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Job redesign

1. Introduction

As the global marketplace becomes more borderless, businesses find themselves competing in an increasing complex environment where change is a constant. Singapore, in particular, is facing an ageing and shrinking workforce. Thus, to prepare for the challenges this may post, one of the initiative that companies can undertake is job redesigning.

The primary objective of job redesigning is to make it "more satisfying or interesting" to the employee., hence ensuring the right person undertakes the right job, which eventually translate to increased productivity and employee satisfaction.

2. What is job redesign?

Job re-design is an effort which involves reviewing, and reallocating specific job responsibilities, tasks and duties to improve output, make it more encouraging and inspiring for the employees. The process includes revising, analysing, altering, reforming and reshuffling the job-related content and dimensions to increase the variety of assignments and functions in order to motivate employees and make them feel as an important asset of the organization. The main objective of conducting job redesigning is to place the right person at the right job and get the maximum output while increasing their level of satisfaction.

3. Why redesign jobs?

The main objective of redesigning jobs is to "alter job elements so that organisations can achieve maximum output". Job redesigning improve the organisation's and employees' productivity; enhances the quality of work life; increases job satisfaction; bringing the sense of "belongingness in employees"; creates a right person-job fit; and reduces employee problems such as grievances or absenteeism.

When done properly, organisations can reap the following benefits:

- Increase in employee performance and productivity
By re-assessing the required job demands and altering the employee's scope of work so as to enable an adjustment in responsibilities, organisations are in effect increasing their return on investment in their human capital. For instance, when technology is introduced to replace repetitive job functions, employees are better able to spend time on responsibilities that require greater focus and attention. In this way, organisations will witness an increase in employee productivity and performance level.

- Motivate and increase employee satisfaction
Through job redesign, employees are able to have greater ownership of the work completed. With a reduction in the number of repetitive tasks and an increase in job responsibilities, employees are given the opportunity to grow and carry on more duties. Furthermore, mature workers will also remain motivated due to the age-friendly work environment created as a result of job redesign. The implementation of technology for instance, makes the workplace easier and safer for them to work in and this in turn, will lead to an increase in employee satisfaction.

- Spearhead leading practices for the industry
Employers conducting job redesign as a result of the organisation's adoption of new technology or service delivery models can also be regarded within the industry as leaders with innovative practices. By creatively thinking of ways in which internal job functions may be adjusted to improve productivity and efficiencies, companies are in fact setting themselves apart and also as an example for other organisations. Doing so not only helps to distinguish these companies as 'thought leaders' within the sectors, but also increases organisational branding.

4. Job redesign process

Understanding job content

The first step to successfully carrying out the job redesign process involves the Human Resource (HR) department and line managers gathering a deep understanding of the job requirements. Information pertaining to the daily functions mentioned in job descriptors should be compared to the daily functions carried out by employees, so as to identify gaps or inconsistencies.

Analysing job-related information

Once information has been collected, thorough analysis has to be conducted so as to identify the gaps and inconsistencies. This will enable HR and line managers to identify areas of improvement and to determine the key areas that may be affecting performance levels of employees. Certain key drivers for job redesign include the following:

- Capacity
 - More aggressive revenue goals
 - Adjustments to headcount
 - Cutbacks
- Challenges
 - Unmet goals
 - Performance or productivity plateaus
 - Operational inefficiencies
 - High attrition or low retention
 - Low employee engagement or satisfaction
- Change
 - New or upgraded technology
 - Automation of previously manual task
 - New tasks and responsibilities
 - Change in business delivery models
 - New regulatory requirements
 - Expansion into new markets

Altering job elements

Once causes of hindrance and room for improvement have been identified, HR and line managers may work together to consider ways in which the job elements may be altered. This could involve automating certain process so as to optimise the worker's efficiency. Other possible solutions could also include adding more job functions or transferring certain responsibilities to other

workers. The goal of the alteration process is to design a job that will increase employee's productivity and motivation.

Revising job description and specifications

Once the alteration of job elements have been agreed upon, job descriptors and specifications need to be updated accordingly. The changes also need to be communicated to the employee so that proper expectations may be set as a result of the job redesign. In addition, it is important that employees adopt a positive attitude and mindset so as to enable a smooth transition into their new role.

Reallocating job-related tasks and duties

Functions that have been reallocated as a result of the job redesign process may be done through job rotations, horizontal or vertical job enlargements. Doing so keeps employees motivated to learn more and also increases their satisfaction level.

Training employees

In the event that new functions are transferred to employees, training programmes should be scheduled in order to equip workers with the necessary set of skills and expertise.

Running a pilot group

Before implementing job redesign to all departments, it is critical that a test in the form of a pilot group takes place to ensure a smooth process when a full implementation is carried out. Introducing this phase allows employers to work out any issues that may arise as a result of job redesign. Depending on the size and capacity of the organisation, it is recommended that only a small group of individuals or teams is selected as part of the 'test' group. The trial period should also last between three to six months.

Communicating and implement

Employers can implement the job redesign arrangements once the pilot group has proven to be successful. Information regarding the new roles and responsibilities, along with the reasons behind such arrangements should be communicated to better manage expectations.

Monitoring and evaluating

Once employees have been introduced to their new job function, employers should monitor and gather feedback to assess the results of the job redesign process. Doing so also ensures that employers are able to track how workers are coping with their new responsibilities.

5. Job redesign approaches

It is important that employers do not mistake job redesign for job design. Job design involves the process of defining the responsibilities of a new role and identifying the key skills, knowledge and attributes required to fulfil the role. In contrast, job redesign involves the process of adjustment and redefinition of a role(s).

In addition to this, employers should also not confuse job redesign for job restructuring. Unlike job redesign, job restructuring may be part of a broader company reorganisation. For instance, the shutting down of departments may call for a transfer or outsourcing of job functions to other companies or regional counterparts.

Once employers have a clear idea on the concept of job redesign, and have identified the areas of improvement, the following approaches may be considered:

- Job enlargement (horizontal integration)
 - Enlarging jobs descriptors refers to a widening job at the same level by increasing the number of tasks and responsibilities for an employee. Job enlargement is often used to fill the gaps left by an eliminated job, to reduce down time or to accommodate change in technology and skill requirements.
 - It is achieved by either creating new tasks or amalgamating existing tasks into current jobs. The key differentiator for this method is to ensure that only tasks of the same competency level are added into the job scope.
- Job enrichment (vertical integration)
 - Enrichment refers to enhancement of the job by introducing task at a higher level. Job

enrichment, unlike enlargement, which involves a horizontal expansion in functions, is often used to grow employees by expanding their roles vertically. This is often used for employees that have been identified for succession with the organisation.

- It involves the addition of tasks from a higher competency level and offers them opportunities for knowledge and skill-building. As a result, new job tasks may be introduced or several existing tasks may be amalgamated into the current job to provide learning and growth opportunities for these employees.
- Job trimming
 - Job trimming refers to the act of removing tasks from a job that is often manual and repetitive in nature. Removal of these tasks allows employees to provide value-added support in areas that require more attention.
 - Job trimming can also be used to create more room for new tasks within a job description. Repetitive or administrative responsibilities can be removed to provide employees with more available time to focus on relevant tasks.
 - Apart from removing task, job trimming involves the compartmentalisation of jobs into discrete functions so that employees can better manage the responsibilities at hand and cope with the job-related stress levels. This is often used to manage employees who have been struggling with complex tasks, or mature workers. When job trimming in such a form has been carried out, employers can consider incentivising mature workers by paying on a piece-meal basis rather than on monthly basis.

6. Job redesign for older/mature workers

In Singapore, with the growing ageing population and shrinking workforce, companies are urged to make the most of older workers. While jobs with a higher knowledge or skill content may require little adjustment, those with a higher level of physical work, will need to be redesigned. Thus, adopting automation and leveraging on technology are proposed to make it easier for older workers to perform their tasks, particularly to reduce physical strain among them. Additionally, the management of these older workers also need to be looked into, which includes offering them good work-life balance and allowing them to mentor younger colleagues.

Job redesign is deemed as an important element. Although the older workers are asked to be prepared for changes including going for training and skills upgrading, not making jobs older worker friendly will have an impact on their employability. It will also mean that increasingly, more and more jobs will be out of reach for these older workers, and they will find themselves confined to a narrow range of jobs that do not do justice to their capabilities or experience. Hence, employers are urged to also consider providing more flexible work options to the older workers, as some may prefer to work shorter hours or part time which is more aligned to their needs at that stage in their life. The key is flexibility by giving more options for the benefit of both the organisation and the older workers.

Communication

An important first step to the introduction of the redesigned job to the employee is to communicate appropriately so as to ensure that the employees are agreeable and willing to adapt to the changes. Any concerns or fears can be immediately addressed and appropriate infrastructure can be created to maximise the chances of success.

Orientation programmes

Employers can consider having 'orientation' programmes. These 'orientation' programmes can often simply involve communicating to mature workers the expectations and a descriptor of their day-to-day job. Training programmes can also be arranged to provide these workers assurance that they will possess the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil the job

requirements. A colleague can also be assigned to provide assistance to these mature workers during their first few weeks. Doing so reduces the level of stress and uncertainty they may be experiencing and also encourages these mature workers to learn despite the altered job requirements.

Employee mindsets

Ultimately the success of such redesign opportunities requires a mindset change from these employees. If they are willing and able to embrace the changes, then the chances of success for these job redesign opportunities are increased.

Case Study

Jumbo Group of Restaurants

Jumbo Group of Restaurants used innovative ways to address its manpower shortage issues across its 15 outlets. This included leveraging technology and redesigning its workflow processes, which resulted in time and cost savings. The initiatives have also improved the company's competitiveness and its ability to pay its workers higher wages. At the same time, the time savings have led to a more enhanced customer experience for its diners.

Besides a rise in profitability, Jumbo also managed to bring about higher morale and greater motivation amongst its service staff because of its ability to pay them higher wages. Jumbo's customers also benefited from the reduced waiting time that this has succeeded in bringing about.

Prior to this, Jumbo had used a three-step process for order-taking. This involved keying the customer's order into the system and passing order chits to different kitchen sections. Jumbo introduced the use of tablets such as iPads and PDAs to reduce the number of steps needed in the ordering process. Its customers or staff are just required to key in their orders directly into their devices, which transmit the orders to the Point-of-Sales (POS) system and kitchen instantaneously. Since the introduction of the new system, customer waiting time has been reduced by about 50 percent. Technology saved Jumbo about eight man-hours per day in order taking.

The company also adopted innovative changes through the set-up of a Central Kitchen at their corporate headquarters. Time spent in food preparation was reduced by 67 percent, as individual outlets no longer needed to make common items at their respective premises.

Overall, these efforts improved the consistency of food quality, helped achieve economies of scale in food production and reduced manpower reliance across many of their outlets.

Job redesign also increased staff morale. By defining career prospects more clearly, remuneration increased by 10 percent per worker across 90 percent of its service staff.

Jumbo also introduced a programme that grooms ground-level staff to become mid-managers within a year instead of the previous two and half years. A career progression path is mapped out for every employee, and service staff receive a

wage increase upon completion of every stage of the programme.

In 2010, Jumbo Group of Restaurants offered flexible working options in response to the “dwindling labour pool for restaurant workers”. A variety of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) were made available for their operations and service staff, including permanent part-time options where restaurant staff can choose the number of days they work as well as the specific hours they work every day. Such fine-tuning of work hours coupled with careful job redesign has allowed the restaurant to tap on lesser-used labour sources. One such source are mothers and grandmothers who want an extra source of income but can only work while the children in their care are in school. Their job scope includes setting up, dishwashing and pantry preparation just before the lunch and dinner crowds appear, so that they can be home for their own families’ mealtimes.

At the Jumbo Group of Restaurants, management believes that flexible working options need to be fluid and tailored to the individual. Madam Aw, a mature worker in her 50s, began working at a Jumbo restaurant in 2007 as a full-time restaurant staff. Over time, she became a valued member of the team. However, she developed a medical condition that caused her arm to be painfully swollen. As her workspace was enclosed without much room to manoeuvre her arm, this caused her much discomfort and affected her work. After discussion with her manager, the management offered her a new position in a different outlet with a larger workspace. Later, Madam Aw’s mother was diagnosed with cancer, and she considered resigning. However the management suggested she shift to a permanent part-time working arrangement, which allowed her to care for her mother while earning an income. This working arrangement was further refined when her care-giving duties increased over the years.

Articles can be retrieved from
NLB's e-Resources –
<http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg>

Books are available at the
National Library.

Recommended Readings

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Here are the schedules for CPP:

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Monday, 13 October 2014	Module 1	9-5 pm
Wednesday, 15 October 2014	Module 1 & 2	9-5 pm
Monday, 20 October 2014	Module 2	9-5 pm
Friday, 24 October 2014		9-5 pm
Wednesday, 29 October 2014	Module 3	9-5 pm
Friday, 31 October 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 4 November 2014		9-5 pm
Wednesday, 5 November 2014	Module 4	9-5 pm

Nov-14		
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Monday, 10 November 2014	Module 1	9-5 pm
Wednesday, 12 November 2014	Module 1 & 2	9-5 pm
Monday, 17 November 2014	Module 2	9-5 pm
Wednesday, 20 November 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 25 November 2014	Module 3	9-5 pm
Thursday, 27 November 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 2 December 2014		9-5 pm
Wednesday, 3 December 2014	Module 4	9-5 pm

Core Faculty Members

MR. LAM CHUN SEE

B. ENG IN INDUSTRIAL & SYSTEMS ENGINEERING (UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE)

Chun see manages his own consultancy practice, Hoshin Consulting and is also an associate consultant/trainer to the PSB Corporation and Singapore Productivity Association. Prior to running his own practice, he has had years of experience as an industrial engineer with Philips, and trainer and consultant with the then National Productivity Board, APG Consulting and Teian Consulting. He was conferred the Triple-A Award in 1989 for helping to transfer Japanese know-how, particularly in the area of 5S, into local programmes and packages. Throughout his years of consultancy experience, Chun See has assisted many businesses in analyzing their productivity and quality objectives and performance; primarily through the application of the PDCA technique and basic QC tools.

MR. LEE KOK SEONG

M.SC. IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING (IMPERIAL COLLEGE, LONDON UNIVERSITY), B.SC. IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING (NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY)

Kok Seong has accumulated vast experience in the areas of productivity training and management consultancy throughout his 30 years of experience with the Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (SPRING). He has provided consultancy assistance and training for numerous organisations both within and outside of Singapore in the areas of Productivity Management, Operation and Production Management, total Quality Management, Total Productive Maintenance, Shopfloor Management, Occupational Safety Management, Industrial Engineering Applications and Supervisory Management. He has also been greatly involved in the pinnacle Singapore Quality Award (SQA) initiative since its inception in 1993. His track records include the assessments and site visits of award recipients like Micron Semiconductor (formerly Texas Instruments), Motorola, Baxter Healthcare, Philips Tuner Factory and Teck Wah Industrial Corporation Ltd. Mr. Lee is currently a certified SQA Senior Assessor, as well as a resource person for Basic and

Advanced Training Courses for Productivity Practitioners, a position he has taken on since 2007.

MR. LOW CHOO TUCK

M.SC. IN INDUSTRIAL ADMINISTRATION (UNIVERSITY OF ASTON, UK); B.SC. IN PHYSICS (NUS); DIP IN QUALITY CONTROL INSTRUCTORS (INTERNATIONAL QUALITY CENTRE, NETHERLANDS); CERTIFICATE IN PRODUCTIVITY DEVELOPMENT (JAPAN PRODUCTIVITY CENTRE); CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT (INSEASD)

Choo Tuck currently provides training and advisory services in productivity and quality management to businesses and government in the Asean region and Middle East. He was previously the Executive Director of the Restaurant Association of Singapore as well as the Singapore Productivity Association, and was also the Director for Strategic Planning in SPRING Singapore. During his many years of service with SPRING Singapore, he gained wide experience in productivity training, management consultancy and productivity promotion, and has helped more than a 100 businesses in improving productivity, quality control and business excellence, including organisations such as Cycle & Carriage, Motorola, PUB and DBS. On top of that, he has also served as an Asian Productivity Organisation (APO) expert on Productivity for several APO member countries, and was part of a team of experts engaged by the Singapore cooperation Enterprise to provide productivity expertise to the Government of Bahrain in 2007 and 2008.

MR. QUEK AIK TENG

B.ENG (HON.) IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING (UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD); DIP. IN BUSINESS EFFICIENCY (INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING_ (PSB-ACADEMY); CERTIFIED MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT (CMC); PRACTISING MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT (PMC); MEMBER, INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS (IMC) SINGAPORE

Aik Teng currently manages his own consultancy, AT Consulting Services. One of his most recent projects includes being the LEAD Project Manager for the Singapore Logistics Association. Prior to running his own consultancy, he has been with SPRING Singapore for 20 years, and was the Head of the Organisation Excellence Department from 2004-05. He was also

SQA Lead Assessor and Team Leader up till 2008 and has been involved in the SQA initiative since its inception in 1993. tasked to start up the consultancy unit within the then Productivity & Standards Board (PSB) to provide training and consultancy services to organisations, his consulting team assisted close to 30 organisations during that period. He was also involved in a project coordinated by the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) to assist the Bahrain Labour Fund in their Labour Reform strategy, which included helping the Bahrain government to initiate a Productivity Movement as well as develop the productivity of the local enterprises. In addition, he was appointed as Project Manager to assist the Government of Botswana to implement a national Productivity Movement, from 1994 to 2003. Botswana is currently held as a model of Productivity in the Pan-Africa region.

MR. WONG KAI HONG

MBA IN STRATEGIC MARKETING (HULL), BSC (NUS)

Kai Hong is a business consultant, management trainer and company director. He has spent almost 2 decades in the consumer products industry, having worked with retailers like Isetan, Metro, Royal Sporting House, The Athlete's Foot and Sunglass Hut; brands like Reebok and Doc Martens; and technology group Wearnes Technology. He has been involved with various functions including operations, business development, project management, human resource, training, marketing, logistics, budgeting and general management. He has developed businesses in Singapore and many Asian cities such as Seoul and Beijing.

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