17

Job Crafting

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Chapter Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- understand the restrictions of top-down job redesign approaches;
- explain the gap that job crafting fills in top-down job redesign approaches;
- provide a thorough insight into what job crafting really is;
- describe some research evidence on the predictors and outcomes of job crafting;
- recognize unresolved and critical issues regarding job crafting;
- describe an intervention on how to stimulate job-crafting behaviour.

17.1   Introduction

The increasing popularity of self-managing teams, re-engineering and other organizational innovations, coupled with the increased flexibility in work arrangements made possible by advances in information technology, has considerably expanded the complexity of professional jobs. Consequently, each job position seems to be characterized by a unique constellation of working conditions that the organization can hardly be aware of. Not surprisingly, top-down organizational

interventions to improve motivation and organizational performance often seem partly ineffective (Biron, Karanika-Murray, & Cooper, 2012). Therefore organizations have started to recognize that redesign approaches initiated by individuals or job holders themselves (bottom-up) should be promoted and combined with approaches initiated by the organization.

The aim of this chapter is to zoom in on the process through which organizations can improve the working conditions for their employees by offering them the opportunity to do so themselves. This process is called *job crafting* and can be seen as a specific form of proactive behaviour in which the employee initiates changes in the level of job demands and job resources to make their own job more meaningful, engaging and satisfying. Our basic premise is that job crafting can be used next to top-down approaches to improve jobs in order to overcome the inadequacies of job redesign approaches. Job crafting can also be used to respond to the complexity of contemporary jobs and to deal with the needs of the current workforce. The chapter starts with a brief overview of the roots of job crafting, namely job redesign (Section 17.2). After presenting the inadequacies of classical job redesign approaches, we will continue with some attempts to individualize job redesign that can also be considered as precursors of job crafting. In the next section (Section 17.3), we provide an overview of job crafting as a job redesign approach and zoom in on its conceptualization and on its predictors and outcomes. In Section 17.4 we make the link between job crafting and the implementation of organizational change and innovation as these represent enduring requirements of modern organizations. As job crafting represents a relatively new construct in the literature, there are several issues that remain unresolved, as well as critical notes that can be made about it. These are presented in Section 17.5. In the following section (Section 17.6), we present some ideas on how to intervene and stimulate the job-crafting behaviour of employees. We end this chapter with some conclusions and suggestions for further reading (Section 17.7).

17.2 The Roots of Job Crafting

We first present a brief overview of the roots of job crafting, namely job redesign and the unresolved problems associated with it.

Job redesign and its unresolved problems

Job design describes 'how jobs, tasks, and roles are structured, enacted, and modified, as well as the impact of these structures, enactments, and modifications on individual, group, and organizational outcomes' (Grant & Parker, 2009, p. 319). Job design usually represents a top-down process in which organizations create jobs and form the conditions under which the job holders/incumbents execute their tasks (see also Chapter 3). In addition, job *redesign* is usually seen as the process through which the organization or supervisor changes something in the job, tasks or conditions of the individual (Tims & Bakker, 2010). We will focus particularly on job redesign in this chapter. An example of a traditional job

redesign effort is the increase in individual and team autonomy in the production process. A more contemporary example concerns the introduction of project work where individuals within and outside an organization work interdependently on the development of a product, often under time pressure. In each case, the structure and content of the work can be redesigned by the organization, with as the ultimate goal the improvement of outcomes such as employee work engagement, performance and well-being.

Extensive reviews of the job redesign literature are available elsewhere and we do not aim to repeat them here (e.g. Morgeson & Humphrey, 2008; Parker & Ohly, 2008). A basic premise in the job redesign literature is that stimulating jobs foster motivating psychological states that contribute to favourable attitudinal and behavioural work outcomes (e.g. Fried, Grant, Levi, Hadani, & Slowik, 2007). During the past three decades, research on job redesign has played an important role in bringing theory into organizational practice. Prominent theories such as the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), Socio-Technical Systems Theory (Trist, 1981), Action Regulation Theory (Hacker, 2003) and the Interdisciplinary Work Design Framework (Campion & McClelland, 1993) have stimulated much of the research in the field. Researchers have accumulated extensive knowledge about the diverse task, knowledge and physical characteristics of jobs, the psychological and behavioural effects of job redesign, the mediating mechanisms that explain these effects, and the individual and contextual factors that moderate these effects (e.g. Grant & Parker, 2009; Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). Moreover, existing research has helped organizational practice by providing guidelines for practitioners to design work to promote employee performance and well-being.

However, job redesign research has revealed mixed results. According to Fried (1991) this is probably due to the relative weak relation between stimulating job characteristics and work outcomes such as job performance, turnover and absenteeism (Fried, 1991). Namely, although research supports the hypothesized relations between stimulating job characteristics and attitudinal outcomes such as internal work motivation and job satisfaction, the magnitude of the association between the core job characteristics and these attitudinal outcomes appears to be moderate rather than high (Fried, 1991; Parker et al., 2001). Moreover, although the literature suggests a positive relation between employee motivation and job performance, this relation tends to be relatively weak (e.g. Demerouti & Bakker, 2006; Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010; see also Chapter 13). These findings suggest that there are characteristics of the context or characteristics of employees that may play a role in moderating employee reactions (Johns, 2006). Some scholars have argued that there is a lack of systematic attention for the context – the situational opportunities and constraints that affect attitudes and behaviours (Fried et al., 2007; Johns, 2006).

Moreover, traditional job redesign approaches have been criticized for no longer reflecting and integrating the dramatic changes in the work contexts that have occurred during the past few decades (Grant & Parker, 2009; Humphrey et al., 2007). These changes include a shift from manufacturing to a service-oriented economy, an increase in the knowledge-based industry,

growth in globalization and global operations across different countries, societies and cultures, and the growing use of innovative technologies and flexible work methods ranging from virtual teams to telework and new ways of working (ten Brummelhuis, Bakker, Hetland, & Keulemans, 2012) as a basis for operations. Simultaneously, the nature of the workforce itself is changing considerably, with more women involved, greater ethnic diversity, more educated employees, an aging population and altered psychological contracts between employers and employees. New approaches to job redesign have started to integrate these changes. The underlying factor in these new approaches is that they more actively involve the individual employee in the job redesign process.

Individualization of job redesign approaches

In response to the mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of job redesign approaches as well as to the changes in the job context and content along with changes in the workforce, job redesign approaches started to integrate more social aspects of the job (rather than only mechanistic aspects, such as tasks, structures and environmental conditions) which are inherent in many contemporary job functions (Grant & Parker, 2009).

Relational perspectives of job redesign focus on how jobs, roles and tasks are more socially embedded than ever before, based on increases in interdependence between and interactions with co-workers and service recipients. The emerging relational perspective on job redesign provides important insights into the social characteristics of work, which include interaction outside the organization, task interdependence, social support and interpersonal feedback (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Moreover, Grant and Parker (2009) suggested that additional social characteristics of work include interpersonal display rules for emotions (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003) and opportunities to benefit others (task significance; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Such characteristics connect employees' actions to the well-being of other people and are therefore important for job redesign.

According to Grant and Parker (2009), another contemporary approach to job redesign that reflects the move towards individualization of job redesign is *proactive perspectives*. Proactive perspectives capture the growing importance of employees taking the initiative to anticipate and create changes in how work is performed, based on increases in uncertainty and dynamism. Proactive perspectives focus particularly on anticipatory actions taken by employees to create changes in how jobs, roles and tasks are executed (Frese & Fay, 2001). Job redesign perspectives that apply the proactive approach aim at (i) *job redesign to stimulate proactivity*, which examines how organizations can structure jobs and tasks to encourage employees to take the initiative and actively shape their work tasks and contexts, and (ii) *job crafting, role adjustment, and idiosyncratic deals* that represent the proactive steps that employees take to modify the cognitive, physical and relational boundaries of their work and to propose personalized employment arrangements with managers and supervisors (Grant & Parker,

2009). Thus, the former focuses on how organizations can stimulate individuals (through job redesign approaches) to become proactive in their job, while the latter focuses on what individuals do themselves to change their jobs, which will be the issue of the next section.

Finally, before moving to job crafting we present a final way that illustrates how contemporary job redesign approaches can move towards more individualization of job redesign: the *time perspective*. Fried and colleagues (2007) suggested that leading job redesign theories have neglected to incorporate the temporal context in their premises which hinders their explanatory power and utility. They claim that time is a fundamental dimension of context, as it specifies when situational constraints and opportunities occur and how they are perceived (Johns, 2006). The failure to include time in job redesign theory limits the theory's ability to accurately predict individual attitudes and behaviours in organizations, as these may develop and change over time. In this way, most job redesign theories are static in nature (George & Jones, 2000). Fried et al. (2007) suggested that employees' reactions to stimulating jobs, and their efforts to craft more stimulating jobs, may depend on temporal aspects of their career aspirations and expectations. For instance, they suggested that employees may react more favourably to jobs that provide little stimulation early in their careers, if they perceive their current jobs as instrumental to career advancement, if they expect to advance in the near future and if their advancement occurs in line with occupational norms. However, in later career stages, employees are likely to develop preferences for more stimulating job characteristics (e.g. task significance) rather than other characteristics (e.g. task and skill variety, complexity). Taken together, this perspective on job redesign suggests that it may depend on the age and job tenure of the employee which job characteristics are important for the specific job. This emphasis on employee characteristics in job redesign literature signals the importance of the individualization of job redesign (or the reliance on bottom-up approaches next to top-down approaches).

Replay

Job redesign approaches have been influential in stimulating organizations to consider employee motivation and well-being as important organizational goals. Early job redesign approaches proved to be inadequate to serve the changing nature of the jobs that include more cognitive tasks, new technologies, relational aspects and employees with changing needs and competencies. As such, the job redesign literature has gradually recognized that the 'one-size-fits-all' approach is no longer sufficient (Grant & Parker, 2009). Moreover, the classical job redesign approach is generally top-down in nature (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). However, approaches that recognize the role of individuals as proactive agents that form their jobs and change their own job characteristics have come to complete the traditional job redesign literature (Fried et al., 2007; Grant & Parker, 2009). These approaches will be discussed in the next section.

17.3   Job Crafting as an Individual Job Redesign Approach

In this section we provide an overview of job crafting as a job redesign approach and particularly zoom in on its conceptualization, predictors and outcomes.

Conceptualization of job crafting

It is clear that the availability of well-designed jobs and optimal working conditions facilitate employee motivation and performance, but what if these favourable working conditions are not available? Employees may actively change the design of their jobs by choosing tasks, negotiating a different job content and assigning meaning to their tasks or jobs (Parker & Ohly, 2008). This process of employees shaping their jobs has been referred to as *job crafting* (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Job crafting is defined as the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in their task or relational boundaries. Physical changes refer to changes in the form, scope or number of job tasks, whereas cognitive changes refer to changing how one sees the job. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) noted that job crafting is not inherently 'good' or 'bad' for an organization. Its effect depends on the situation.

To explain what job crafting is we use the example of the maintenance technician who was interviewed by Berg, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2010), and who told that he crafted his job in the form of taking on additional tasks. After having been in the organization for some time, he started to proactively help newcomers to learn the job. Because he turned out to be good at this, he became formally responsible for the training of new employees. As another example, consider this customer service representative, who reframed the perception of the job as a meaningful whole that positively impacts others rather than a collection of separate tasks (i.e. cognitive change as a form of job crafting): 'Technically, [my job is] putting in orders, entering orders, but really I see it as providing our customers with an enjoyable experience, a positive experience, which is a lot more meaningful to me than entering numbers' (Berg et al., 2010, p. 167).

According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), the motivation for job crafting arises from three individual needs. First, employees engage in job crafting because they have the need to take control over certain aspects of their work to avoid negative consequences such as alienation from work. Second, employees are motivated to change aspects of their work to enable a more positive sense of the self to be expressed and confirmed by others. Third, job crafting allows employees to fulfil the basic human need for connection to others. Additionally, Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli and Hetland (2012) suggested that individuals craft their jobs in order to create conditions in which they can work more healthily and be more motivated.

The central characteristic of job crafting is that employees alter their tasks or other job characteristics on their own initiative (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). This distinguishes job crafting from other bottom-up redesign approaches such as *idiosyncratic deals* (i-deals), in which employees negotiate with their employers about their

work conditions (Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, Angerer, & Weigl, 2010; see also Chapter 5), or employee participation in job redesign (Nadin, Waterson, & Parker, 2001). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) viewed job crafting as changes introduced by the individuals in the design and social environment of their jobs, which, in turn, alter work meanings and work identity. Lyons (2008) defined job crafting as spontaneous unsupervised changes in one's job scope. Moreover, job crafting is different from proactive work behaviours. Proactive work behaviours have in common that they are initiated by the person either by acting in advance of a future situation and/or by taking control and causing change (Parker & Collins, 2010). An important benefit of proactive behaviour is that it is targeted to performance: employees who take the initiative to change certain things in their work environment are likely to contribute to organizational effectiveness (Tims et al., 2012). According to Tims and her colleagues, job crafting is different from previously studied proactive constructs because the changes that job crafters make are primarily aimed at improving their person–job fit and work motivation. This does not necessarily have to lead to an increase in organizational effectiveness.

Work Psychology in Action: Two examples of job-crafting behaviours in a general hospital

Female medical specialist:

'I organized a meeting for patients with a certain medical condition in the city where I work. During the time that I was busy with organizing the meeting, I kept asking myself: "Why am I doing this?" Then the day came and about 100 people showed up and I knew why I was doing this. We gave them information about their disease and it seemed to really help people. Although it took so much time and energy, it gave me much confidence seeing the positive effects of our work.'

Male medical specialist:

'For me, I become bored seeing the same type of patients over and over again because it is too predictable and at times there is not enough variety. We've been discussing how to improve patient care and we've been trying to implement the idea of utilizing our team members' strengths. Using strengths may improve patient care while also helping us as individuals to enjoy our jobs and make the most out of it. For example, I like working with a specific population of patients within our department and I've expressed this to my colleagues. Now, when my colleagues have questions about this population, or if one checks in, we've worked out that I can handle most of the flow and activity with this population. At the same time, I give up a portion of my patient population that falls outside of this group to my colleagues. To achieve this, me and my team need to express what we like most about our work and talk about ways to help everyone in the team utilize their strengths. We are much more effective as doctors when we are able to do what we enjoy, which is usually also what we are best at.'

Job crafting from the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources Model

Although Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) defined job crafting as 'everyday' behaviour, most empirical conceptualizations do not tap this aspect. Lyons (2008) found that employees reported an average of 1.49 crafting episodes for the past year. In order to capture the 'everyday' changes in job characteristics that employees may pursue, some scholars (Petrou et al., 2012; Tims & Bakker, 2010) theoretically frame the definition of job crafting in the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; see Chapter 4). As a result, job crafting is defined as the changes that employees may make to balance their job demands and job resources with their personal abilities and needs (cf. Tims & Bakker, 2010). Petrou et al. (2012) adopted a stance similar to Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) social constructionist view (Gergen, 1994) of the workplace, and define job crafting as proactive employee behaviour consisting of resources seeking, challenges seeking and demands reducing. In doing so, job crafting can be conceived as unfolding on a daily basis and as being directed towards the work environment that surrounds the individual, namely specific job demands and job resources. Like Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), Petrou et al. (2012) suggested that even in the most stable environments with detailed job descriptions and clear work procedures, individuals can and do adjust the tasks they perform, and mobilize the resources they need to carry out their tasks successfully. In this way, individuals remain healthy and motivated.

As depicted in Chapter 4, the JD–R Model proposes two processes in the development of well-being and performance. In the health impairment process, job demands such as a heavy workload and emotionally demanding interactions with others relate primarily to impaired health, whereas in the motivational process, job resources such as autonomy and performance feedback are primarily related to work motivation and engagement. Note that work engagement represents the experience of vigour, dedication and absorption at work. Viewing the work environment from the JD–R perspective implies that individuals craft their jobs to make it 'fit'; they target their job demands and job resources.

As already indicated, Petrou and colleagues (2012) discriminated between three distinct job crafting behaviours: resources seeking, challenges seeking and demands reducing. Decreasing job resources has not been proposed and does not seem to be a purposeful behaviour of workers. Seeking job resources (e.g. feedback, advice from colleagues or the manager, maximizing job autonomy) can be a form of coping with job demands or achieving goals and completing tasks. Past research has examined positive outcomes of several resource-seeking behaviours, such as feedback seeking (Ashford, Blatt, & van de Walle, 2003) and social support seeking (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). Hobfoll (2001) also suggests that a basic human motivation is directed towards the accumulation of resources that are important for the protection of other valued resources.

Challenges seeking may include behaviours such as seeking new challenging tasks at work, keeping busy during one's working day or asking for more responsibilities

once one has finished the assigned tasks (see also the examples in the Work Psychology in Action box). Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (1989) argued that when individuals engage in activities offering opportunities for growth, they seek challenges to maintain motivation and avoid boredom. This is consistent with the proposition that workers with active jobs (characterized by high job demands and high control) are likely to seek challenging situations that promote mastery (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

The job-crafting strategy of reducing job demands can include behaviours targeted at minimizing the emotionally, mentally or physically demanding aspects of one's work, reducing one's workload or making sure one's work does not go at the cost of one's private life. From an organizational perspective, reducing job demands might be a health-protecting coping mechanism when demands are excessively high. Reducing job demands has not been systematically studied as organizational behaviour. However, in the literature 'task avoidance' has been described as a withdrawal-oriented coping mechanism (Parker & Endler, 1996), slow or sloppy work and poor attendance have been described as counterproductive behaviours (Gruys, 1999), and procrastination can be 'active behaviour' with positive outcomes (Chu & Choi, 2005). While reducing demands might be an instrumental strategy to deal with the threat of diminished health, it is possible that at the same time it can have detrimental effects on (specific aspects of) one's job performance.

Using this conceptualization, Petrou et al. (2012) conducted a study among 95 employees from several organizations who filled out a quantitative diary for five consecutive days. Findings not only confirmed the validity of the job-crafting conceptualization, including the three specific behaviours of resources seeking, challenges seeking and demands reducing, but also showed that job-crafting behaviours varied significantly from one day to another. Specifically, it was found that job crafting occurs on a daily basis as daily fluctuations of job crafting ranged between 31% (challenges seeking), 34% (resources seeking) and 78% (demands reducing).

Tims, Bakker and Derks (2012) developed and validated a scale to measure job-crafting behaviour in three separate studies conducted in The Netherlands ($N=1,181$). Job crafting was defined as the self-initiated changes that employees make in their own job demands and job resources to attain and/or optimize their personal (work) goals. They found four independent job-crafting dimensions, namely increasing social job resources, increasing structural job resources, increasing challenging job demands and decreasing hindering job demands. These dimensions could be reliably measured with 21 items. In terms of convergent validity (see also Chapter 2), job crafting was positively correlated with the 'active' constructs of proactive personality and personal initiative, and negatively with the 'inactive' construct cynicism. In support of criterion validity of the job-crafting conceptualization and measurement, results indicated that self-reports of job crafting correlated positively with colleague ratings of work engagement, employability and performance. Finally, self-rated job-crafting behaviours correlated positively with peer-rated job-crafting behaviours, which indicates that job crafting represents behaviours that others can also observe.

Replay

Job crafting can be conceived from the job characteristics perspective of the JD–R Model, discriminating between three distinct job-crafting behaviours: (i) resources seeking, (ii) challenges seeking and (iii) demands reducing. In this way, job crafting was found to occur on a daily basis. Moreover, this conceptualization resulted in reliable and valid measures of job crafting as self-reports on job crafting were related to peer ratings of one's job crafting and performance.

Predictors and outcomes of job crafting

In this section we provide an overview of the predictors and outcomes of job crafting.

Predictors of job crafting

As crafting represents discretionary behaviour on the part of the employee, decision latitude and job autonomy were already suggested by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) to be important conditions that stimulate this behaviour. Several studies have indeed confirmed that decision latitude is positively related to job crafting (e.g. Leana, Appelbaum, & Shevchuk, 2009; Lyons, 2008). Other proposed predictors of job crafting include proactive personality (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012), job control (Lyons, 2008), task interdependence and discretion to craft a job (Leana et al., 2009), job demands (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), task complexity (Ghitulescu, 2007) and job challenges (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010). Task complexity and job challenges were found to be positively related to job crafting, which indicates that demanding aspects of the job stimulate proactive behaviour (Berg et al., 2010; Ghitulescu, 2007). Note, however, that task interdependence was found to inhibit collective job crafting (the degree to which teams crafted jobs), but was unrelated to individual crafting (Leana et al., 2009).

Petrou et al. (2012) examined the situational conditions influencing job crafting on a daily basis, as well as the relationship between job crafting and state work engagement. Their diary study showed that on days that work pressure and autonomy were both high (i.e. 'active jobs'; cf. Karasek, 1979) individuals showed higher resource-seeking and lower demand-reducing behaviours.

Berg, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2010) interviewed 33 employees in for-profit and non-profit organizations to examine how employees at different ranks describe the execution of their job-crafting behaviour. While employee rank was unrelated to the prevalence of job-crafting efforts, rank was related to how employees perceived the challenges to craft their job. Higher-rank employees tended to see the challenges they face in job crafting as located in their own expectations of how they and others should spend their time, while lower-rank employees tended to see their challenges as located in their prescribed jobs and others' expectations of them. Moreover, higher-rank employees adapted their own expectations and behaviours to get along with the perceived opportunities to job craft at work, while lower-rank employees adapted others' expectations and behaviours to create opportunities to job craft.

Outcomes of job crafting

Although research on the outcomes of job crafting is still in its infancy, there are some interesting empirical findings to be reported. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) proposed that job crafters are satisfied workers, as job crafting represents a way to enhance one's experienced meaning at work. In support of this suggestion, Ghitulescu (2007) found a positive link between job crafting and organizational commitment. Positive significant correlations have also been found between episodes of work modification and the variables of self-image, perceived control and readiness to change (Lyons, 2008).

More research has been conducted on the relation between job crafting and work engagement. In their study among 95 dyads of employees ($N = 190$) working in various organizations, Bakker, Tims and Derks (2012) found that employees who were characterized by a proactive personality were most likely to craft their jobs (increase their structural and social job resources, and increase their job challenges). Job crafting, in turn, was predictive of work engagement and colleague ratings of in-role performance. These findings suggest that to the extent that employees proactively adjust their work environment, they manage to stay engaged and perform well. In Tims et al.'s (2012) study, decreasing hindering job demands (e.g. role conflict, role ambiguity) was unrelated to work engagement. The reason for this is most probably that hindrance demands need to be taken care of in order to prevent exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001). However, hindrance demands do not seem to affect employee work engagement. Petrou et al. (2012) found that daily fluctuations in job crafting were related to daily fluctuations of work engagement. Specifically, it was shown that the more employees sought resources and challenges on a specific day, the more engaged they were in their job. In contrast, the more employees simplified their work on a specific day, the less engaged they were on that day. Note that reducing demands may have detrimental effects on the motivational process, for exmaple work engagement, but beneficial effects on the health impairment process, for example exhaustion (Petrou et al., 2012).

Furthermore, job crafting has been found to influence performance at work, which represents a very valuable outcome for organizations. Leana, Appelbaum and Shevchuk (2009) conducted performance assessments in 62 childcare centres and surveyed 232 teachers and aides to examine the extent to which workers crafted their jobs and how such crafting affected classroom quality. Results showed that collaborative crafting was positively related to performance, particularly for less experienced teachers. Note that in this study, collaborative crafting was also associated with higher levels of satisfaction and commitment.

Replay

There is evidence that people generally craft their jobs when they experience more autonomy and when the jobs are demanding. Moreover, job crafting occurs on days that employees experience high work pressure combined with high autonomy. However, the rank of a job seems to influence the degree to which one feels

responsible for the crafting behaviours, with high-ranking employees feeling more responsible themselves for their job crafting than low-ranking employees. Moreover, the scarce empirical evidence up to now suggests that job crafting is beneficial for job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Preliminary findings also indicate that job crafting may have both beneficial (in case of resources and challenges seeking) and detrimental (in case of demands reducing) effects on work engagement. Also, job crafting has favourable effects on the performance of groups and individuals.

17.4   Linking Job Crafting with Organizational Change and Innovation

Job crafting falls under proactive employee behaviours enacted in the light of an increasingly uncertain and transformational work environment (Grant & Parker, 2009). Crafting a job not only requires but also triggers adaptive efforts. Job crafting can be the key to successfully dealing with today's workplace, where tasks and roles are already in flux. Because managers today do not simply require employees to change but also to proactively introduce changes (Grant & Parker, 2009), job crafting enhances employees' sustainable ability to adapt to the demands of the dynamic post-industrial workplace (Kira, van Eijnatten, & Balkin, 2010). Proactive actions that are useful during organizational change include (i) maximizing the pool of job resources that help employees deal or cope with change, (ii) keeping the work pressure associated with change at an optimal level and (iii) seeking challenges that will transform change to an engaging and efficacious experience (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008). Those three behaviours are present in job crafting and thus form an ideal strategic advantage for employees in the context of change (Petrou et al., 2012).

Preliminary evidence indicates that job crafting can be useful during organizational change. For example, in a qualitative study during a merger, Kira, Balkin and San (2012) found that, among other activities, relational crafting (e.g. asking for supervisory support) and task crafting (e.g. prioritizing) were used as strategies to deal with the new situation at work. In a similar vein, job-crafting episodes have been associated with readiness to change (Lyons, 2008). However, the evidence on how different job-crafting behaviours and employee outcomes are inter-related is far from conclusive. As mentioned before, in a diary study among employees dealing with various changes, Petrou and colleagues (2012) found that seeking challenges was positively related to work engagement and demands reducing was negatively related to work engagement. Next to these daily effects, job crafting is found to have more enduring effects on work engagement and adaptation to change. In a longitudinal study conducted during the reorganization of a Dutch police department, Petrou, Demerouti and Schaufeli (2013) found that seeking resources was positively associated with work engagement, while reducing demands was negatively associated with work engagement one year later. Furthermore, within the same organization, seeking resources and seeking challenges were positively associated with adaptation to

changes as reported by police officers, whereas reducing demands was negatively associated with adaptation (Petrou et al., 2013).

Replay

Taken together, research so far seems to suggest that job crafting can be a way through which individuals adapt change and innovations to themselves, which makes them more responsive and adaptive to the context of change and consequently facilitates successful implementation of organizational change and innovations. Preliminary findings further reveal a favourable implication of seeking resources and seeking challenges, and an unfavourable implication of reducing demands for motivation and performance within changing environments.

17.5   Unresolved Issues Regarding Job Crafting

Oldham and Hackman (2010) discussed several open issues regarding job crafting that remain to be answered. The first question that needs to be addressed is whether the benefits of job crafting derive from substantive changes in the work itself or mainly from involvement in the process of making those changes. It may be that employee-initiated changes in the redesign of jobs result in more complex, challenging and meaningful work, which is likely to foster positive work and personal outcomes. But it could also be the case that beneficial outcomes derive not from positive changes in job attributes but instead from simply being involved in job-crafting activities. Even when improvements in productivity and/or satisfaction are observed after individuals have crafted their jobs, the open question is why this is the case. Is it because the job now fits better with their own preferences and needs, or because the newly crafted jobs stretch their skills, or because crafting allowed them to eliminate inefficiencies and redundancies in work processes that had been frustrating them and impeded their productivity? Such explanations have been provided by Oldham and Hackman (2010), who further identified the danger of dysfunctional consequences of job crafting. Is it possible that job crafting will introduce inefficiencies in work processes? If employees adjust a product or service or characteristic of their work that is even slightly different from what existed before, disruptions in the work processes may develop that affect not only the crafter but also other employees, who may have to struggle to accommodate the newly modified product or service. How can job crafting be executed in a way that it lessens the likelihood of unanticipated problems that reduce the effectiveness of the work unit as a whole?

It should be noted that there is some discussion in the literature as to whether job crafting is a predictor or outcome of employee work engagement. Are enthusiastic and vigorous employees more likely to craft their jobs or does crafting one's job demands and resources facilitate work engagement? The preliminary answer is that both scenarios are possible. Bakker (2011) argued that employees who are engaged and perform well are able to create their own job and personal resources, which then foster engagement again over time. Engaged workers are active job crafters who change their job demands and resources if necessary. Consistent with

this idea, Schaufeli, Bakker and van Rhenen (2009), in their study among Dutch managers of a telecom company, showed that changes in job resources predicted engagement over a one-year time period, and that engagement was predictive of increases in social support, autonomy, opportunities for development and performance feedback. In a similar vein, in their three-year panel study among 2,555 Finnish dentists, Hakanen, Perhoniemi and Toppinen-Tanner (2008) found that job resources predicted work engagement and were indirectly related to personal initiative. In addition, they found that personal initiative predicted work engagement and was indirectly related to future job resources. These findings are consistent with Bakker's (2011) model of work engagement, and suggest that job crafting and work engagement are reciprocally related.

17.6   Job Crafting as Redesign Tool: Ideas for Interventions

In 2012, van den Heuvel, Demerouti and Peeters developed a training programme to increase the awareness of employees within different layers of the organization regarding the ways in which they can adapt their job to their own needs so that they experience more pleasure, engagement and meaning in their work. The adjustments refer to the specific job demands and job resources, the two categories of job characteristics that are described in the JD–R Model. That process begins with awareness of the current working situation and the freedom that they have to make those adjustments. In this way, it becomes clear to employees what job demands and job resources they need to adjust or create.

The job-crafting training aims to increase participants' motivation and engagement through two different routes: (i) through promoting the self-directed behaviour of employees and (ii) through the strengthening of personal resources. With regard to the increase in self-directed behaviour at work, previous research has shown that it is possible to facilitate this through interventions (e.g. Demerouti, van Eeuwijk, Snelder, & Wild, 2011). The training combines learning about what job crafting is and what happens when employees craft their jobs, executing self-specified job-crafting assignments/actions for a period of several weeks and reflecting on the experiences of these job-crafting actions after they have been completed. In this way, individuals are encouraged to integrate job crafting in their daily work by learning to choose and to execute small job-crafting actions.

This training was tested (with pre and post measures) among 39 employees of a police district. These employees were assigned to three experimental groups, while the control group consisted of 47 employees. Each participant had to identify a colleague with a similar job, who was approached to fill in a questionnaire before and after the training in order to serve as the control group. The training had a positive effect on two job resources, namely contact with the supervisor and opportunities for developmental work. These were higher at Time 2 compared to Time 1, while for the control group no change was found. Next to job resources,

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Job-crafting training is an intervention that consists of a number of phases:

1. *Organizing and communicating job crafting*. At this stage, all aspects of the training are organized and communicated in consultation with the organization that will apply the job-crafting training as a motivational intervention. The organization recruits a group of participants who will attend the training. The training starts with a job-crafting workshop that consists of a one-day session for small groups of employees. Through various explanations and exercises during the workshop, employees get to know the concept of job crafting. The workshop concludes with the development of a so-called Personal Crafting Plan (PCP). The PCP consists of specific crafting actions that the participants/employees have to undertake for a period of four weeks.

2. *Getting started with job crafting itself*: In this phase, the employees themselves keep a so-called 'crafting logbook'. This is a weekly logbook in which for a one-month period employees keep detailed reports of their crafting activities of that week as they have been specified in the PCP. Specifically, during the first week of van den Heuvel et al.'s (2012) job-crafting intervention, participants were asked to increase job resources (search for feedback and for social support), while during the second week they were instructed to decrease job demands. In the third week, participants were asked to seek job challenges, while during the fourth week they were again asked to increase three different job resources: autonomy, participation in decision-making and developmental possibilities. Moreover, participants were asked to make time to think about a number of reflection questions every week. Answering these questions each week was expected to increase personal effectiveness and meaning making.

3. *Exchange of experiences*: After the participants themselves had crafted their job for one month, they met again to exchange their experiences on the crafting actions. During this reflection meeting they discussed successes, problems and solutions. In this way, employees could learn from each other's best practices. Moreover, attention was paid to how employees in the future could overcome possible obstacles that hinder their job-crafting attempts.

4. *What is the effect?* In this phase, the effect of the job-crafting training on employee work engagement, motivation and well-being is investigated.

self-efficacy was also found to have increased in the training group but not in the control group. Finally, participants reported more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions after the training, which indicated that the job-crafting training not only influenced the working conditions but also employee well-being. Research has shown that people who often (vs. not) experience positive emotions are more open to new experiences as well as being more creative and cooperative (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008).

17.7   Conclusions

In this chapter we suggests that job crafting is a job redesign approach that organizations can use (next to top-down approaches) to improve the jobs of their employees. The chapter began by presenting an overview of (top-down) job redesign approaches that organizations traditionally use. The job redesign literature has gradually recognized that the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to the implementation of improvements at work is no longer sufficient. Approaches that recognize the role of individuals as proactive agents who shape their own jobs and change their own job characteristics (bottom-up) have come to complete the traditional (top-down) job redesign literature. We discussed the phenomenon of job crafting – the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in their task or relational boundaries. We showed that job crafting (e.g. increasing challenging job demands and increasing job resources) can have important ramifications for employee work engagement and performance. Job-crafting interventions can be effectively used to encourage employees to modify their own work environment proactively in order to stay engaged.

Although job crafting is not a panacea for all organization problems, it is important for organizations to recognize its existence and to manage it such that it has beneficial effects on the employees and the organizations. We do not claim that job crafting should replace the (top-down) attempts of organizations to improve the work environment of their employees. However, we do suggest that organizations should allow, stimulate and train their employees to craft their jobs in a way that fits them and the organization better. It is important that organizations recognize that an individual employee is the person who knows his/her job best and who can recognize where there is room for improvement such that the job fits better with the person.

Discussion Points

1. Should job crafting refer only to adjustments of job demands and job resources?
2. How can a supervisor manage the job-crafting behaviours of his/her employees?
3. Why do you think that job crafting can make people more enthusiastic about their jobs?

Learning by Doing

1. Think back about your own study or working experience and try to recall situations in which you crafted your study or job. Try to answer the following questions:
    i.   What did you craft?
    ii. When did you craft your study or job?
    iii. What was the result of your study or job crafting?
    iv. How did others react to your crafting actions?
2. Find an individual (e.g. a friend, family member or lecturer) who is performing paid work. Conduct an interview with him/her and try to find some information about his/her past job-crafting behaviour. Explain to the person what job crafting is and ask for specific examples indicating the person's past crafting behaviour. Ask further questions about the result of the crafting and the reactions of others to the crafting.
3. Find an individual with a supervisory role (e.g. lecturer, friend, family member). Have an interview with him/her and try to find some information about how this person deals with the job-crafting behaviours of his/her employees. Try to uncover what kind of employee job-crafting behaviours a supervisor can observe and how the supervisor reacts to such behaviours. Does he/she stimulate the employees or does he/she discourage them?
4. You have to convince the management of an organization that the organization should offer its employees the possibility of attending a job-crafting intervention. Try to come up with arguments that you can use based on the literature. Moreover, try to anticipate possible counter-arguments and questions from the organization.

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