

## **Designing Jobs to Bring out the Best in Employees**

In order to keep employees happy within your organization, it is important that they enjoy the work that they are doing. A good way to do this is to keep them motivated by using various job design techniques and strategies. Factors such as the tasks that a worker performs, the variety of the tasks, and the authority that workers are given can make the difference between a rewarding work environment and the desire to leave a job.

Job specialization is often used in larger organizations in order to help work flow through the organization more rapidly. It is also used in smaller businesses as well. Job specialization is the degree to which the overall tasks are broken down into smaller components. This is often thought of in the manufacturing process by having an assembly line. It also occurs in the office setting as well. There may be one person whom always does the mail or all of the filing. Some positions require specialization due to the nature of the work at hand. Very complicated tasks may require special education and training. However, when tasks are highly specialized, new workers can more easily be trained in one area instead of needing training in multiple areas.

The main drawback of job specialization to consider is that employees do not like to do the exact same thing day in and day out. Some tasks that are not complicated can be shared or switched among employees. Although job specialization may move work faster in the beginning, workers may become tired of the repetitive tasks and not be as productive.

Job rotation is an alternative to job specialization. It is a way to reduce employee boredom and it also facilitates more of an understanding about the organization. Job rotation is moving from one job to another. Jobs can be rotated that are very similar or

drastically different. For example, a person who is in charge of accounts receivable could change with a person who is in charge of accounts payable. An employee could work as a marketer for a year and then work as a selling agent for a year. An added benefit of rotating is that employees who complete a variety of tasks can see how things fit together for an organization. They also are able to fill in for coworkers in the event of an absence. An added security benefit occurs when rotating jobs. If a worker is not completing a job correctly, then when another employee takes over, mistakes are more easily caught right away. The downfall of this is that it is more expensive to train workers, some jobs require information that can't be shared with a large number of people, and it may be too complicated to train employees to have multiple skill sets.

When job rotation is not feasible due to the size or tasks required of an organization, then job enlargement is another option. The basic idea behind this is that you give a worker a variety of things to accomplish. In other words their job description becomes a conglomeration of various jobs. They may always be responsible for the same tasks, but they are diversified. For example, an office assistant may answer phones, file paperwork, type, and plan business lunches. This would supply the worker with a varying day. Although job enlargement may provide a better work environment for the employee, they often argue that if they are going to complete more tasks, they should be paid a higher wage.

Job enrichment takes job enlargement to the next level. Enrichment is not only increasing the number of tasks that an employee completes, but it is also increasing the employee's power over the tasks at hand. Job tasks, in this situation, are usually assigned

as complete units. This assures that authority can be handed over to the employee in a concrete manner specific to the task being completed.

Another radically different approach is looking at employee preferences and feelings toward the tasks that they complete. This is referred to as the job characteristics approach. It suggests that jobs should be looked at according to five guidelines that are outlined in the book, *Management 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*.

### **Job Characteristics Approach**

1. Skill Variety: the number of things a person does in a job.
2. Task Identity: the extent to which the worker does a complete or identifiable portion of the total job.
3. Task Significance: the perceived importance of the task.
4. Autonomy: the degree of control the worker has over how the work is performed.
5. Feedback: the extent to which the worker knows how well the job is being performed.

A job that rates higher on these criteria is assumed to create higher worker motivation and performance. When people enjoy their job they tend to be absent less often and there is less employee turnover. Most workers would prefer that their job met all of the five criteria in order to get the most satisfaction and growth from their work efforts.

Team approaches can also be used as a tool for job design. It depends on the employee's work style, but many people enjoy working in teams. A team environment allows workers to delegate responsibility and work assignments as they see fit. There is also more of an ability to ration out work fairly and monitor progress. The team can work as a cohesive unit to ensure that the job is completed reasonably and accurately. This can make workers feel more involved and in control.

There are many ways to ensure that employees in any given business are working at their maximum potential, and are given a good work experience. Different techniques of job design can be used to create the most rewarding circumstances for employees. The main idea of job design is to keep employees happy so that they are productive and enjoy working at their place of business. As an employer, you should utilize the techniques that create a positive response in your organization.

Reference:

Griffin, Ricky. (1993). *Management 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.