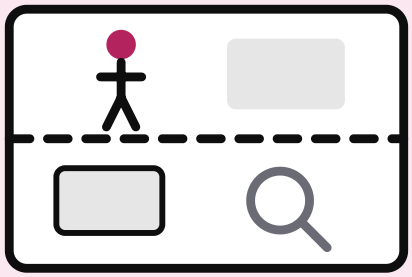
Concept

Frontstage and backstage

The distinction between what the person sees of a service (frontstage) and what happens behind it to make it possible (backstage), separated by the line of visibility.



In Spanish
Frontstage y backstage

Origin
Goffman (1959); in services, Shostack (1984)

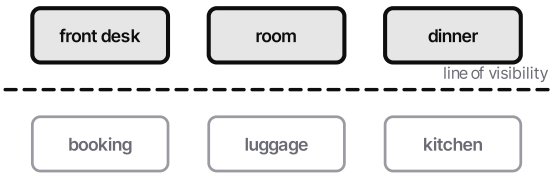
What problem it addresses

Explains why a service can't be fixed only in what is visible: the problem is often behind the scenes.

An example

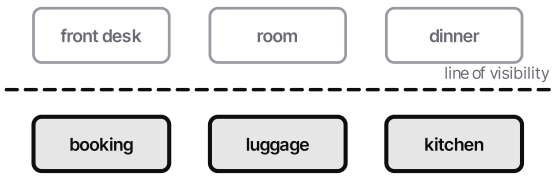
A night at a hotel, based on the example by Bitner et al. (2008).

What the guest sees



The front desk, the room, the dinner brought up. **Frontstage.**

What they don't see



The booking recorded, the luggage carried up, the food being prepared. **Backstage.**

If the backstage fails, the guest notices it in the frontstage, even without knowing why.

Why it happens

1 

What is visible depends on what happens behind it.

2

The line of visibility separates what is seen from what isn't.

3 

Designing both sides avoids promising what can't be delivered.

Applications in design

Use it like this

When something fails up front, look for the cause behind it: processes, systems or staff.

Avoid

Dressing up the frontstage to hide a backstage that doesn't work.

Don't fall for it

Decide what is worth showing: sometimes making the backstage visible (an open kitchen) builds trust.

3 lines

What the research says

The blueprint separates actions with three lines: the line of interaction (person and staff), the line of visibility (what is seen and what isn't) and the line of internal interaction (staff and support processes) (Bitner et al., 2008).

●●○ **Debated evidence.** It is a way of describing a service, not a measured effect; it is widely used in research and practice.

Connections

Used in

- Ecosystem map
- Service blueprint

Related to

- Service evidence
- Gaps model of service quality
- Touchpoint

Authors and works

1959	**Erving Goffman**	Distinguished between the front region and the back region of any social performance.
1984	**G. Lynn Shostack**	Introduced the line of visibility in the service blueprint.
2008	**Mary Jo Bitner et al.**	Defined the lines of interaction, visibility and internal interaction.

Sources

Original sources

- Goffman, E. (1959). The presentation of self in everyday life. Doubleday.
- Shostack, G. L. (1984). Designing services that deliver. Harvard Business Review, 62(1), 133–139. View source (https://hbr.org/1984/01/designing-services-that-deliver)

Academic reviews

- Bitner, M. J., Ostrom, A. L., & Morgan, F. N. (2008). Service blueprinting: A practical technique for service innovation. California Management Review, 50(3), 66–94. View source (https://doi.org/10.2307/41166446)

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