

9

JOB DESIGN

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- A Describe quality of work life, and define some of its categories.
- ▲ Discuss the benefits and problems associated with job simplification.
- ▲ Differentiate between job enlargement and job enrichment, and explain the benefits and costs of each.
- ▲ Explain the job characteristics model, and identify the core task dimensions.
- A. Discuss steps in implementation of job redesign.
- A Identify the sorts of jobs and people for which job enrichment is likely to be successful or unsuccessful. A Explain the social information-processing approach to job design.
- ▲ Describe flextime, job sharing, and the compressed workweek.

Jobs are central to the lives of most people. They consume a large part of our days, and often our nights. To a large extent, many of us evaluate our success in life on the basis of the status, pay, and other characteristics of our jobs. And, others often size us up by our response to, "Tell me, what do you do?" Indeed, it is hard to imagine not working. Consider the case of \$40-million-lottery winner Michael Wittkowski, described in Situation 1.

SITUATION 1

Chicago Man Wins \$40-Million Lottery

A 28-year-old Chicago man became North America's biggest lottery winner when he stepped up to claim a fat \$40-million prize in the Illinois State Lottery. Michael E. Wittkowski, a printer for Deluxe Check Printers, Inc., his father, and seven other family members appeared at a jammed news conference yesterday, ending speculation over who would claim the huge prize.

The lottery will invest \$15,093,125 in an annuity to pay Mr. Wittkowski \$2 million a year, before taxes, for the next 20 years.

The winner, smiling broadly, said he hadn't any special plans for the money except to pay some bills and hasn't any intention of quitting his job. "I quit," he said, "all I have to do is sit around and count my money."

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Albert Camus has written, "Without work, ail life goes rotten. But when work is soulless, life stifles and dies." What is it about jobs that makes them important to people? What makes them exciting? Why are some soulless? What makes jobs "good" or "bad"? Does everyone want the same things from jobs? And, what can management do to improve jobs and increase their motivating potential?

In this chapter we will examine job design. We will first look at the issue of quality of work life, in which job design figures prominently. We will then explore the merits and demerits of job specialization and consider calls for "bigger" jobs. Then, job enrichment will be discussed. Next, we will consider an approach to job design that emphasizes social cues. Finally, additional approaches to job redesign, focusing on work schedules, will be examined,

THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

The recent calls for job redesign manifest the growing emphasis on the quality of work life. Quality of work life is an elusive term, used in many ways. To some, it means a "humane" work environment or increased worker participation in decision making or the full use and development of human capacities. To others, it means making working conditions more conducive to good health and even distributing the firm's income and other resources more equitably. Richard Walton (1973) provided the following list of categories for quality of work life:

- ▲ Adequate and fair compensation;
- A Safe and healthy environment;
- A Development of human capacities;
- A Growth and security—the opportunity to maintain and expand capabilities, to use those capabilities in future work assignments, and to advance in organizational or career terms;
- A Social integration—the opportunity to achieve personal identity and self-esteem;
- A Constitutionalism—the degree to which a worker has rights and can protect those rights;
- A The total life space—the extent to which a person's work has a balanced role in his or her life, not demanding so much time, effort, or other inputs so as to severely disrupt leisure and family time;
- A Social relevance—the degree to which the worker views what the organization does as socially responsible and, therefore, sees his or her work as being of social value.

What these categories have in common is the intent to make organizations better places to be, more liveable, and satisfying. Because the nature of jobs is so central to work life, calls for job redesign are common among those concerned with the quality of work life.

II

THE CASE FOR SPECIALIZATION

As discussed in Chapter 2, Frederick Taylor (1911) introduced scientific management. According to scientific management, the "one best way" to perform a job should be found. That "one best way" generally results in job simplification, with each worker performing the same few activities over and over again. Advantages cited for specialization include:

- ▲ The worker should be better able to perform the task and should find it to be easier.
- ▲ Time is not lost moving from one piece of machinery to another.
- A The use of specialized machinery is encouraged.
- A Replacement of employees who are absent or who leave the organization is easier. A Especially where assembly lines are used, the worker will adjust to the required pace and be drawn along by "traction."

Scientific management was credited with some notable successes. For instance, application of its principles in one case increased the number of bricks laid per worker-hour from 120 to 350.

However, Taylor is now often criticized for his emphasis on efficiency at the possible expense of employee satisfaction. He did consider the human element, but many of his views are seen today as inhumane. He wrote, for instance, that the kind of person who made a good pig-iron handler was "of the type of the ox." Whether or not criticisms of Taylor are valid, it does seem that the simplified, routine jobs he proposed may have some unforeseen consequences. It has been argued that they may lead to boredom, dissatisfaction, and other negative outcomes.

There is little doubt that many jobs are quite boring. Figure 9-1 presents boredom ratings for a variety of jobs.

Criticisms of specialization have led to demands for larger, more challenging jobs. The Saab advertisement shown in Figure 9-2 is one reflection of those demands.

e 9- JOB BOREDOM RATINGS

ijfobs differ substantially in their boredom levels. Some of the iftbre and less boring jobs, according to a study conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan, are listed below. An average boredom rating is 10.0.

fob	Bdrednoiii "Rating
Assembler (work paced, by machine)	207
Foiklift truck driver	170
Monitor of continuous-flow goods	146
Accountant	107
i Electronic technician	87
Blue-collar supervisor	85
Administrator	66
Air-traffic controller (small airport)	51

Source: Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan

Figure 9-2
Some companies
arc attempting
to make jobs
more
challenging
through less
specialization.



**Bored people build bad cars.
That's why we're doing away with
the assembly line.**

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Swb. IVI what a car should bt.

Source: Photo courtesy of Saab-Scania ot America, Inc.

In many companies, the role of the worker is now much broader than in the past. For example, consider the changes presented in Situation 2:

SITUATION 2

Worker Roles Are Expanding

The old picture of bosses giving orders and employees simply following them is changing at many companies. Employees at A&P's Super Fresh Food Markets in Philadelphia have had a hand in advertising, inventory, and operating decisions. Workers at a Bethlehem Steel Corporation plant in Johnstown, PA, recommended improvements in the steel wire they produce and helped the firm keep a customer. At a Midwest Steel plant in Portage, IN, a labor-management participation team started a publicity campaign to persuade local soft-drink companies to switch from aluminum cans to tin cans, which the company produces.

Partly in return for wage and other concessions, workers in ailing industries are winning greater roles in corporate decision making. For badly needed wage concessions, Chrysler Corporation in 1980 granted Douglas A. Frasset, then head of the United Auto Workers, a seat on its board of directors and gave him access to sensitive financial information. More and more unions are now demanding what were traditionally management rights. Many people consider this to be a basic realignment of labor-management relations.

To some, this change is seen as a scary thing, handcuffing management. For instance, Ford Motor Company in 1982 had to agree to a 24-month prohibition against plant closings caused by work being contracted out to either foreign or nonunion domestic plants. Several airlines have gained needed concessions only by accepting agreements barring them from creating nonunion subsidiaries.

Others argue that these changes are simply part of a healthy trend toward greater worker participation. That participation may improve workers attitudes toward their companies and their jobs. By feeling they have more of a hand in the destiny of the company, employees may take greater pride in their work and improve the competitive strength of their firms.

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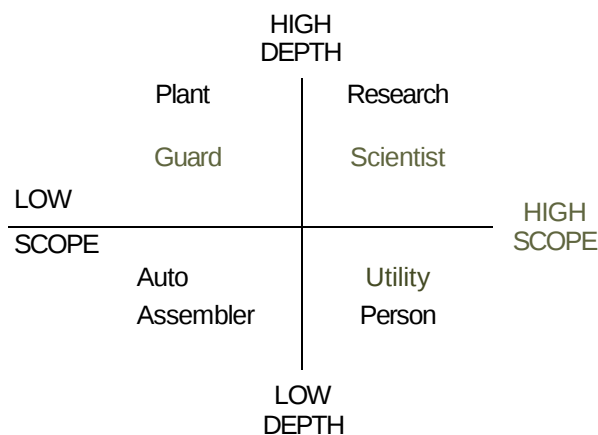
JOB SIZE

If it is argued that "small" jobs are demeaning and dissatisfying for workers, a logical question to ask is how jobs can be made larger. There

are at least two major dimensions to job size—job depth and job scope, or range.

Job depth refers to the degree to which employees are able to influence their work environments and to carry out planning and control functions. **Job scope** is the number of different activities the worker performs, regardless of their content. Increases in job depth are generally called **job enrichment** while increases in job scope are referred to as **job enlargement**. Most job changes are likely to influence both depth and scope, but these are separate dimensions and they can be independently manipulated. Figure 9-3 shows jobs differing in their levels of job depth and scope.

Figure 9-3 **JOBS VARYING IN DEPTH AND/OR SCOPE**



Source: From *Managerial Process and Organizational Behavior* by A. C. Filley, R. J. House, and S. Kcrr. Copyright © 1976 by Scott, Foresman and Company. Reprinted by permission.

Benefits of Increased Scope

Among the suggested advantages of increases in scope are:¹

- A There should be less fatigue of particular muscles since a greater variety of muscles may be used. A Since the employee will complete a larger part of the task, there may be a greater feeling of accomplishment.

1. R. I. Aldag and A. P. Brief, *Managing Organizational Behavior* [St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1981], 200.

- A The employee may exercise a greater variety of skills.
- ▲ Substantial increases in scope may enhance managerial flexibility. For instance, if (as in the Saab ad) assembly teams are used rather than assembly lines, it is easier to shut down a small number of the benches used by assembly teams rather than the entire line.

We should note that some of the presumed advantages of scope confound scope with depth. For instance, the assembly teams described in Figure 9-2 generally provide employees with more things to do and also with increased opportunities for planning and control.

Benefits of Increased Depth

The presumed benefits for increased depth are primarily psychological. For instance, it has been suggested that since small, routine jobs are frustrating to the drives of "mature" individuals, they may result in a display of a variety of defense mechanisms. Those defense mechanisms are ways in which the employee may try to reduce the tensions caused by frustration. They might involve physically leaving the source of frustration [such as through absenteeism or turnover], mentally leaving (through apathy or daydreaming), or striking back (perhaps by slowing down on the job or by making negative comments about the company). As shown in Figure 9-4, Chris Argyris has argued that the typical firm's response to such defense mechanisms is to make jobs even more specialized, tighten up on rules and regulations, and emphasize authority relationships.¹ These actions further frustrate maturity drives, and a self-reinforcing cycle occurs. Argyris reasons that to break out of that cycle, it is necessary to treat employees as mature individuals. Giving them more opportunity for planning and control is one step in that direction.

M. Scott Myers [1970] has made similar arguments. Myers reasoned that the assumption underlying work simplification is that there are two categories of workers. One category, responsible and highly motivated, is known as managers. The other, irresponsible and in need of close supervision, is called workers. Because of those assumed differences, managers are called on to plan, direct, and control, while workers are expected to simply carry out orders. What is needed, according to Myers, is to break down this artificial dichotomy and "make every employee a manager." This would involve turning many planning and control functions over to workers; that is, it would require enriching their jobs.

2. C. Argyris, *Integrating the Individual and the Organization* [New York: Wiley & Sons, 1964]

re 9-4

THE**MATURITY DRIVE, FRUSTRATION CYCLE**

Individual's drives
toward maturity
including desires for:

Activity
Independence
Diverse behavior
Deep interests
Long-time
perspective
Superordinate
position

Frustration
Q_i maturity ■
differs

Defense:
mechanisms

Anathv
Apatny
Daydreaming
Negativism Rate
restriction
Absenteeism

Organization's rules, formal
hierarchy, emphasis on
authority, and specialized
work resulting in worker:

Passivity
Dependence
Few ways of behaving
Shallow interests
Short-time perspective
Subordinate position

Source: Based on *Integrating the Individual and the Organization* by Chris Argyris. Copyright© 1964 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

THE JOB CHARACTERISTICS MODEL

if anything is to be done to change jobs, it is important to know which job dimensions are relevant to employees. In particular, before job enrichment attempts can be undertaken, it is necessary to determine the characteristics of an enriched job.

Arthur Turner and Paul Lawrence (1965) attempted to identify a set of job attributes that would influence employees' responses. Building on that work, J. Richard Hackman and Edward J. Lawler (1971) and later Hackman and Greg Oldham [1974] refined what has come to be known as the **job characteristics model** of job design.³ As presented by Hackman

3. For other discussions of this model, see the following: R. J. Aldag, S. H. Barr, and A. P. Brief, "Measurement of Perceived Task Characteristics," *Psychological Bulletin* 90 [1981]: 415-31; R. J. Aldag and A. P. Brief, *Task Design and Employee Motivation* [Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1970];- R. W. Griffin, *Task Design: An Integrative*

and Oldham, the job characteristics model describes jobs as having five core task dimensions and two interpersonal dimensions.

Core Task Dimensions

The core task dimensions are characteristics of the job itself that are felt to be key influences on employee motivation. They include:

- A *Skill variety*. The degree to which the job requires employees to perform a wide range of operations in their work and/or the degree to which employees must use a variety of equipment and procedures in their work.
- A *Autonomy*. The extent to which employees have a major say in scheduling their work, selecting the equipment they will use, and deciding on procedures to be followed.
- A *Task identity*. The extent to which employees do an entire piece of work and can clearly identify the result of their efforts.
- A *Task significance*. The extent to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives and work of other people.
- A *Feedback*. The degree to which employees receive information while they are working that reveals how well they are performing on the job.

Interpersonal Dimensions

The interpersonal dimensions are job characteristics that influence the degree to which employees engage in relationships with others on the job. They are:

- A *Dealing with others*. The degree to which a job requires employees to deal with other people (either customers, other company employees, or both) to complete their work.
- A *Friendship opportunities*. The degree to which a job allows employees to talk with one another on the job and to establish informal relationships with other employees at work.

Sample items from each of the core task dimensions are presented in Figure 9-5. Can you match each item to the appropriate dimension!

Hackman and Oldham see the core task dimensions as impacting on three critical psychological states: experienced meaningfulness of work, experienced responsibility for work outcomes, and knowledge of.

Approach [Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1982]; and K. H. Roberts and W. Glick "The Job Characteristics Approach to Task Design: A Critical Review," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 66 [April 1981]: 193-217.

SELECTED ITEMS TO MEASURE TASK DIMENSIONS

Listed below are a number of statements that may (or may not) describe your job; You are to indicate the degree to which each statement is an accurate description of the job on which you work. Do this by writing the appropriate number in the left-hand margin, based on the scale below.

Please make your descriptions as objectively and factually accurate as possible, without regard for whether you like or dislike your job.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very untrue of the job	Mostly untrue of the job	Slightly untrue of the job	Uncer- tain	Slightly true of the job	Moder- ately true of the job	Very true of the job

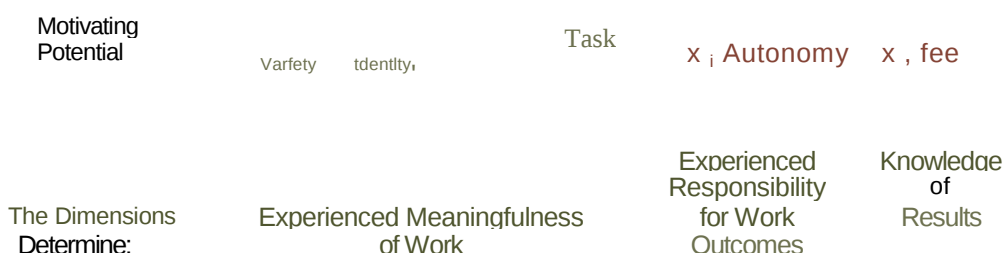
1. The job requires me to use a variety of complex or high-level skills.
2. The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work.
3. The job provides me with the chance to completely finish the pieces of work I begin.
4. Just doing the work required by the job provides many chances for me to figure out how well I'm doing.
5. The job is one where a lot of other people can be affected by how well the work gets done.

Source: Hackman & Oldham, WORK REDESIGN, 1980, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA. Pages 300-301 (adapted material). Reprinted with permission.

the actual results of work activities. Further, they have argued that perceptions of the core task dimensions fit together, as shown in Figure 9-6, to yield the motivating potential score of the job. This model implies that if any of the three components are very low, overall motivating potential of the task will be low. Further, as long as any of the three remain at very low levels, increases in the others will do little to improve overall motivating potential.

Figure

DETERMINING A JOB'S MOTIVATING POTENTIAL SCORE



Source: Hackman & Oldham, WORK REDESIGN, © 1980, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA- Page 81 (adapted material). Reprinted with permission.

Research on the Job Characteristics Model

The job characteristics approach has dominated recent research into job design. Questions have been raised concerning whether all employees actually view their jobs on these specific dimensions.⁴ It does seem, however, that the dimensions may serve as useful guides for understanding reactions to jobs and for planning redesign strategies.

Studies show perceptions of the core task dimensions to be generally related in job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and other favorable attitudes. However, those perceptions are generally not related to any consistent way to performance.⁵ Employees on enriched jobs typically get the benefits of enrichment simply by carrying out the task, regardless of their performance levels. So, we would expect the core task dimension perceptions to translate into increased performance only when persistence on the task is important.⁶

Research indicates that the combinatory model proposed by Hackman and Oldham is of questionable validity. That is, it appears that task dimension perceptions combine in an additive fashion to impact on reactions.⁷ This is a welcome finding since it suggests that improvements on any of the dimensions may substantially influence outcomes.

The Focus on Perceptions

It is important to keep in mind that the job characteristics approach focuses on employee perceptions of task characteristics. This is appropriate since people behave on the basis of their perceptions. However, as we stressed in Chapter 3, many things may affect perceptions. For instance, Gene Stone (1976) asked students to perform a simple assembly task. The task was the same for all students, but the way they perceived the task depended on their ages and personalities. As an example, older students felt the task offered more skill variety and feedback but less task identity than did younger students. In general, we might expect that an employee with considerable experience and training on a task would see it very differently than would a "rookie."⁸

This makes the job of job design more difficult. It is not enough to make objective changes in feedback, skill variety, or the other task dimensions. We must also discover how those objective changes translate into perceptions. Alternatively, as we'll see a bit later, it may even be possible to change perceptions *without* altering objective task characteristics.

4. R. B. Dunham, R. J. Aldag, and A. P. Brief, "Dimensionality of Task Design; Measured by the Job Diagnostic Survey," *Academy of Management Journal* 20 (1977); 201-23.

5. Aldag, Barr, and Brief, "Task Characteristics," 415-31.

6. *ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

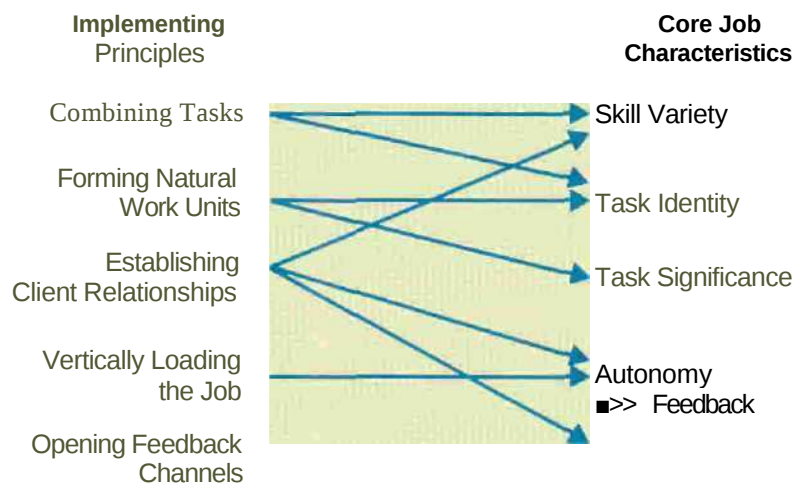
8. See Aldag and Brief, *Employee Motivation*, 93-95, for more on this issue.

IMPLEMENTING JOB ENRICHMENT

Hackman and Oldham (1980) have presented a set of implementing principles for job redesign. These are job changes that might influence the core task dimensions. Those implementing principles are presented in Figure 9-7.

Figure 9-7

IMPLEMENTING PRINCIPLES!



Where:

Combining tasks involves "putting together" simplified jobs to make a larger job.

Forming natural work units means arranging the items of work done by employees into meaningful, logical groups. For instance, tasks might be grouped by customers, geography, or type of business.

Establishing client relationships involves putting employees in direct contact with the "clients" or recipients of the work and giving them responsibility for dealing with those events.

Vertically loading the job means pushing down to the employee responsibility and authority that were formerly held at higher levels.

Opening feedback channels involves creating conditions for employees to directly learn how they are doing, from the job itself.

Source: © 1975 by the Regents of the University of California. Adapted by permission from CALIFORNIA MANAGEMENT REVIEW, volume XVII, no. 4, p. 62 by permission of the Regents.

These principles may be useful in providing suggestions for how jobs can be changed to increase levels of the core task dimensions. However, their use must take place as part of a systematic assessment of the particular situation. For instance, if job enrichment is to be successful, it must fit with the organization's employees, practices, structure, and technology.

The Conditions for Successful Redesign

According to Ray Aldag and Arthur Brief (1979), a family of jobs should be considered for redesign if:

- ▲ The employees perceive their jobs to be deficient in terms of the core task dimensions. It is important to stress here that *worker* perceptions, not just the assumptions of management or consultants, are crucial.
- A Employees are fairly well satisfied with pay, fringe benefits, and working conditions. Job redesign is likely to be resented and resisted if workers are unhappy with these factors.
- ▲ The current structure and technology of the unit where the jobs are housed are hospitable to enriched jobs. If the overall organization structure is quite mechanistic, or if technology is long-jumped, redesign attempts may be difficult to implement, very expensive, and likely to fail in the long run.
- A Employees want the sorts of things—variety, autonomy, feedback, and so on—that enriched jobs provide.

Steps in Implementation

If conditions seem appropriate for redesign, a job redesign task force made up of management and labor representatives should proceed through the following steps:

1. Identification of the actual activities which currently comprise the family of jobs.
2. Identification of the specific relationships between those activities [and the job incumbents' perceptions of salient task attributes [such as variety, autonomy, task identity, feedback, and task significance],
3. Specification of a detailed job-redesign intervention derived from a study of the job activities-task attribute linkages thus detected.
4. Evaluation of the proposed intervention through experiments in selected parts of the organization.
5. If evaluation is favorable, diffusion of the intervention throughout the family of jobs.

These conditions and steps are summarized in Figure 9-8.

STAGES IN JOB REDESIGN ,,

Current lievels
of core task
dimensions
■at£ |ij>yjr

Pay, fringes,
and working
conditions are
satisfactory

Practices,
structure, arid
technology
are suitable

Employees
want
job
redesign

Creation of labor-
management job-
redesign task force

Identification of
actual activities
comprising the job

Identification of
job activities-task
attribute links

Specification of job
redesign
intervention

Evaluation of
sample intervention

innovation

WHO WANTS ENRICHED JOBS?

A quick review of people we know would probably suggest that **some** would like more challenge, variety, and responsibility and others

might be Indifferent to them. Still others might say, "If you're going to give me all the decision-making responsibility of my boss, give me my boss's pay. And if you want me to do more things, you'd better be ready to pay me even more." Consider the following:

Anyone who has read Studs Terkel's series of interviews, *Working* [1974], has to be struck by the different ways in which people view their work in terms of the aspects of the work they consider important and of their reactions to job characteristics. A former quiz kid who has gone through a succession of jobs likes his current work in a greenhouse because his mind is at ease all day long- Conversely, a garbage collector keeps his mind occupied by analyzing how families live on the basis of what they throw out. Some workers are willing to put up with monotonous jobs in order to make money to do other things. A cab driver says his work is just a way to get enough money to buy a car wash and, ultimately, buy a schooner he'll charter in the West Indies. Other workers stress job ease. A fashion model feels guilty because she's spending her life doing something she doesn't like, 'it's not very fulfilling," she says, "... but I'm lazy, I admit it. It's an easier thing to do." [P. 541 Still others find a variety of ways to make their jobs more meaningful. An elevator starter has assumed security functions and acts as an information source, giving room numbers. A steelworker sometimes deliberately dents his work as a way of making an imprint that he can recognise as his own.⁹

Not everyone
wants his or her
job enriched.



⁹, From *Task Design and Employee Motivation* by R. J. Aldag and A. P. Brief. Copyright © 1979 by Scott, Foresman and Company. Reprinted by permission.

The Search for Factors Influencing Reactions to Job Enrichment

These examples highlight the need to determine what it is that particular workers or sets of workers may want from their jobs. Who wants enriched jobs and who doesn't? In seeking answers to this question, researchers have struck out in several directions. Variables that have been examined include whether the employees grew up in urban or rural areas, their degree of adherence to Protestant Work Ethic ideals, and their age, sex, and race.¹⁰ Each of those attempts has come up short, failing to identify with any degree of consistency who would be likely to respond positively or negatively to enriched jobs.

Higher Order Need Strength

A more promising moderator is **higher order need strength (HONS)**. This is basically the degree to which an individual is concerned with such things as challenge and responsibility, a topic we will explore further in Chapter 12, "Motivating." While most employees respond positively to high levels of the core task dimensions, those with strong HONS react most favorably.

THE CASE AGAINST JOB ENRICHMENT

Job enrichment is not a panacea. If workers don't want enriched jobs, if pay and working conditions are poor, or if the firm's technology or structure is inappropriate, job enrichment may be infeasible or unsuccessful. Further, job enrichment has been criticized on other grounds. For example, it has been suggested that:¹¹

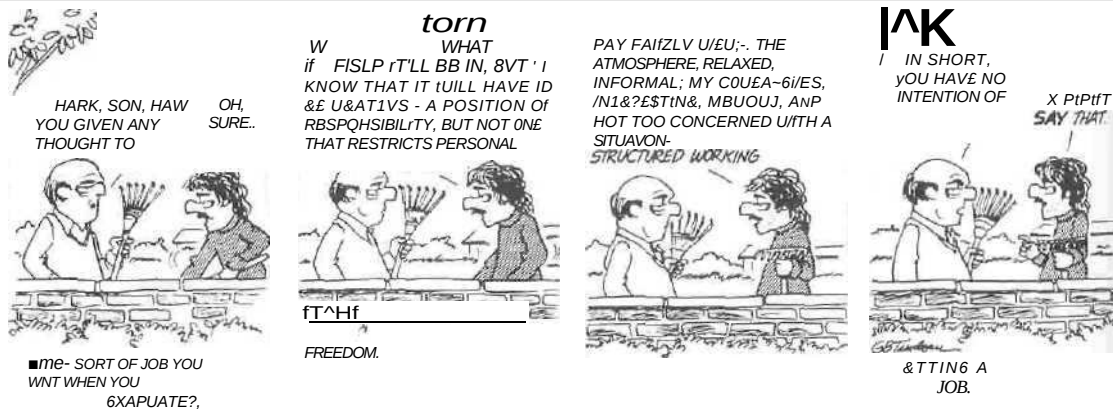
- A Much of the worker dissatisfaction which has been blamed on "blue-collar blues" may really be due to such factors as work speedups.
- ▲ Job enrichment may simply be a popular fad which behavioral scientists are exploiting.
- ▲ There is only so much to be done. If some workers are given **more** challenge and responsibility, the jobs of others must become more trivial.
- ▲ Competence can't be delegated as easily as responsibility. Some workers simply aren't ready for enriched jobs.

10- See *Ibid.*, 81-92, for a review.

11. Aldag and Brief, *Organizational Behavior*, 210-11.

Doonesbury

BY GARRY TRUDEAU



Source: DOONESBURY. Copyright 1982 by G. B-. Trudeau. Reprinted with permission of Universal Pres> Syndicate. All Rights Reserved.

A When employees' jobs are enriched, they may demand more pay because of the greater skill requirements of the altered j o ! Also, the job redesign may automatically lead to pay increases if the firm's reward system ties pay to such skill requirements.¹²

These criticisms may each contain a grain of truth. At the very least, they raise some issues to be kept in mind when contemplating a job enrichment program. Properly done, job enrichment may be time-consum^jing and expensive. It should not be taken lightly.

THE SOCIAL INFORMATION-PROCESSING APPROACH

A recently popular view of job design relies on the social information-processing approach. This approach says that socially provided infor¹, mation, such as comments from peers or supervisors, plays a major roleM determining how people perceive jobs and respond to them. For instance, if new employees hear their co-workers saying the job provides a lot of freedom, they are likely to perceive it as offering autonomy. In fact, some lab experiments have shown that socially provided information, such as written job descriptions and verbal cues, may have as much influence m worker perceptions of the job and their affective responses as do the objective characteristics of the job.¹⁵

VI. R. R. Dunham, "Relationships of Perceived Job Design Characteristics to; Ability Requirements and [ab Value," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 62 (December 191 760-6.?

13, For a discussion of ihis approach, see G. Salancik and J. A. Pfeffer, "A Information Processing Approach to Job Attitudes and Task Design," *AdministrativeSa\ en.ee Quarterly* 23 (June 1978); 224-53.

Academic Profile

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O: Should individual differences be taken into account in attempting to match the needs of individuals with the characteristics of jobs?

A: A considerable number of empirical studies show that various individual differences variables (e.g., need for achievement, need for autonomy, growth-need strength, and belief in the Protestant Work Ethic) are correlated with individuals' reactions [attitudinal and behavioral) to the characteristic* of jobs. Consequently, it's clear that the standing of people on such variables should be taken into account when making a variety of personnel decisions (e.g., employee selection, job placement, and employee development). Results of the same studies, however, suggest that the role of individual differences variables is not as strong as it was once thought to be. The available evidence shows neither strong nor consistent support for the once popular view that individual differences variables function as moderator variables (i.e., variables that influence the *relationship* between job design and individuals' reactions to jobs). In short, individual differences variables are important, but their role in job design theories needs to be reconsidered. Q: How important is the social information processing perspective in explaining individuals' reactions to jobs?

A: A basic tenet of the social information processing perspective is that individuals' perceptions of job characteristics and their affective (attitudinal, emotional) reactions to such characteristics are based more on information available from social sources in the work environment than on the objective characteristics of jobs. In my opinion, this perspective grossly distorts reality. More precisely, while it's clear that individuals may use information from others to help "make sense" of stimuli (e.g., objective job characteristics) in their work environ-

ment, it's generally the case that perceptions of such stimuli *are not dominated by social cues*. Instead, perceptions of jobs and other work-related stimuli are based largely on the objectively ascertainable properties of such stimuli. Attesting to this is the fact that research in which objective characteristics of jobs are experimentally manipulated (while holding social cues constant) show profound impacts on both perceptions of and reactions to job characteristics. On the other hand, research in which social cues are manipulated (while objective features of jobs are held constant) shows relatively weak effects on measured outcomes. Moreover, many studies show that social cues would appear to account for only a minor proportion of the variance in individuals' reactions to their jobs.

Q: What do you see as some of the most interesting new developments in the area of job design?

A: I view two developments as interesting. First, the findings of a study by myself and Hal Gueutal suggest that the dimensions that have typically been measured by job design researchers (e.g., variety, task significance, and autonomy) are not fully representative of the dimensions along which workers actually perceive their jobs. The important implication of this is that if researchers employ measures that assess the fuller set of dimensions in future studies, it may be possible to develop a better understanding of workers' reactions to characteristics of their jobs.

Second, interest in the physiological consequences of variations in the design of jobs appears to be increasing. Investigators are now studying how changes in the design of jobs influence a variety of heretofore understudied outcome variables, e.g., job-related stress.

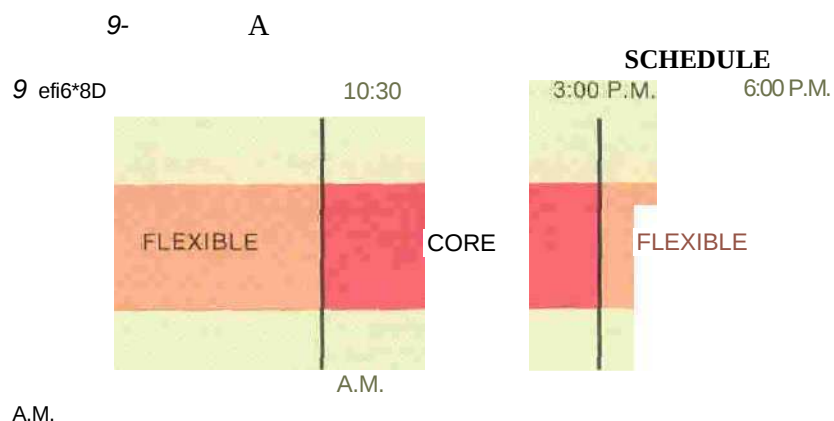
In one recent experiment, Ricky Griffin (1983) changed objective job characteristics in ways that were intended to increase variety, autonomy, feedback, and task identity. He also manipulated social information by training supervisors to make comments concerning those same task dimensions. Each supervisor's goal was to give five such cues each day. Both objective changes and social information were found to influence employee perceptions of the job and affective reactions. However, while objective changes had a significant impact on productivity, social cues did not. Nonetheless, this approach gives one more way for managers to influence employee task perceptions and subsequent responses.

OTHER JOB CHANGES

Several other approaches to changing jobs have been proposed. Three which seem to have promise are flextime, job sharing, and the compressed workweek. Each represents a departure from traditional work schedules.

Flextime

Flextime requires employees to work a certain number of hours during a core work period in the middle of the day ("coretime"), but the employees are free to decide when they want to come to work and when they want to leave ("flexband"). A typical flextime schedule is shown in Figure 9-9. Under flextime, one employee may decide to arrive at work at 6:00 in the morning and leave at 3:00 in the afternoon; another may arrive at 10:00 in the morning and leave at 7:00 in the evening.



Flextime may be especially welcome in households when both spouses are employed,



Flextime reduces the stress of getting to work during busy rush hours, gives a sense of freedom, and lets employees work during their "best" hours. It may be especially welcome for young families trying to juggle child-rearing responsibilities with work schedules.

Not surprisingly, most employees seem to like flextime. For instance, in one recent longitudinal field experiment carried out in a Midwestern utility, it was found that satisfaction levels of a flextime experimental group, initially similar to those of members of a comparison group, became substantially higher after implementation of flextime. Further, this satisfaction difference was still evident six months after the change.¹⁴ One summary of flextime studies showed that worker support for adoption or continuation of flextime across nine samples of workers ranged from 80 percent to 100 percent.¹⁵

The few studies dealing with the impact of flextime on performance have concluded that flextime sometimes helps and doesn't seem to hurt.¹⁶ However, as noted by Paul Muchinsky (1983), it is conceivable that flextime productivity gains may be due to the Hawthorne effect. That is, the fact that workers have been singled out to participate in the flextime experiments may be affecting their behavior.

14. R. B. Dunham, *Organizational Behavior: People and Processes in Management* (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, 1984), 528-30.

15. R. T. Golembiewski and C. W. Proehl, "A Survey of the Empirical Literature on Flexible Workhours: Character and Consequences of a Major Innovation," *Academy of Management Review* 3 (October 1978): 837-53.

16. For instance, see S. Kim and A. F. Campagna, "Effects of Flexitime on Employee Attendance and Performance: A Field Experiment," *Academy of Management Journal* 24 [1981]: 729-41; V. E. Schein, E. H. Maurer, and I. F. Novak, "Impact of Flexible Working Hours on Productivity," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 62 [August 1977]: 463-65, and S. Ronen, *Flexible Working Hours: An Innovation in the Quality of Work Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1981).

Not all jobs, though, are suitable for flextime. For instance, if teamwork is important, flextime may cause coordination problems. Also, Hextime may result in increased administrative costs. More research on the topic is clearly needed, but early signals are positive.

Job Sharing

Job sharing, or worksharing, is a simple enough idea but could cause a substantial rethinking of work roles. With job sharing, two or more people share a single job. A husband and wife, for instance, could each work half a day while taking turns on other responsibilities. Job sharing may provide considerable flexibility for both workers and organizations. Like flextime, job sharing is relatively untested but promising;

Compressed Workweek

In the United States, most workers get up Monday mornings facing five working days. However, an increasing number of employees now work ten hours a day for four days, or what has come to be called **4/40**. In some cases, work schedules are staggered so that the firm can operate for a full five days. In others, the firm is open only four days a week, saving on overhead costs.

The 4/40 workweek gives workers a three-day weekend, with the opportunity for longer vacations or even a second job. It is hoped that this larger block of free time will increase worker satisfaction and reduce absenteeism and tardiness. However, workers are likely to be fatigued by the end of a ten-hour day, and both accidents and poor performance could result. Coordination problems with firms working traditional schedules are also possible.

Studies on the 4/40 workweek are sparse. It seems that workers' reactions to 4/40 are generally positive but that acceptance is not uniform¹⁷ among workers.¹⁷ Support has been found to be greatest for younger workers with low-level jobs and for those who feel the change upgraded their status and responsibility.¹⁸ One study which examined M

17. On these points, see J. G. Goodale and A. K. Aagaard, "Factors Relating to Reactions to the 4-Day Workweek," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 60 (February 1975): 38; W. R. Nord and R. Costigan, "Worker Adjustment to the Four-Day Week: A Longitudinal Study," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 58 (August 1973): 60-66; A. R. Cohen and J. Gadon, *Alternative Work Schedules: Integrating Individual and Organizational Needs* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978); and R. B. Dunham and D. L. Hawk, "The Four-Day/40-Hour Week: Who Wants It?" *Academy of Management Journal* 20 (December 1977): 544-55.

18. M. D. Fentler, "Employee Acceptance of a Four-Day Workweek," *Academy of Management Journal* 20 (December 1977): 656-68.

impact of 4/40 on productivity showed short-run gains which disappeared about two years later.¹⁹ As with flextime, the Hawthorne effect may be playing a role.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

As a manager, you will be concerned with such goals as ensuring that products and services are of acceptable quality, that costs of absenteeism and turnover are low, and that levels of employee satisfaction and motivation are high. The steps you take with regard to job design may help to achieve each of those goals.

Your actions as a manager will, to a large extent, define the jobs of your subordinates and others. By the way you supervise and assign tasks, you will be able to influence directly such key task elements as feedback, autonomy, and task significance. In addition, you may be in a position to implement or push for major changes such as job enrichment, flextime, job sharing, and the compressed workweek.

Based on the information in this chapter, you know that such job changes offer various benefits, but they may prove difficult, expensive, or ill advised. You will have to decide whether subordinates want the changes, whether the situation is appropriate for redesign, and whether benefits are likely to outweigh costs. In making those decisions, you may have to consider current levels of the core task dimensions, adequacy of pay and working conditions, the structure and technology of the firm, and employee desires.

If you decide that job enrichment is a desirable approach, you will face the substantial task of actually changing subordinate perceptions of their jobs. A key lesson of this chapter is "Don't assume." Perceptions of the job are complex and sometimes surprising. To redesign jobs properly in order to change perceptions in desirable ways, it will be necessary to get employee inputs and to carry out a systematic redesign effort involving study, experimentation, and diffusion. You may also be able to use social cues, such as comments or literature about the job, to further influence worker perceptions.

Implementation of flextime, job sharing, or the compressed work week is usually more straightforward than job enrichment, though problems can certainly occur. Each of these innovative approaches has generally been favorably received by employees, and the approaches seem well suited to reducing levels of employee stress. Nevertheless, the information presented in this chapter suggests that you should use them cautiously. In each case, evidence concerning hard organizational outcomes

19, J. M. Ivancevich and H. L. Lyon, "The Shortened Workweek: A Field Experiment," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 62 (February 1977): 34-37.

is sparse, and some jobs are clearly not suited to the approaches. Your job as a manager will be to decide whether the very real benefits to employees and the potential benefits to the firm justify the enhanced administrative costs and coordination problems that will probably ensue.

There are few panaceas in management, and job design is no exception. It does offer the promise of enhancing the quality of work life while influencing organizational outcomes, but it demands care and restraint. As in any new or volatile area of management, it will be important that you update your knowledge on a regular basis. There will certainly be exciting new developments in job design in the coming decades.

KEY TERMS
AND
CONCEPTS

core task dimensions	job depth
critical psychological states	Job enlargement
defense mechanisms	job
flextime	enrichment
4/40	job scope
higher order need strength	job sharing or worksharing
(IHONS)	motivating potential
interpersonal dimensions	score
job characteristics model	quality of work life
	social information-processing
	approach

REVIEW
QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by the quality of work life? What are four quality-of-work-life categories;
2. Give four benefits of specialization. Give three problems associated with simplified, routine jobs.
3. Explain the differences between job enlargement and job enrichment. What are the benefits of each?
4. Describe the job characteristics model. What are its underlying assumptions?
5. Identify the conditions under which job enrichment is likely to be most successful.
6. Outline the steps in implementation of job redesign.
7. Describe an individual who would probably react positively to job enrichment.
8. Give three criticisms of job enrichment.
9. What is the social information-processing approach to job design?
10. Describe flextime, job sharing, and the compressed work week. Cite potential benefits of each.

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CASE 9 A Riding the Product through the South Bronx

When Robert Felts's supervisor at Bethlehem Steel Corp. asked him to visit a customer, the veteran line operator jumped at the chance. But there was one problem: The client was in east Texas, and Mr. Felts had to fly for the first time in his life. "I didn't like that. And they put me on four planes to get me there," he recalls with a shudder.

Mr. Felts's adjustment is only a small part of a general upheaval in traditional management-labor roles in the country's basic industries. Increasingly, management is turning to hourly workers for help with problems formerly handled only by field engineers and select executives. Employees

like Mr. Felts are calling on customers and, in some instances, even visiting foreign competitors to determine firsthand how their own products stack up.

Whether the concept is called "employee involvement" or "worker education/" the goals are the same: to improve quality, heighten competitive verve, and open a new channel for client relations. An Aluminum Co. of America senior executive says, "It's useless to ask employees to do a better job if they aren't empowered to take steps toward that goal."

Jobs are becoming so specialized that decisions about products often have to be

made closer to the work area. Thus, more companies are ensuring that certain hourly employees understand how their products or services are viewed by customers or compare with those of competitors.

Workers are sometimes sent as far afield as Japan. Such a trip made by Clay Adams, a machine operator at a Westinghouse Electric Corp. turbine plant, left him with the impression that "the Japanese aren't going to slack up."

Westinghouse recently sent 30 hourly workers who produced subway generating equipment to New York to appraise their workmanship on the city's transit system and to underscore the need for reliability. "There's a difference between putting wires into a black box and riding the product through the South Bronx," contends Jack Geikler, general manager of Westinghouse's transportation business unit near Pittsburgh.

The changes are difficult for both management and labor. While management delayed bringing wage earners into the bigger picture, workers and their unions were initially suspicious of dropping an adversarial role. A mill supervisor at Bethlehem Steel explains that many workers who agreed to

visit major customers were hounded during their shifts by co-workers who claimed they were "turncoats" to labor's cause.

At Bethlehem Steel's facility at Sparrows Point, Maryland, general manager John G. Roberts is largely credited with starting the employee visitation program. "Management still has to make the tough economic decisions. But they are easier to make when employees understand the issue and also trust management," he says.

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1. Which of the core task dimensions are likely to be altered by "employee involvement" of the sorts discussed in this case-
2. What are probable positive consequences of such employee involvement? Possible negative consequences?
3. As an employee of Bethlehem Steel Co. who is participating in the visitation program, how would you respond if accused by co-workers of being a "turncoat" to labor's cause?