An Overview of Role of Job Crafting on Enhancing Employee Well Being in the Work Place

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ABSTRACT

Employees engage in job crafting when they actively create what their job is physically, socially, and psychologically. While not well-known, job crafting has been shown to be a means for effectively improving emotional well-being in organizations. In order to help employees achieve emotional well-being in the workplace and the positive outcomes that go along with it (such as increased organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and improved performance), it is important to craft jobs so that employees can use their greatest strengths. Job crafting has been shown to increase productivity, quality, and efficiency while decreasing turnover and absenteeism. This paper examines the benefits of job crafting, how to design the job crafting intervention, and factors critical to job crafting success.

Keywords— Job crafting, Organizational performance, Employee well being

I. INTRODUCTION

Research has found that many workers are looking for—but not finding—emotional well-being in their work. Research also shows that individuals and organizations alike suffer when people do not experience emotional well-being in their work. Kieran Mathieson and Cynthia Miree’s 2003 manuscript “Illuminating the Invisible,” for example, points out that employers who ignore the issue will frequently be faced with increasing absenteeism and turnover. Yet this does not have to be the case, because we can use interventions such as job crafting to support the emotional well-being of employees in the workplace.

The job crafting intervention (JCI) introduced in this paper consists of assessing employees’ strengths, communicating both strengths and performance goals to employees, and supporting employees in re-crafting their jobs within the boundaries of the employer’s desired performance outcomes. This extends beyond the view that job crafting is a process in which employees engage without a manager’s involvement. Since all employees are prone to engage in job crafting—formally or informally—it is wise for managers within organizations to understand how job crafting works. Further, it is important for employees’ job crafting activities to be aligned with the organization’s performance measures and goals. Managers can create the conditions that foster the alignment of employee job crafting with organizational goals.

What is job crafting exactly? The concept of job crafting was introduced in 2001 by Ross School of Business’s Amy Wrzesniewski and Stern School of Business’s Jane Dutton to describe the process people use to make a job their own. In their 2001 article for The Academy of Management Review, they define job crafting as “the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work” (p. 179). Job crafters change the task boundaries (what their job is physically) by altering the form or number of activities they engage in while doing the job (such as a file clerk developing a system of document filing that enables him to get his work done faster). Employees change the cognitive task boundaries by altering the way they see the job (for example, a fast-food fry cook thinking of herself as a “French fry culinary artist”). Finally, job crafters alter the relational boundaries of their jobs by exercising discretion over with whom they interact while doing the job (for example, a realtor choosing to work with clients and their families based on how well she gets along with them).

Job crafting has the ability to contribute to emotional well-being, which comprises the factors that make people happy. Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania defines overall happiness in 2002’s...
Authentic Happiness as pleasure, engagement (also known as flow), and meaning. Pleasure includes enjoyable experiences through the senses (such as great-tasting food) and higher pleasures (such as comfort and fun). Engagement, or flow, is the experience in which time stands still and a person feels completely at home, usually during activities the person likes doing (such as sports or painting). Meaning occurs when people pursue activities that connect them to a cause outside of themselves and that make a positive difference in the world (such as volunteering at a local orphanage). Taken together, these three components comprise overall happiness. In their 2004 article for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences’ journal Daedalus, Robert Biswas-Diener and his colleagues also suggest that happiness can be specific to an area in life such as work, marriage, or school. While happiness and emotional well-being are often used interchangeably, in this paper emotional well-being is comprised of overall happiness, job satisfaction, and meaning in life and work.

Job crafting has the potential to benefit the organization when employees’ re-crafted meaning, identity, and work patterns align with organizational objectives. Job crafting relates to the areas of job design, process redesign, and job and task analysis in that it involves changing the processes, procedures, tasks, and products of work. While the focus of job crafting is on increasing meaning in work and changing role or identity in the organization, a 2006 article by Paul Lyons suggests that the outcomes of job crafting improve organizational performance “through the provision of better services, processes, and/or products” (p. 91). Not only does job crafting have the potential to enhance the individual employee’s emotional well-being, but it can benefit the organization as well.

All employees are potential job crafters, given the right individual and work contexts. Job crafting is most likely to occur when individual employees have the motivation to job craft and when perceived opportunities to engage in the crafting act present themselves. The general effects of job crafting are to change the individual’s meaning of work and work identity, while maintaining a focus on alignment with organizational performance. Work identity refers to the way individuals define themselves at work. Meaning of work is the way individuals understand the purpose of their work or what is achieved by that work. Job crafting acknowledges the fact that, regardless of the job description, employees make a job fit who they are and the skills and abilities they bring to work.

II. FORMS OF JOB CRAFTING

III. FACTORS ENABLING JOB CRAFTING IN AN ORGANISATION

As has been discussed, all employees are potential job crafters; thus, it is important to understand the conditions under which job crafting is likely to be initiated by employees. It is also imperative for managers to understand when to get involved in this process and to apply a job crafting intervention (JCI).

The factors that enable job crafting are the motivation and perceived opportunity to shape work. First, we will examine motivation. Employees are motivated to job craft when they have a desire for personal control over their jobs. Motivation for job crafting also occurs when employees want to create a positive self-image in their work. Finally, employees are motivated to job craft when they want to fulfill a basic desire for human connection.

Next, we look for perceived opportunities. Employees perceive opportunities to job craft when they have a sense of freedom or discretion in their job tasks and how they complete them. Another condition that causes employees to perceive opportunities for job crafting occurs when job tasks require little task inter-dependence with co-workers. Job crafting opportunities also become apparent when employees have autonomy in their work (that is, freedom from close monitoring or supervision by management).

It is appropriate for managers to apply the job crafting intervention to improve performance when there is a change in performance measures or strategic goals. Job crafting is intended to align employees’ tasks, relationships, and cognitive boundaries with the new performance goals. Managers should also encourage job
crafting when they recognize that employees perceive that their needs are not being met in the job as it is currently designed. This can be evidenced by decreased productivity and increased job shopping activities (searching for new jobs or even applying for other positions), as Minnie Osteyee describes in her 1990 dissertation. Finally, management should initiate the JCI when the features of the job or occupation are “stigmatized” and job crafting is intended to create a positive work identity that boosts productivity, according to Wrzesniewski and Dutton, writing in 2001.

IV. PROS AND CONS OF JOB CRAFTING

Some advantages and disadvantages of job crafting are listed below:

Advantages

- People who experience more meaning in their work tend to exhibit more productivity, organizational commitment, engagement with their work, and organizational citizenship behaviors—going above and beyond the call of duty to help people in the organization or the organization itself.
- Encouraging job crafting enables managers to benefit from processes in which many employees already engage.
- Job crafters who change their work to use their signature strengths transform a “job” into a “calling,” which in turn leads to improved emotional well-being.
- Emotional well-being in work typically results in increased job satisfaction and improved performance. It also has the potential to increase job tenure.
- Exercising signature strengths benefits nearly everyone involved—customers receive better service, managers gain a more productive employee, and the employee derives positive emotion.

Disadvantages

- Job crafting is largely improvisational and not visible to management in some cases, which removes some degree of managerial control. The more traditional job or process redesign may yield similar results for managers attempting to influence employees’ job shaping activities directly.
- Workers who are unmotivated or who do not perceive opportunities to job craft are less likely to engage in the process.
- Job crafting can greatly improve person-job fit, but may not alleviate a lack of fit in other areas (person-group fit, person-vocation fit, and meaning-mission fit).

V. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

As detailed in this paper, both theory and empirical results suggest that job crafting can be an effective strategy for improving performance and enhancing employee well-being. The following are some critical success factors of note.

Social

The factors that enable job crafting by employees should be in place (employees should feel motivated to engage in job crafting, and they should perceive opportunities for job crafting). If an employee feels no motivation to personalize his or her job, management will have to attempt to supply extrinsic incentives, recognition, or rewards to spur what is inherently an intrinsically motivated process.

Political

Revised work patterns must be consistent with the performance and organizational goals that the employer has set for employees. Otherwise, the individual employees may feel very satisfied with the new design of their work, but they may not perform to the standards that the organization or work group requires from them. Both the individual and the employer’s needs must be met by the re-crafted work.

Economic

Reward systems and incentives must encourage individuals to reshape their work to meet performance goals. Giving employees bonuses for having completed a job crafting training, for instance, without regard for the job crafting activities they use after the training would not necessarily focus employees on meeting management’s performance goals. Management should target rewards to re-crafted work that meets the employer’s goals.

Legal

Re-crafted job tasks must fulfill the fiduciary responsibilities of the position and of the organization. Managers should monitor employees’ performance to ensure that the task boundaries, in particular, do not diverge from the duties that must be performed for the organization and the particular job.

Technical

Technology should be used to communicate effectively the performance measures and strategic goals of the organization to individual employees. While computer-mediated communication may be effective for aspects of the job crafting process, face-to-face meetings may be helpful particularly when assisting employees in re-crafting relational boundaries to improve team performance.

Intercultural

Culture influences the way people judge their own well-being and the avenues through which they achieve well-being. As such, individuals whose cultural
background encourages them to fulfill their needs for control, connection with others, or positive identity through their work are more likely to job craft.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the job crafting intervention as a tool for enhancing employees’ emotional well-being in organizations. Employers can use the JCI to create work environments where employees use their best strengths to achieve emotional well-being in the workplace. This increased emotional well-being in turn leads to positive outcomes such as increased organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and improved performance. Job crafting empowers employees to create work that expresses their own greatest strengths while fulfilling the organization’s strategic and performance goals.

REFERENCES