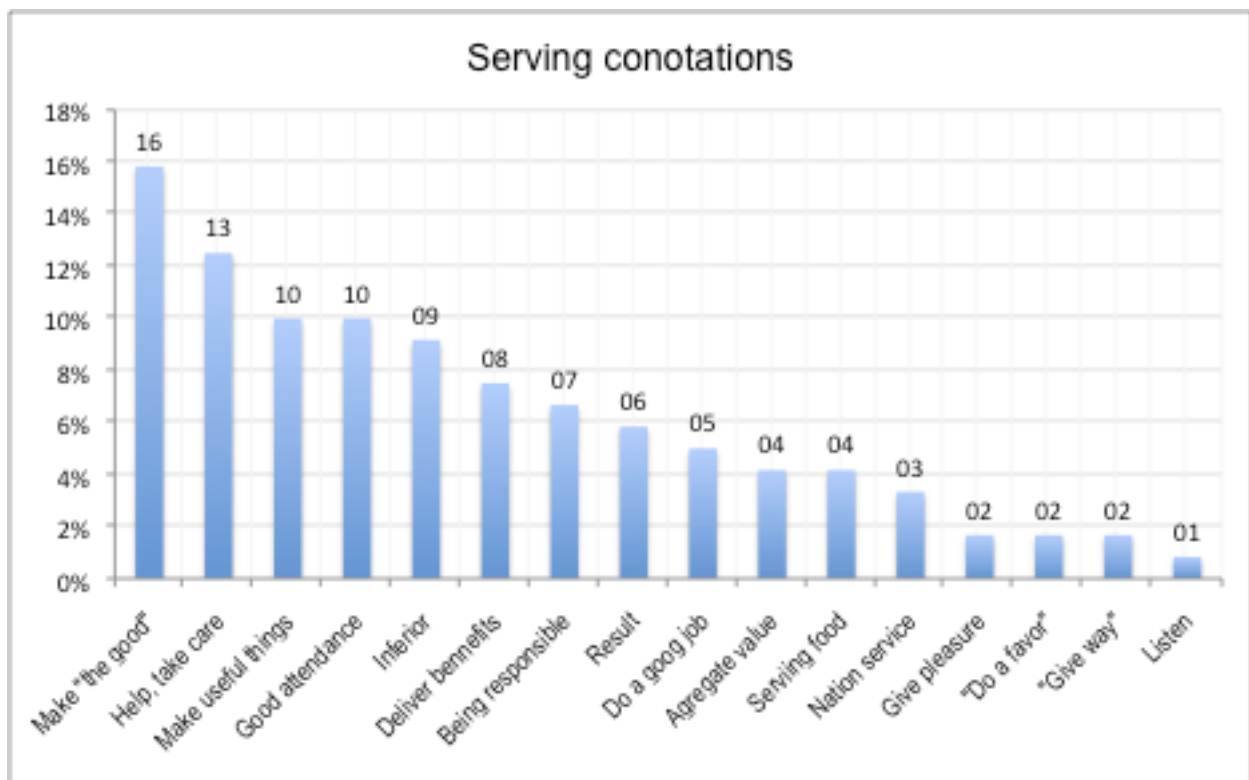


Figure 1: Different connotations for the word "serving" (data in perceptual)

It is fact that the 10 first items correspond to 88% of the answers

### **Serving associated to do good**

Serving uses to be associated to doing good to others. In this sense, any activity performed by one that results in "something good" to another can be understood as synonymous of serving. Small gestures may represent great achievements. This needs to be taught to anyone, in a personal or professional way. Human nature is to do good to people and the world. As Cicero, Roman orator and politician pointed, "nothing brings men so next to Gods than the moments when they do good to their fellow citizens.

### **Serving meant as utility**

In sentences like "this old car serves no more" or "this guy serves for nothing", the word serve is used to describe the utility (or not) of a product or person. Thus, one can associate to serve the utility of things, people and processes. The usefulness of the service you provide is always higher than the futility of reward for staff that serves, but the recognition is always present. Serve is to run the activities to generate value as a result of what someone does to others.

### **Serving meant as performance**

When a job is made less than expected, it is Said that "the service was bad," not serving at all to what was proposed, "this computer does not serve anymore. "The low performance is synonymous with poor service, inferior service. Serve is to have good performance in implementing its activities

## Serving meant as helping

Frequent connotations for “serve” are to help, give aid, help somebody. It is important to note that service is to help people, colleagues, clients, companies and organizations or businesses, communities to resolve situations of difficulty, to solve their problems, find solutions to their projects, finally, to find better results for their processes. The meaning of help is what motivates movements, programs and projects for volunteers. Serve is to help, caring for people, companies and communities! Serve is taking care of another.

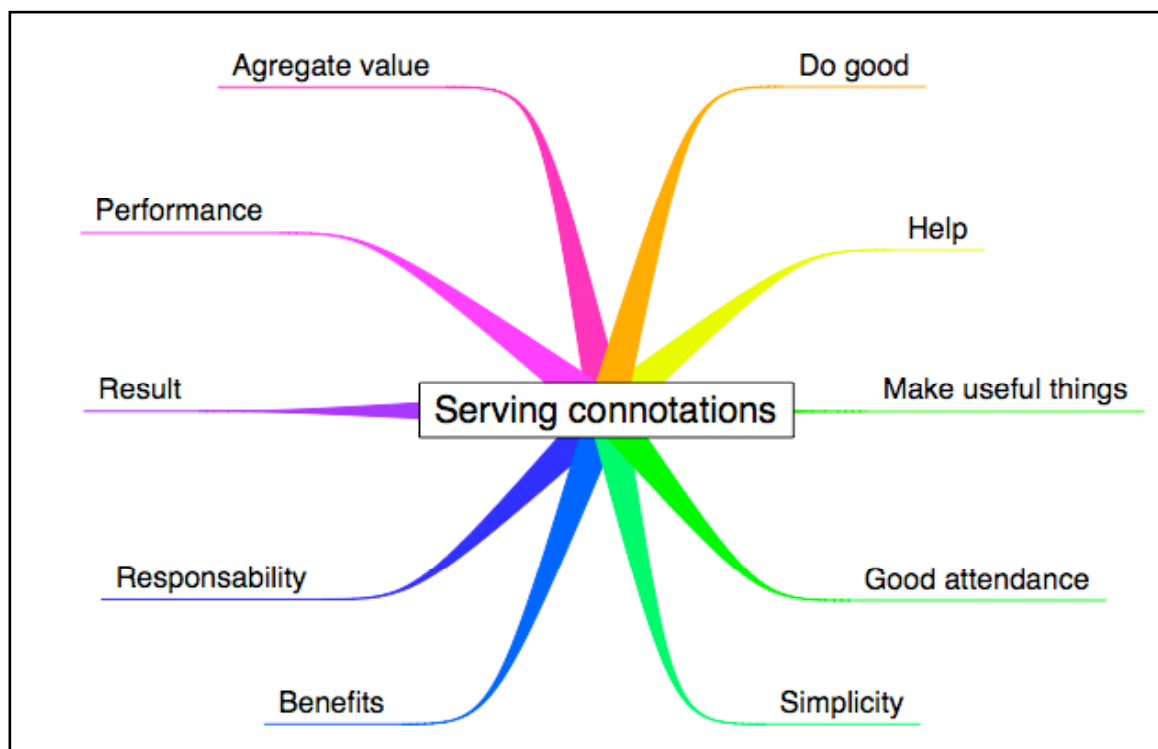


Figure 2: Mind map with some of the principal connotations for the word “Serving”

### **Serving meant as attendance**

Serving is widely used to describe restaurant waiter activities, like serving a coffee, offering or delivering beverage or food. Similarly, it is usual to say that "each waiter serves his square" to delimit operation area for bars and restaurants professionals. Moreover service quality courses and trainings use to teach attendance and treatment techniques, which, however, are not put into practice. Why? This occurs due to misunderstanding of serving. If there is no attitude for serving, hardly any techniques for improving service will be put into practice. For a good attendance is essential to understanding the desire to serve. Serving attitude is antecedent for good attendance.

### **Serving meant as result**

Serving is associated with outcome when expressing either the return of some effort or investment made, like the sentences: "Going to that store served as nothing to me" or "the job you did served as reference for all groups achieve their tasks." There is, in these phrases a strong sense of contribution in someone's activity. Every time one runs some task, he should focus that, for anyone whom he serves, a client, relative or friend, there is the expectation of reaching the result. Serving is achieving the expected results.

### **Serving meant as responsibility**

Responsibility inherent to certain professions requires a very strong sense of mission to respond to individuals and companies. When someone fails to fulfill its role, it is said "the guy did not serve, once he did not provide the service he should, he is really irresponsible". In another context such military service, it may be seen the responsibility to exercise of a citizen's duty when achieving majority age. Thus, the

responsibility of the citizen, man, will be to serve the nation. Responsibility demonstrated in any activity that is running, specifies the provision to serve.

### **Serving meant as inferiority**

Many service activities are usually related to professionals who do not have the best qualification. This has, possibly, historical reasons, since serving is associated to slave, server or servant. These associations of the word serve with subservience of someone inferior ends up creating difficulties for the correct understanding of service. This traditional view needs to be changed, otherwise how one could classify the work of professionals like doctors, nurses, psychologists, pharmacists, dentists, teachers - at any level of education, economists, engineers, artists, journalists, and others?

### **Serving meant as generating benefits**

From all these connotations addressed above, one truth is that service, is overall, to provide benefits. In all connotations like good, utility, performance, support, care, return, result or inferiority, it is necessary to consider, always, the benefit associated with providing the service. Indeed, all these are related connotations associated with the benefit of what you do. Thus, one can say, “we are all servers”. And to be a server is to be mind focused on the benefits of what you do. The doctor, in performing a surgical procedure, or the execution of a consult, must be concerned with healing, comfort and safety of patient-client. The lawyer, when giving an opinion, is providing guidance and tranquility to his client. The judge is giving to society a sense of justice, rather than judging people and processes. The politicians hold a public function to promote the common good.

### **Serving meant as aggregate value**

The notion of adding value, increasing the usefulness of a process or a product, is another connotation of serving. While some connotations of serving are close to the utility, performance, benefits, adding value in use of a product, process or person may be another option to serve. Serve is to add value to something, going beyond the commonly expected result as a consequence of work. Some professionals reject using the word serve, especially by the connotation of inferiority. A good argument to reduce this resistance is to say that everyone's job has value, serves to a superior goal.

### **6. The basics for servant behavior**

Robbins (2005) mentions the need to substitute intuition for the systematic study to develop contributions to organizational behavior. From the comprehension that serving is "conduct activities that provide benefits to those to whom we serve, attributes for the servant behavior are listed, through empirical research, which include responsibility, simplicity, renunciation, initiative, willingness to help, welfare practices and usefulness. Once there is not a great amount of management scientific literature regarding servant behavior, the following text is derived from empirical researches conducted on the topic, with participants of university courses and consultancy projects in business, making use of instruments mentioned earlier in this paper. These results should be considered as partial, requiring still methodological deepening, In spite of that, some modest results begin to appear, as shown in Figure 3.

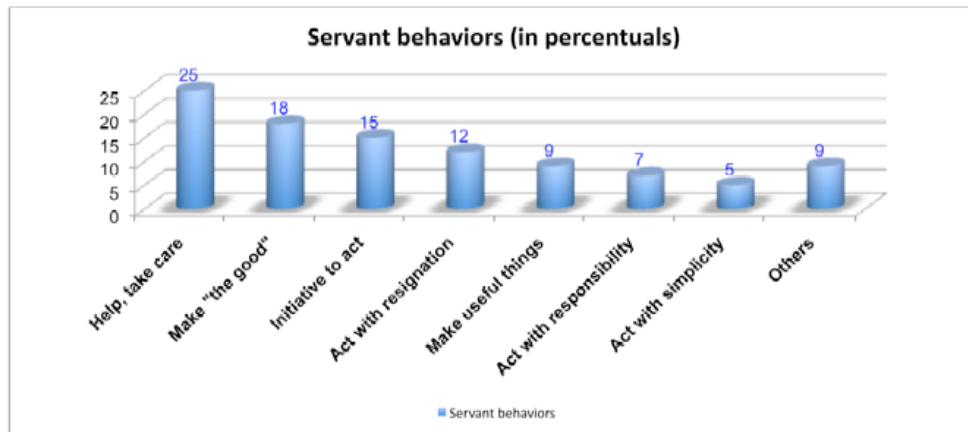


Figure 3: Principal servant behaviors (results collected with 1.282 courses, seminars and company training participants)

The respondents were asked to list five most important servant behaviors, using attributes from each behavior introduced earlier, it was obtained the predominant profile of an individual server, represented by the main server behavior. These studies still require more rigorous methodology for both the refinement of the attributes on the statistical treatment given. One of the difficulties encountered in conducting this type of research is that the sense of serving is not a matter of general knowledge. Because it is relatively unknown topic, building a model of reference on performance server is in early stages of development.

Despite these limitations, was chosen to disclose these initial results, to disseminate and stimulate discussion, providing methodological refinement and precision in the course of further developments in this area of knowledge. Thus, it is, then the essence of the server behavior. From the connotations and the fundamentals of serving, one can relate the main features of the server behavior, i.e., the main attributes that characterize the behavior of a servant individual. In Figure 4 we see the mental map of the server, which will be detailed ahead.

After the above systematization, a conceptualization is under construction. Each component from the servant behavior has a proposed definition, in Table 2, aiming to characterize them. It is expected that this conceptualization show correspondence with the serving connotations.

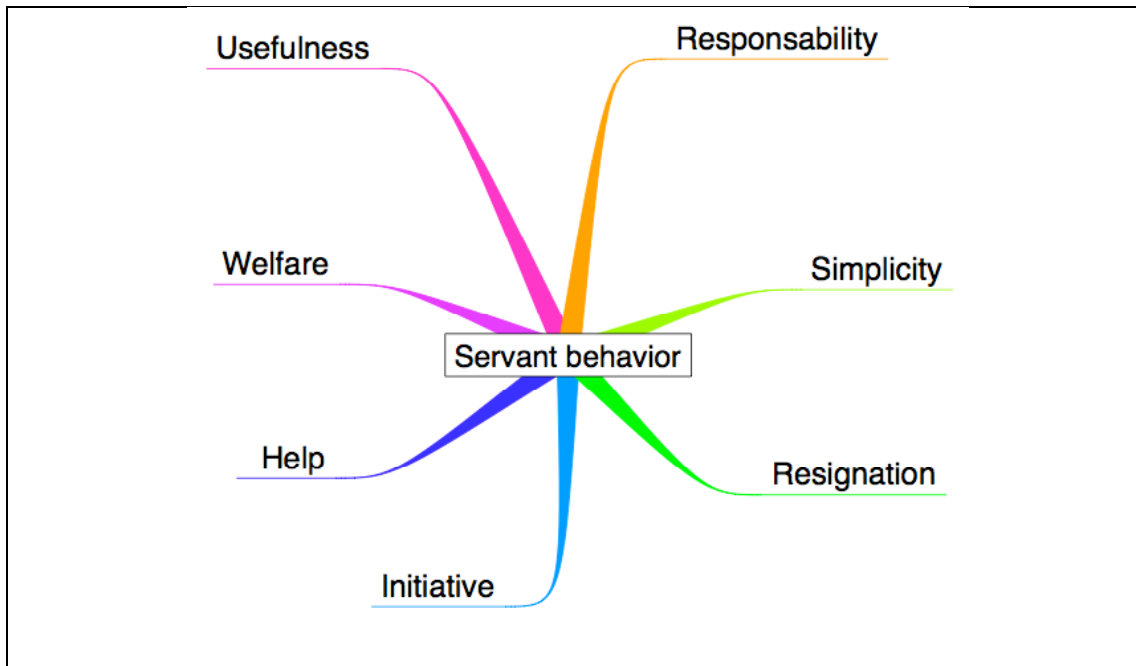


Figure 4: Servant behavior min map

Servant behavior conceptualization	
Servant behavior	Definition
Responsibility	Serving is to act with responsibility, commitment, consistency, and required performance
Simplicity	Serving is to make things simple, but necessary, in value, without fear that this causes you any feeling of inferiority
Resignation	Serving is to resign, abandoning self wishes, space or valorization, in order to take care of another
Initiative	Serving is to take initiative and act proactively, performing activities with responsiveness
Willingness to help	Serving is to act with a sense of proximity, complicity and reciprocity in order to attend and help another
Welfare practices	Serving is a pleasure, tendency and disposal to do good to people and community
Usefulness	Serving is to give meaning to activities aiming do make useful actions, providing result, value and productivity

Table 2: Conceptualization of servant behavior

A synthesis of the mind map is meant by the sentence: by being responsible and simple, the server individual disclaims to be priority, and takes the initiative to help, doing good to others with useful activities and things.

## **7. From servant individual to servant leader**

Robbins (2005) relates some theoretical approaches on leadership, such as, grid, Fiedler model, situational leadership, leader x led permute, and goal x way as classical theories. The author mentions some contemporary approaches, such as charismatic leadership, transformational leadership. Charismatic leadership, whose principal characteristics are vision and articulation, personal risk, environmental sensitivity, led needs sensitivity, and non-conventional behaviors, seems to have higher correlation with servant leadership.

As Andersen (2008) stated, more research on characterizing servant leadership is needed both to define as to characterize it. As the aim of the present paper is to contribute, to propose learning with servant behavior to an organizational approach, servant leadership will be characterized from the correspondence between servant individual behavior and elements of servant leadership, from the comparison elaborated by Andersen, taking elements from charismatic leadership, cited by Robbins (2005). This way, Table 3 shows a correspondence between servant behavior and servant leadership. This correspondence was based on analysis, discussion and convergence process of the authors. Items were chosen based on frequency from each author in Andersen's comparative (Table 1), aligned with charismatic leadership and service leadership's characteristics. Andersen's criticism about servant leadership absence of goals was included.

Servant main features	
Servant Individual features	Servant Leadership features
Responsibility	Results and persuasion
Simplicity	Educated and patient
Resignation	Listening and stewardship
Initiative	Influent and awareness
Willingness to help	Empathy and committed to people growth
Welfare practices	Common good, building community
Usefulness	Educator

Table 3: Comparative features between servant individual and leadership servant features

## **8. Servant individual behavior and servant leadership helping to build a servant organization**

Robbins (2005) defines organizational behavior as the discipline responsible for investigating the impact that individuals, groups and structure have on behavior inside the organizations aiming to use this knowledge to improve organizational effectiveness. The discipline evolves, then, elements like people behavior, communications, culture, leadership, organizational structure, power and politics, people management practices and politics. On the other hand, service management disciplines use to deal with strategy, products and processes, research & development, innovation management, operation system, people development, service quality.

The present study, aiming to contribute for a service organization management, makes use of some of these elements, to propose a servant organization structure. This research introduces, then, the servant organization structure, showed in Figure 5. The

basis for this proposal is that from individual servant behavior, the concept is extended to a servant company, based on a servant strategy, which creates servant products, delivered through servant processes, in a servant culture environment, promoted continuously by servant leadership. Each of these elements is based on literature, when available, and their correspondence between each other is showed in Table 4.

Service strategy, as the definition of a strategy in which the role of services is a central item in corporation's strategy. It consists of the elements: internal marketing (Berry and Parasuraman, 1992; Normann, 2001; Grönroos, 2004); good relationship (Normann, 2001; Mota, 2003; Grönroos, 2004), access (Zeithaml *et al*, 1990; Fitzsimons, 2005; Akan *et al*, 2006), supplementary services (Teboul, 1999; Lovelock, 2001; Grönroos, 2004); people development (Zeithaml *et al*, 1990; Berry and Parasuraman, 1992; Horovitz, 2000; Normann, 2001; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003; Grönroos, 2004), social responsibility (Greenleaf, 1977; Campos, 1992; Robbins, 2005) , and service focus (Zeithaml *et al*, 1990; Berry and Parasuraman, 1992; Horovitz, 2000; Normann, 2001; Lovelock, 2001; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2003; Grönroos, 2004; Akan *et al*, 2006).

Servant products are products, goods or services, developed to contain attributes similar to service operations characteristics. Apple products are a good example of servant products. The features for servant products are, among the servant organization elements, that one with less contribution from literature. Its elements are: intrinsic quality (Garvin, 1992); use facilitating (Nóbrega, 1997); informative disposal, intelligent, customer focused (Teboul, 1999; Albrecht, 2000; Lovelock, 2001; Grönroos, 2004; Akan *et al*, 2006), environmental non-affective (Greenleaf,

1977; Campos, 1992), and supplementary attributes (Teboul, 1999; Albrecht, 2000; Horovitz, 2000; Lovelock, 2001).

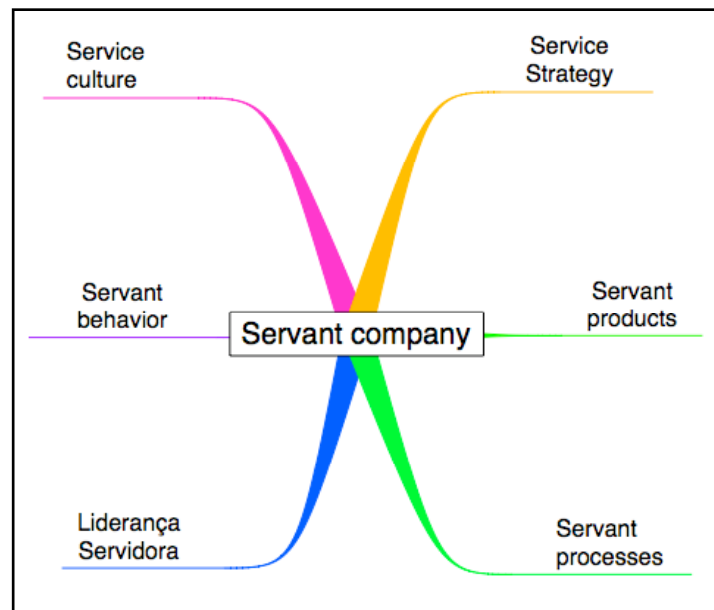


Figure 5: Servant organization structure

Servant processes is meant as serviceable processes, i.e., processes designed to contain elements typical from service sector. They consist of: systematized roles (Lovelock, 2001; Corrêa, 2002; Fitzsimmons, 2005); responsive (Zeithaml *et al*, 1990; Nóbrega, 1997; Horovitz, 2000; Grönroos, 2004), agile (Zeithaml *et al*, 1990; Lovelock, 2001; Corrêa, 2002; Fitzsimmons, 2005), flexible (Zeithaml *et al*, 1990; Nóbrega, 1997; Horovitz, 2000; Grönroos, 2004; Fitzsimmons, 2005); customer focused (Teboul, 1999; Albrecht, 2000; Lovelock, 2001; Grönroos, 2004; Akan *et al*, 2006), and informative.

Service culture is meant as the background of values, principles that may orient service procedures to everybody in the organization. Robbins (2005) registers a common sense about organizational culture as system of shared values that differentiate a company from another. Service culture is, also, one of the most cited themes in service management literature. The elements proposed here are: focus on results (Campos, 1992; Kaplan, 1997; Corrêa, 2002; Heskett, 2002, Porter, 2004); respect (Zeithaml *et al*, 1990; Greenleaf, 1977; Bunz and Maes, 1998; Berry, 1999; Grönroos, 2004; Akan *et al*, 2006); serving (Bunz and Maes, 1998; Berry, 1999; Mota, 2003; Grönroos, 2004; Parasuraman, 2006); responsiveness (Zeithaml *et al*, 1990; Nóbrega, 1997; Horovitz, 2000; Motta, 2003; Grönroos, 2004); committed to others (Greenleaf, 1977; Grönroos, 2004; Nóbrega, 2006); common good (Greenleaf, 1977); usefulness and efficiency.

Servant organization elements					
Servant Individual	Servant Strategy	Servant Products	Servant Processes	Servant Culture	Servant Leadership
Responsibility	Internal marketing	Intrinsic quality	Systematized	Focus on results	Results and persuasion
Simplicity	Good relations	Facilitates use	Caregiver	Respect	Educated and patient
Resignation	Access	Informative	Responsive	Serving	Listening and stewardship
Initiative	Supplementary services	Intelligent	Agile	Responsiveness	Influent and awareness
Willingness to help	People development	Customer focused	Flexible	Committed to others	Empathy and committed to people growth
Welfare practices	Social responsibility	Environmental non affective	Customer focused	Common good	Common good, building community
Usefulness	Service focus	Supplementary attributes	Informative	Usefulness and efficiency	Educator

Table 4: Servant organization elements

## 9. Conclusions

With a theoretical-reflective character, this paper aimed to deal with a theme that is yet, little deepened. From a simple concept, used to individual behavior, and now, expansible to a whole organization, the research allowed to achieve the following conclusions:

- Serving conceptualization was systematized, through a literature research, enriched now with some empirical results. Identifying people who present servant behavior may be a good challenge to service and non-service companies, in order to define improvements in service operations. Elements like people selection, people training, performance evaluation may be enriched with the servant behavior characteristics;
- Different connotations for serving concept were related, at first as a way to understand the sense of serving. These synthesized connotations, can, however, providing contributions to service concept definition in companies, according to the predominant nature of the service they deliver to their customers;
- The servant behavior features (responsibility, simplicity, resignation, initiative, willingness to help, welfare practices and usefulness) have a high correspondence with the servant leadership elements (results and persuasion, education and patience, listening and stewardship, influent and awareness, empathy and commitment to people growth, common good, and educator);
- From the servant behavior and the servant leader elements, supported by service literature, it was possible provide a framework for a servant organization, based on: service strategy, servant products, servant processes, servant individual behavior, servant culture and servant leadership;

- Service strategy is composed by internal marketing, good relationship, access, supplementary services; people development; social responsibility, and service focus;
- Servant products are characterized by intrinsic quality; use facilitating; informative disposal, intelligent features, customer focused; environmental non-affective; and supplementary attributes;
- Servant processes consists of systematized roles; responsive; agile; flexible; customer focused; and informative;
- A servant culture shows elements like focus on results; respect; serving; responsiveness; committed to others; common good; as well as usefulness and efficiency;
- A synthetic sentence to illustrate the overall view of the research is: from individual servant behavior, the concept is extended to a servant company, based on a servant strategy, which creates servant products, delivered through servant processes, in a servant culture environment, promoted continuously by servant leadership.
- The servant company is not a concept applicable only to service companies. It may be used by any other sector organization.

## **10. Limitations and further research**

Some limitations of the present research are:

- The initial stages of the present research represent an advance, but the theme needs deepening and more researches to be consolidated;
- at this time research made use of simple statistical tools. More sophisticated statistical tools can lead to more precise results;
- “non humanization” of competitive business and scientific research may create some level of rejection to this theme;
- methodological procedures were not sufficiently structured. The paper is a mix of literature review, reflexive analysis and empirical research.

So, some recommendations for future studies may be:

- deepen statistical fundamentals for each component of the servant organization;
- deepen correlation among each feature of the six elements.

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