

## Job Design: Everything you need to know

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### Introduction

This article seeks to explore the concept of job design by focusing its attention on the theoretical models of job design, the definition of job design, guidelines for job design, aims of job design, methods of job design and steps that need to be followed when conducting job design. The precursor to job design is job analysis. Job design aims to organize tasks, duties and responsibilities of a job to achieve organisational and individual goals. Job design is defined as the systematic and purposeful allocation of tasks to individuals and groups within an organisation. It is important to note that if properly conducted job design can lead to an increase in productivity and job satisfaction. The main ingredients of job design are a task, motivation, resource allocation and a compensation system. The design of jobs is influenced by organisational, environmental and behavioural factors.

### What is Job Design?

According to *Torrington, Hall, Taylor and Atkinson (2011)*, job design is the process of putting together a range of tasks, duties and responsibilities to create a composite profile of tasks for individuals to undertake in their work and to regard as their own.

It is the view of *Zareem, Razzaq, and Mujtaba (2013)*, that job design is the process of changing the content and processes of a job to increase an employee's satisfaction, motivation, and productivity.

*Buchanan (1979) cited in Zareem et al., (2013)* defined job design as specifying the contents or methods of any job in such a way that various requirements of the job holder can be effectively satisfied. They further maintained that these requirements may include social, technological, personal, and organizational desires. Job design has been noted to be related to the process of transformation of inputs to outputs and it also takes into consideration the human factors such as attitudes, beliefs, behaviour, and organizational factors such as policies, procedures, and plant and equipment which are of critical importance in the achievement of desired performance.

Against this background, job design can therefore be defined as the integration of job content and the method of doing the job. This combines the qualifications, skills, and experience required for the job, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards associated with the job, and the basic relationship between organizational needs and employee needs. A typical job design process will consist of the following components: specification of individual tasks, a combination of tasks into jobs and specification of methods to execute the tasks.

### Theoretical Models of Job Design

Job design can be viewed from three main perspectives:

## 1. Taylorism

This approach was propounded by Frederick Taylor and is also known as scientific management and is regarded as the foundation for systematic job design. Frederick Taylor developed this theory to develop a “science” for every job within an organization according to the following principles:

- Create a standard method for each job.
- Successfully select and hire proper workers.
- Effectively train these workers.
- Support these workers.

## 2. The Social Technical Systems Approach

According to Kariuki & Makori (2015), the socio-technical systems theory suggests that organizations are composed of people interacting with each other and a technical system that produces products or services. This perspective is based on the following guiding principles:

- The design of the organization must fit its goals.
- Employees must be actively involved in designing the structure of the organization.
- Control of variances in production or service must be undertaken as close to their source as possible.
- Subsystems must be designed around relatively self-contained and recognizable units of work.
- Support systems must fit in with the design of the organization.
- The design should allow for high-quality working life.
- Changes should continue to be made as necessary to meet changing environmental pressures

According to Baxter and Sommerville (2011:4), “the outcome of applying these methods is a better understanding of how human, social and organizational factors affect how work is done and technical systems are used”.

## 3. The Job Characteristics Model(JCM)

This model suggests that the existence of certain job characteristics leads to certain psychological states such as a state of meaningfulness arising from skill variety, task identity, and task significance; a sense of responsibility arising from autonomy and knowledge of results obtained from feedback. The five characteristics in Hackman and Oldman’s JCM as summarized by Mukul et al., (2013) are:

- Skill variety
- Task identity
- Task significance
- Autonomy
- Job feedback

The individual elements are then proposed to lead to positive outcomes through three psychological states:

- Experienced meaningfulness
- Experienced responsibility
- Knowledge of result

## Definitions and Clarification of Key Components of Job Design

### Job Design

Job design can be described as the process of describing a job in terms of its duties and responsibilities, the methods used in carrying out the job in terms of techniques, systems and procedures, the relationship that should exist between the job holders and their superiors, subordinates and colleagues.

According to Davis (1966), job design is the specification of the content, methods and relationships of jobs to satisfy technological and organizational requirements as well as the social and personal requirements as well as the social and personal requirements of the job holder.

Job design encompasses the specification of tasks that are to be performed by employees in the organization and it includes any anticipated interpersonal and task relationships. This occurs all the time in the workplace as people communicate and is increasingly so in the flat, lean organization structures.

The major components of Job design are work content and job depth. Work content includes among other things:

- Tasks and functions
- Methods of work
- Responsibilities and duties attached to the job
- Knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform a job
- Interrelationships between the jobs
- Rewards employees get after performing the job

**Job depth:** is the autonomy or the authority that the job holder enjoys in planning and organising the work attached to the job

**Task:** is a piece of assigned work expected to be performed within a certain time. Job designers must strictly and thoroughly identify tasks that need completion

**Motivation:** refers to forces within the individual that account for the level, direction, and persistence of effort expended at work. Individuals need to be compelled, excited, and passionate to do their work. Managers should design jobs that motivate employees

**Resource Allocation** occurs when an organization decides to appropriate or allocate certain resources to

specific jobs, tasks, or dilemmas facing the organization. In job design, it is necessary to identify and structure jobs in a way that uses the company's resources efficiently. Appropriate resource allocation allows large organizations to foster and develop innovation in their workforce and underscores strategy through distribution.

**Compensation:** the reward systems include compensation, bonuses, raises, job security, benefits, and various other reward methods for employees. An outline or description of reward packages should be established when constructing jobs.

## What are the main aims of job design?

- Facilitating the interest of employees towards the job and enhancing their satisfaction
- Increasing employee motivation and productivity
- Enhancing employees' skills by identifying their training needs
- Covering the modern needs of employee participation
- Ensuring a safer working environment
- Making the communication process clear and effective in the organization
- Improving the quality of working life of employees
- Eliminating the unnecessary levels of supervision, checking, and control

## What are the Guidelines for Job Designing?

To achieve the objectives of job design certain factors need to be taken into consideration:

- Identifying the tasks clearly and forming natural work units
- Fixing the responsibility associated with a job clearly
- Allowing an appropriate provision for the autonomy of doing work in the job design
- Equipping the employees to participate in decision-making
- Including the details about the working environment of a job
- Developing interest of employees in their jobs
- Presenting the timely feedback to employees on their performance
- Providing timely recognition and sufficient support to employees

## What are the Main Methods of Job Design?

The methods that can be used to conduct job design include.

### Job Rotation

Saravani and Abbasi (2013) stated that job rotation involves mainly rotating employees from one position to another in a lateral fashion and is characterized by having tasks that require different skills, and at times, tasks with different responsibilities. As such, job rotation is seen as having the important element of promoting learning in the organization thus improving the capabilities of employees and at

the same time getting the benefits of job satisfaction

## **Job Enlargement**

According to Marwa and Muathe (2014), job enlargement can be viewed as an activity that entails assigning workers additional same level activities thus increasing the number of activities they perform. It, therefore, means that job enlargement increases the scope of work laterally without necessarily increasing job tasks in a vertical fashion. According to Chung and Ross (1977), cited in Marwa and Muathe (2014), the impact of job enlargement on employee motivation is in fulfilling the lower needs of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs namely: physiological, safety, and social needs, towards influencing job satisfaction. This means that job enlargement as a technique of job design has the capacity of giving the employees motivation to enjoy the work and thus improve organizational performance.

## **Job Enrichment**

According to Marwa & Muathe (2014), job enrichment entails giving employee's greater autonomy and control thereby influencing workers' affective and motivational systems by chiefly providing multiple paths to job goals. Job enrichment involves vertical restructuring that leads to the employee being given additional authority, autonomy, and control over the way the job must be done. Based on the work of King-Taylor (1975), Marwa and Muathe (2014), argued that job enrichment must meet and fulfil employees' aspirations as individuals and not robots.

## **What steps are involved in Job Design?**

Certain steps should be followed when carrying out job design.

### **Step.1. Identification of Jobs to be Redesigned**

The first step in job redesign is to identify the jobs to be redesigned. Job redesign is not an automatic process but when any change in contextual variables affecting jobs takes place, it affects the quality of job performance.

### **Step.2. Identification of Jobs to be Redesigned**

After identifying the jobs to be redesigned, contents that are to be changed have to be identified. This is done through the process of job analysis. By undertaking the job analysis process, the new job description for each job is prepared which shows the contents of the job as well as its relationship to other jobs. Simultaneously, the job specification for each job is prepared.

### **Step.3. Effecting Redesigning**

Based on the job description, a job is redesigned. Whenever there is any change like any job because of change in contextual variables, its core dimensions remain the same. These core dimensions are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Therefore, redesigning is effected in these dimensions

#### **Step.4. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Effects of Job Design**

When a job is redesigned, it is put in operation on an experimental basis. During this period, an attempt is made to evaluate how the redesigned job is facilitating or constraining the job holder and other jobs with which it is linked. Feedback is received from all the persons concerned—job holder, his superior, his subordinates, HR professionals concerned and, if possible, those outsiders who interact with the redesigned job holder

#### **Empirical Evidence Surrounding Job Design**

The notion of job design has always featured prominently in efforts to improve the performance of both public and private institutions (Ali & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2014:70). Many researchers have analyzed the relationship between job design and employee performance and concluded that there is a strong relationship between the two concepts (Ali & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2014:70).

According to Potgieter (2003), changes that are introduced as part of job design can enrich or enlarge jobs and these will assist in the reduction of stress factors that are related to autonomy, routineness, and complexity. According to Ali and Zia-ur-Rehman (2014:76), job design has a positive and significant effect on the relationship with employee performance.

Job design has a sufficient role in employee satisfaction and performance and therefore management of any organization must consider employees' perspective in designing the job profile of each position. Hence, prominence should be given to Job Characteristics Model elements of the job (Ali & Zia-ur-Rehman 2014:76).

Hadi and Adil (2010:297) confirmed that job characteristics are successful in predicting job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation. Task identity, which refers to the extent to which the employees perform the whole task instead of merely small components of a task, was found to be the most important predictor of job satisfaction. This led to the psychological state of meaningfulness of work to the employees, further influencing the level of job satisfaction. Feedback turned out to be the only significant predictor of extrinsic motivation.

According to research in countries such as France, South Africa, and Mexico, it has been found that autonomy in deciding to start and work ending times tended to lead to more job satisfaction.

According to Schultz, Bagraim, Potgieter, Viedge and Werner (2003:67), "job satisfaction is a collection of an individual's attitudes to his or her job as influenced by aspects such as the job itself". When this view is juxtaposed with Zareem's et al., (2013:46) definition of job design as "changing the content and

processes of a job to increase an employee's satisfaction, motivation and productivity", this then suggests that job design can be used to introduce productivity improvement in current jobs by introducing concepts such as job enlargement, job rotation, job enrichment, and socio-technical systems.

## Conclusion

The above analysis boils down to an understanding of job design as the process that articulates the work content in terms of tasks and functions, methods of work, skills, knowledge and abilities required for performing the job, the interrelationship between jobs and the compensation that an employee gets after performing the job. Research evidence shows that there are commonalities of thought in the effects of job enlargement, job enrichment, and job rotation on employee satisfaction and workplace productivity.

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