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A smile is – usually – a wonderful thing, especially if it is genuine. But having to smile as part of your job can be emotionally draining.

Employers like a smiley workforce because they know happy, friendly faces boost sales. And there is plenty of evidence that even a forced smile can make the smiler feel happier as our physiology responds to the expressions we have on our own faces.

But faking happiness at work is emotional labour and it has consequences.

Researchers from Singapore Management University found that bus drivers who acted happy were more likely to suffer insomnia and report anxiety and distress.

Performance coach, Louise Mahler, warns a fake smile can be a bad look for leaders.

“What I have learnt is this: in the last decade there has been a lot of research on smiling and there is a big difference between a genuine and a false smile,” she says.

The genuine smile is called the Duchenne smile, defined as the activation of the orbicularis oculi (cheek raiser) muscle that makes crow’s feet at the outer corner of the eye.

“In the non-Duchenne smile, often called a non-enjoyment, false, faked or social smile, the eye muscle movement is lacking ,” she says.

Mahler says smiling is good for persuasion, but few people can deliberately produce a Duchenne smile.

But that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t put a smile on your dial: a faked Duchenne smile will help to sell a good and valid product, she says.

However it has no benefit for selling a dodgy product.

Mahler says former US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, uses her smile to great effect. The secret for Clinton is to keep her mouth wide and open, making an entrance and managing the feat of saying “thank you, thank you” without shutting her mouth.

“It sends messages of being open, no matter how stressed you are”, Mahler says.

Mahler has recorded a series of presentation videos for *The Australian Financial Review* for quick tips on making a great impression.

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