Job Design

The core dimensions and techniques of job design are important because different combinations of these core dimensions motivate different types of employees. Each of the core dimensions can be viewed as if on a continuum. You may need a high skill variety and a low task identity for a specific job.

**Job design** (also referred to as **work design** or **task design**) is a core function of human resource management and it is related to the specification of contents, methods and relationship of jobs in order to satisfy technological and organizational requirements as well as the social and personal requirements of the job holder or the employee. Its principles are geared towards how the nature of a person's job affects their attitudes and behavior at work, particularly relating to characteristics such as skill variety and autonomy. The aim of a job design is to improve job satisfaction, to improve through-put, to improve quality and to reduce employee problems (e.g., grievances, absenteeism).

Job characteristic theory

The job characteristic theory proposed by Hackman & Oldham (1976) stated that work should be designed to have five core job characteristics, which engender three critical psychological states in individuals—experiencing meaning, feeling responsible for outcomes, and understanding the results of their efforts. In turn, these psychological states were proposed to enhance employees’ intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, quality of work and performance, while reducing turnover.

Core job dimensions

1. *Skill variety* — This refers to the range of skills and activities necessary to complete the job. The more a person is required to use a wide variety of skills, the more satisfying the job is likely to be.
2. *Task identity* — This dimension measures the degree to which the job requires completion of a whole and identifiable piece of work. Employees who are involved in an activity from start to finish are usually more satisfied.
3. *Task significance* — This looks at the impact and influence of a job. Jobs are more satisfying if people believe that they make a difference, and are adding real value to colleagues, the organization, or the larger community.
4. *Autonomy* — This describes the amount of individual choice and discretion involved in a job. More autonomy leads to more satisfaction. For instance, a job is likely to be more satisfying if people are involved in making decisions, instead of simply being told what to do.
5. *Feedback* — This dimension measures the amount of information an employee receives about his or her performance, and the extent to which he or she can see the impact of the work. The more people are told about their performance, the more interested they will be in doing a good job. So, sharing production figures, customer satisfaction scores etc. can increase the feedback levels.

Critical psychological states

The five core job dimensions listed above result in three different psychological states.

* *Experienced meaningfulness of the work*: The extent to which people believe that their job is meaningful, and that their work is valued and appreciated (comes from core dimensions 1-3).
* *Experienced responsibility for the outcomes of work*: The extent to which people feel accountable for the results of their work, and for the outcomes they have produced (comes from core dimension 4).
* *Knowledge of the actual results of the work activity*: The extent to which people know how well they are doing (comes from core dimension 5).

Techniques of job design

Job rotation

*Job rotation* is a job design process by which employee roles are rotated in order to promote flexibility and tenure in the working environment. Through job rotation, employees laterally mobilize and serve their tasks in different organizational levels; when an individual experiences different posts and responsibilities in an organization, the ability to evaluate his or her capabilities in the organization increases. By design, it is intended to enhance motivation, develop workers' outlook, increase productivity, improve the organization's performance on various levels by its multi-skilled workers, and provides new opportunities to improve the attitude, thought, capabilities and skills of workers.

Job enlargement

Hulin and Blood (1968) define *Job enlargement* as the process of allowing individual workers to determine their own pace (within limits), to serve as their own inspectors by giving them responsibility for quality control, to repair their own mistakes, to be responsible for their own machine set-up and repair, and to attain choice of method. By working in a larger scope, as Hulin and Blood state, workers are pushed to adapting new tactics, techniques, and methodologies on their own. Frederick Herzberg referred to the addition of interrelated tasks as 'horizontal job loading,' or, in other words, widening the breadth of an employee's responsibilities.

Job enrichment

*Job enrichment* increases the employees’ autonomy over the planning and execution of their own work, leading to self-assigned responsibility. Because of this, job enrichment has the same motivational advantages of job enlargement, however it has the added benefit of granting workers autonomy. Frederick Herzberg viewed job enrichment as 'vertical job loading' because it also includes tasks formerly performed by someone at a higher level where planning and control are involved.

Scientific management

Under *scientific management* people would be directed by reason and the problems of industrial unrest would be appropriately (i.e., scientifically) addressed. This philosophy is oriented toward the maximum gains possible to employees. Managers would guarantee that their subordinates would have access to the maximum of economic gains by means of rationalized processes. Organizations were portrayed as rationalized sites, designed and managed according to a rule of rationality imported from the world of technique.

Human Relations School

The *Human Relations School* takes the view that businesses are social systems in which psychological and emotional factors have a significant influence on productivity. The common elements in human relations theory are the beliefs that

* Performance can be improved by good human relations
* Managers should consult employees in matters that affect staff
* Leaders should be democratic rather than authoritarian
* Employees are motivated by social and psychological rewards and are not just "economic animals"
* The work group plays an important part in influencing performance

Socio-technical systems

*Socio-technical systems* aims on jointly optimizing the operation of the social and technical system; the good or service would then be efficiently produced and psychological needs of the workers fulfilled. Embedded in Socio-technical Systems are motivational assumptions, such as intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. As Bradbury and Reason (2005) state, this approach causes workers to focus less on being highly specialized, and more on becoming multi-skilled and self-directed.

Work reform

Work reform states about the workplace relation and the changes made which are more suitable to management and employee to encourage increased workforce participation.

Motivational work design

The psychological literature on employee motivation contains considerable evidence that job design can influence satisfaction, motivation and job performance. It influences them primarily because it affects the relationship between the employee's expectancy that increased performance will lead to rewards and the preference of different rewards for the individual.

Hackman and Oldman developed the theory that a workplace can be redesigned to greater improve their core job characteristics. Their overall concept consists of:

* Making larger work units by combining smaller, more specialized tasks.
* Mandating worker(s) to be responsible via having direct contact with clients.
* Having employee evaluations done frequently in order to provide feedback for learning.
* Allowing workers to be responsible for their job by giving them authority and control.

Two Factor Theory

Frederick Herzberg's Two Factor Theory (Motivator-Hygiene Theory) proposes that the factors that correlate to motivation in the work environment are separate to those factors that correlate to dissatisfaction. He relates these factors to the perceived satisfaction of a set of needs as a reward for completing a task; universal necessities and expectations such as healthcare and salary do not contribute to motivation as much as factors such as achievement or recognition. Employees of a work environment therefore are motivated and dissatisfied by two sets of factors:

1. Hygiene Factors (e.g. salary, clean working environment); these do not contribute to motivation, but their absence can lead to dissatisfaction.
2. Motivational Factors (e.g. opportunity for meaningful work, sense of importance); these contribute to one's intrinsic motivation to work in an environment.

Economic theory

In economics, job design has been studied in the field of contract theory. In particular, Holmström and Milgrom (1991) have developed the multi-task moral hazard model. Some of the tasks are easier to measure than other tasks, so one can study which tasks should be bundled together. While the original model was focused on the incentives versus insurance trade-off when agents are risk-averse, subsequent work has also studied the case of risk-neutral agents who are protected by limited liability. In this framework, researchers have studied whether tasks that are in direct conflict with each other (for instance, selling products that are imperfect substitutes) should be delegated to the same agent or to different agents. The optimal task assignment depends on whether the tasks are to be performed simultaneously or sequentially.