

PURPOSE
AND
MEANING
IN THE WORKPLACE

edited by

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Job Crafting and Meaningful Work

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The design of employees' jobs can significantly shape how they experience the meaningfulness of their work (Grant, 2007; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). A *job design* consists of the tasks and relationships assigned to one person in an organization (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991). However, research suggests that job designs may be starting points from which employees introduce changes to their tasks and relationships at work, and such changes are captured by the concept of *job crafting*. Specifically, job crafting is the process of employees redefining and reimagining their job designs in personally meaningful ways (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). These changes, in turn, can influence the meaningfulness of the work. By *meaningful work*, we refer to work that employees believe is significant in that it serves an important purpose (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). We use the term *meaningfulness* to capture the amount or degree of significance employees believe their work possesses (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). Meaningfulness is associated with numerous work-related benefits, including increased job satisfaction, motivation,

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and performance (Grant, 2007; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Rosso et al., 2010). Although we recognize that meaningful work may come with negative side effects (e.g., Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), for our purposes in this chapter, we follow the trend in the literature and treat meaningfulness as a generally positive or beneficial outcome for individuals and organizations.

Job crafting is a way to think about job design that puts employees in the driver's seat in cultivating meaningfulness in their work. Job crafters can proactively reshape the boundaries of their jobs using three categories of job crafting techniques: task, relational, and cognitive. *Task crafting* involves employees altering the set of responsibilities prescribed by a formal job description by adding or dropping tasks; altering the nature of tasks; or changing how much time, energy, and attention are allocated to various tasks (e.g., a tech-savvy customer service representative offering to help her colleagues with their IT issues). *Relational crafting* involves changing how, when, or with whom employees interact in the execution of their jobs (e.g., a software engineer forming a collaborative relationship with a marketing analyst). And finally, *cognitive crafting* involves employees changing the way they perceive the tasks and relationships that make up their jobs (e.g., a ticket salesperson seeing the job as an essential part of providing people with entertainment, not just processing orders).

By using any combination of these three types of job crafting techniques, employees become job crafters, altering the boundaries of their jobs in ways that change their experience of the meaningfulness of their work. Job crafting is not an isolated, one-time event. On the contrary, job crafting is a continuous process that is likely influenced by where employees are in their career trajectories (Fried, Grant, Levi, Hadani, & Slowik, 2007) and the social context in which they work (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010). A core feature of job crafting is that employees initiate and carry out alterations in their jobs from the bottom up, rather than managers directing changes from the top down, as in many job redesign interventions. This enables employees to leverage the unique knowledge they have of their jobs and themselves to craft their jobs in ways that create more meaningfulness. For example, a history teacher with a longtime passion for performing music could incorporate music into his curriculum (task crafting), collaborate with the music teacher in his school (relational crafting), and draw parallels between the act of teaching in front of a classroom and the experience of performing music (cognitive crafting). By crafting his job in these ways, this teacher is able to incorporate musical performance and the experience of being a musician—which are valued parts of his identity—into his life at work, thus bringing new meaningfulness into his work (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010).

Job crafting is particularly critical as a path to meaningfulness in modern work contexts (Wrzesniewski, Berg, & Dutton, 2010). The idea of employees working from a fixed job description is becoming less

common over time. In a rapidly changing knowledge economy, organizations place a premium on employee proactivity (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Instead of reacting to a set of job responsibilities, employees' personal initiatives in shaping their jobs often deliver benefits to organizations by fostering innovativeness and adaptability (Frese & Fay, 2001). Freedom to take initiative opens up opportunities for employees to create meaningful experiences for themselves through job crafting.

In addition, job crafting is an especially important process for cultivating work engagement and satisfaction in a workforce that is experiencing increasing dissatisfaction with work (The Conference Board, 2010) and retiring later in life (Johnson, Butrica, & Mommaerts, 2010). At the same time, many members of Generations X and Y hold the view that they can "be anything they want to be" (Twenge, 2006, p. 72) and thus have strong expectations for the meaningfulness they would like to derive from their careers. These demographic and employment trends contribute to pressure for employees to stay in less than ideal jobs for longer periods of time, making it more likely that employees will need to reengineer their jobs from within as a way to find increased meaningfulness or foster engagement. From an organization's perspective, these trends produce similar pressures to keep productive employees in their jobs. Thus, both employees and organizations stand to benefit from job crafting as a way of sparking new meaningfulness or rekindling old meaningfulness in long-held jobs.

In this chapter, we aim to explain how job crafting can be a powerful process for cultivating meaningful work experiences. We begin by summarizing insights from theory and research in the growing literature on job crafting, then give recommendations for how job crafting can be used in organizations, and conclude with promising areas for future research and practice on job crafting.

Theoretical and Empirical Literature

The literature on job crafting is relatively new but has been expanding rapidly over the past few years. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) established the theoretical framework of job crafting, including the three forms described earlier. Their model was based on insights from previous research on how hairdressers, engineers, nurses, chefs, and hospital cleaners crafted their jobs, often without support or recognition from their organizations or from higher-ups. A key theoretical insight from their original conceptual piece was that employees construct their own experiences of the meaningfulness in their work by thinking about and

performing their jobs in particular ways. Thus, the job design that is formally prescribed to an employee from the top down is only part of how the meaningfulness of the job is constructed; the other part is initiated and driven by the employee through job crafting (see Figure 4.1).

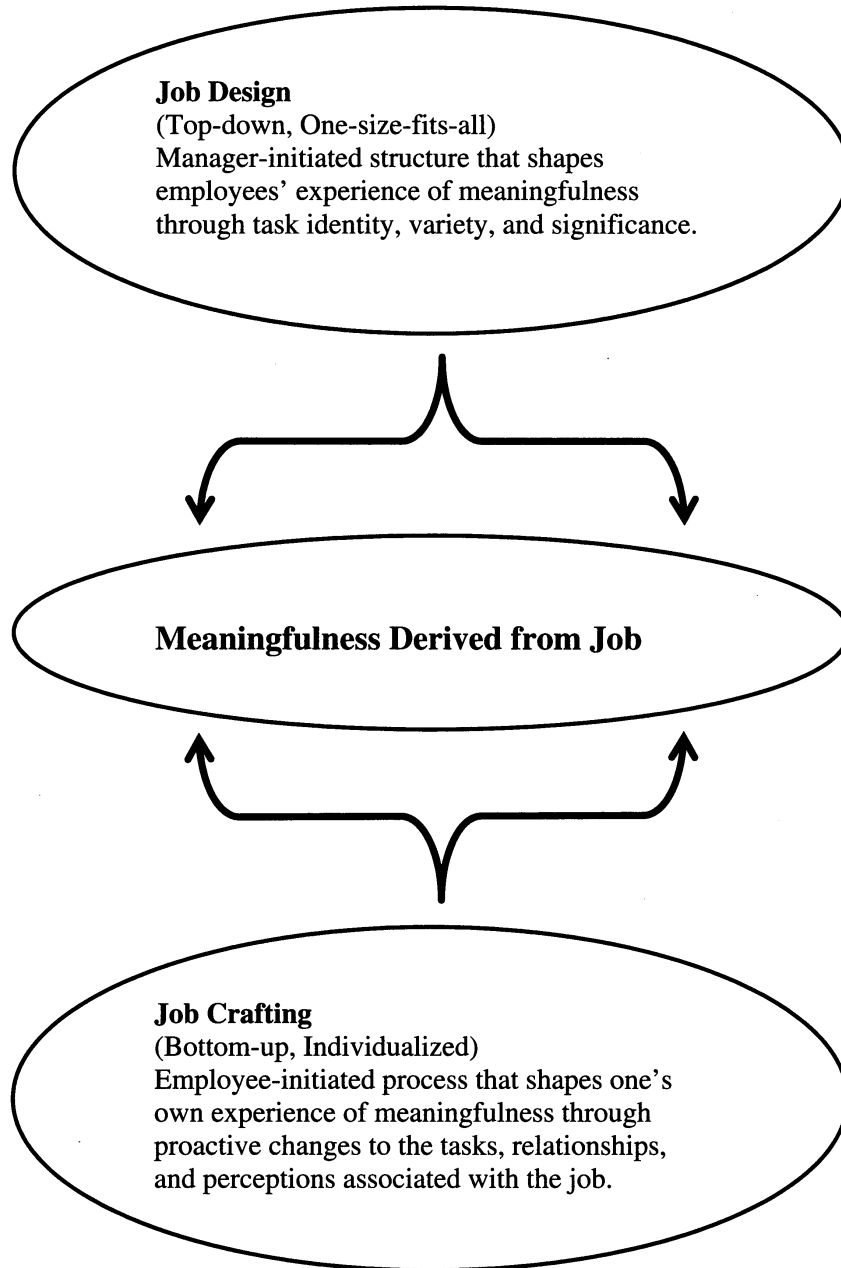
Several scholars have elaborated on Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) original job crafting framework. In a study of salespersons, Lyons (2008) found that employees' cognitive ability, quality of self-image, perceived level of control, and readiness to change all predicted the extent to which they engaged in job crafting, such that employees who were rated higher in these measures engaged in more job crafting. Consistent with these findings, Clegg and Spencer (2007) theorized that employees would be more likely to engage in job crafting when they are performing well and perceived by themselves and others as competent and trustworthy.

In a study of early childhood educators, Leana, Appelbaum, and Shevchuk (2009) introduced the idea of *collaborative job crafting*, in which employees work together to collectively redesign their jobs. They found that educators who engaged in collaborative job crafting tended to perform better than did those who did less collaborative crafting, especially when the educators were less experienced. In addition to higher performance, job crafting has also been associated with increased levels of resilience in the face of adversity at work (Ghitulescu, in press) and increased emotional well-being (French, 2010).

Using a qualitative study of employees in the for-profit and non-profit sectors, Berg, Wrzesniewski, and Dutton (2010) uncovered how employees perceive and adapt to challenges in crafting their jobs and how these processes differ for employees in relatively high- versus low-ranking jobs in organizations. Specifically, they discovered that high-ranking employees perceived the challenges in job crafting as located in their own expectations of how they should use their time, and they adapted to these challenges by settling for only the opportunities to job craft that were readily available to them. In contrast, low-ranking employees saw the challenges in job crafting as located in others' expectations of them and adapted to these challenges by winning others' support in ways that created new opportunities to job craft. Thus, high-ranking employees seemed to feel more constrained with respect to their freedom to job craft, whereas low-ranking employees felt relatively more autonomy to proactively craft their jobs. These findings suggest that the level of formal autonomy and power within a prescribed job design does not necessarily have the impact on employees' perceptions of opportunities to craft their jobs that one would expect. Rather, greater formal autonomy and power may sometimes be associated with greater psychological constraint with respect to job crafting.

Also using a qualitative study, Berg, Grant, and Johnson (2010) examined how people craft their jobs to pursue unanswered occupational callings (i.e., occupations) other than their own that people feel

FIGURE 4.1



The interaction between job design and job crafting in shaping employees' experience of meaningfulness. Meaningfulness derived from a job is the result of an interaction between top-down job design and bottom-up job crafting.

drawn to pursue because they consider them to be intrinsically enjoyable and meaningful and an important part of who they are. They found that people use three job crafting techniques to pursue desired components of their unanswered callings within their current occupations: (a) *task emphasizing*, which involves allocating more time, energy, and attention to tasks that are related to an unanswered calling; (b) *job expanding*, which involves adding new tasks or projects related to an unanswered calling; and (c) *role reframing*, which involves mentally drawing connections between the purpose of one's current role and an unanswered calling. Using these job crafting techniques can bring about the enjoyable and meaningful experiences that people associate with pursuing their unanswered callings, but, at the same time, this process can have negative consequences. For example, engaging in job crafting to pursue an unanswered calling is stressful when it is difficult or frustrating to pursue. Furthermore, regret may result through reexposure to desirable but unattainable aspects of the unanswered calling that might otherwise be out of sight, out of mind. These effects highlight the sometimes double-edged sword of job crafting: It is not always positive and can produce unintended side effects, especially when it runs counter to the organization's goals.

Applications in the Workplace

The growing academic literature on job crafting has made it a ripe concept for practitioners to begin using as a tool to help employees enhance the meaningfulness they experience in their work. In addition to applying ideas and methods around job crafting that have already been developed, we see numerous promising opportunities for practitioners to experiment with new methods of using job crafting that have not yet been extensively tested. Next, we discuss several possible ways of using job crafting in the workplace, all of which are inspired by existing theory and/or research but only some of which have been tested in practice.

JOB CRAFTING THROUGH CHANGING TASKS

Most jobs consist of tasks that can be altered to make the job more meaningful. Traditional job design theory states that tasks are more meaningful when they involve a greater variety of skills (*task variety*) and are seen as part of an identifiably whole piece of work (*task identity*; Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980). In addition, relational job design perspectives (Grant, 2007, 2008; Grant & Parker, 2009) highlight that when employees are able to see the impact that their tasks have on others (*task significance*), they experience their work as more meaningful, often leading to

higher motivation and performance. Combining these job design theories with the job crafting techniques described by Berg, Grant, and Johnson (2010), we propose three ways employees can craft their tasks to cultivate greater task variety, identity, and significance, thereby enhancing the meaningfulness they are likely to derive from their work:

- *Adding tasks.* Employees can add whole tasks or projects that they find meaningful into their jobs. For example, a human resources recruiter with an interest in technology might add the task of using social media to attract and communicate with recruits. Adding this task would bring the application or development of new, desirable skills into the job and allow the recruiter to more easily track how her or his efforts are influencing recruiting results over time. The depth that these changes bring to the tasks of the job would likely spark feelings of deeper meaningfulness at work.
- *Emphasizing tasks.* Employees can take advantage of any tasks that they see as meaningful that are already part of their jobs by allocating more time, energy, and attention to them. For example, a dentist could spend more time educating patients on healthy dental habits. In this way, the dentist can better leverage an existing part of the job that is considered to be meaningful.
- *Redesigning tasks.* Especially when time constraints make adding or emphasizing tasks difficult, employees can find ways to reengineer existing tasks to make them more meaningful. For example, an experienced salesperson could bring a new colleague along on sales calls, so this task would involve both selling to clients and training the colleague. Helping the new colleague forge important connections and learn this part of the job might invigorate the salesperson by making a mundane task more meaningful.

JOB CRAFTING THROUGH CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS

In addition to crafting tasks, employees can craft their interactions with others at work in ways that foster meaningfulness through altering with whom and how they form connections and relationships. We use the term *connections* to denote short, momentary interactions with others that could evolve into or contribute to a longer term relationship. We know from a broad array of research about employee interactions that even short-term connections, particularly high-quality connections (where employees experience mutual trust, positive regard, and vitality), can be highly consequential (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). High-quality connections between people are associated with more adaptability in jobs and careers (e.g., Ibarra, 2003), increased job commitment and more positive work attitudes (e.g., Chiaburu & Harrison,

2008), better physiological functioning (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008), and recovery from pain and suffering (Lilius et al., 2008). As well, relationships with others on the job provide key inputs to how employees make sense of the meaning of their work, the job, and themselves in the job (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Thus, relationships—and the short-term connections that form them—are key sources of meaningfulness that can be unlocked through job crafting. We propose three main pathways through which crafting relationships can facilitate meaningfulness at work:

- *Building relationships.* Employees can craft their jobs to cultivate meaningfulness by forging relationships with others who enable them to feel a sense of pride, dignity, or worth. For example, we found that hospital cleaners increased the amount of interaction they had with patients and their families, because within these interactions, they experienced more appreciation and enacted a role of caregiver that elevated the sense of meaningfulness that they derived from their work (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003).
- *Reframing relationships.* Employees can craft their work relationships by changing the nature of each relationship to be about a new, more meaningful purpose. For example, a school principal might reframe what it means to have relationships with teachers to be about getting to know their individual work preferences and interests (and helping them understand the principal's) rather than just supervising or evaluating teachers' work. Approaching relationships in this way may change the nature and content of interactions with teachers by compelling the principal to ask more questions (as opposed to just giving directions) and explain the reasoning behind these actions, which may produce more high-quality connections with teachers and thus enhance the meaningfulness the principal and the teachers derive from their relationships (e.g., Gerstner & Day, 1997; Laschinger, Purdy, & Almost, 2007).
- *Adapting relationships.* Rather than changing the purpose of relationships or adding new ones, employees can craft their existing relationships to cultivate meaningfulness by providing others with valuable help and support in carrying out their jobs, thus encouraging others to give valuable help and support in return. These adaptations are likely to deepen and strengthen the relationships that comprise employees' jobs by fostering higher quality connections through increasing levels of mutual trust, positive regard, and vitality. In this way, employees can unlock meaningfulness from within their current relationships without having to form new relationships or change the purpose of relationships,

which may be difficult or impossible if the job is highly structured or the organization is fairly small. For example, Fletcher (1998) found that engineers often interacted with others in adaptive ways that enabled them to be successful in their jobs. She called this way of interacting *mutual empowering*, and as a form of relational job crafting, it can foster meaningful relationships in which both parties readily give and receive valuable help and support. Similarly, employees may craft their jobs by adapting relationships with new or less experienced colleagues to focus on mentoring or coaching, which could be meaningful for both the mentor and the mentee (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

JOB CRAFTING THROUGH CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

Unlike crafting tasks and relationships, crafting perceptions does not involve changing anything physical or objective about the job, such as what tasks one is doing or who one is interacting with. Instead, changing perceptions—or *cognitive job crafting*—points to enhancements in meaningfulness than can arise from employees altering how they think about the tasks, relationships, or jobs as a whole. The potential power of this mental form of job crafting is supported by research on the power of mind-sets for changing how employees subjectively experience their work, without changing anything physical or objective about the job itself (e.g., Crum & Langer, 2007; Langer, 1989). We propose three ways in which employees may craft their perceptions of their jobs to experience more meaningfulness in their work. As mentioned earlier, this might involve employees reframing how they see their jobs—for example, a hospital cleaner seeing his or her work as healer or caregiver. Through rethinking the job and what it means—in a team, in an organization, or in society—job crafters are able to imbue their work (and themselves) with greater significance and value.

- *Expanding perceptions.* Employees can cultivate meaningfulness by broadening their perceptions of the impact or purpose of their jobs. This often takes the form of employees thinking about their jobs as a whole rather than a set of separate tasks and relationships. By keeping the holistic purpose of their jobs in mind, employees are able to better connect with the ultimate fruits of their labor and beneficiaries of their work (Grant, 2007) and thus experience their work as more meaningful and motivating (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, 1980). For example, Bunderson and Thompson (2009) found that many zookeepers—whose jobs involve mostly

cleaning cages and feeding animals—often see their work as a moral duty to protect and provide proper care for animals, and this holistic view of their jobs is likely more meaningful and motivating to them than simply focusing on the individual tasks that make up their jobs.

- *Focusing perceptions.* In contrast to expanding perceptions, employees can also foster meaningfulness by narrowing their mental scope of the purpose of their job on specific tasks and relationships that are significant or valuable to them. This technique may be most useful for employees who dislike a substantial portion of the tasks and/or relationships that make up their jobs but do find some specific parts of their jobs to be meaningful. For example, software engineers who find meaningfulness in creating new ideas but not the actual coding involved in implementing their ideas could try to focus on and continually remind themselves that much of their job is about creating new ideas. By taking frequent steps back and mentally focusing on the creative aspects of the job that are most meaningful to them, they may be able to more effectively leverage the meaningful components of their jobs to bear the parts that seem less meaningful. In addition, by mentally breaking the job into two chunks—one that is more meaningful (creating new ideas) and one that is less (coding)—they can treat the more meaningful work as a future reward to help motivate them to get through the less meaningful work (e.g., Oettingen, Pak, & Schnetter, 2001).
- *Linking perceptions.* In addition to focusing perceptions, employees can take advantage of existing components of their jobs by drawing mental connections between specific tasks or relationships and interests, outcomes, or aspects of their identities that are meaningful to them. For example, a customer service representative who has a passion for stand-up comedy might draw a mental connection between the experience of performing comedy with the moments in the workday spent cracking jokes to build rapport with customers. Seeing the link between these two experiences may help the representative perceive such interactions with customers as more meaningful because it taps into a valued personal interest and an important aspect of identity (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010).

CRAFTING A BETTER PERSON–JOB FIT: USING MOTIVES, STRENGTHS, AND PASSIONS

Research on person–job fit has suggested that when employees see more of a fit between themselves and their jobs, they are more likely to experience their work as personally meaningful and respond with

enhanced job performance, satisfaction, and retention in their organizations (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). The nine job crafting techniques described previously can all help employees reshape their jobs to better fit themselves. But this raises the question: Which aspects of themselves should employees focus on when crafting their jobs to better fit them? In reflecting on our research on job crafting and, in particular, how employees were able to successfully craft their jobs in ways that were meaningful to them and helpful to the organization, we identified three key categories of personal characteristics that employees used to guide their crafting efforts:

- *Motives.* Job crafting in ways that align with employees' key motives, or the specific outcomes that drive them to put forth effort and persistence (e.g., enjoyment, personal growth, friendship), can foster meaningfulness by enabling employees to pursue outcomes that they care about and deeply value (Ambrose & Kulik, 1999).
- *Strengths.* Job crafting in ways that enable employees to leverage their strengths, or areas of talent that can be productively applied at work (e.g., problem-solving skills, attention to detail, public speaking), can cultivate meaningfulness by helping employees leverage what they are naturally capable of doing well (Clifton & Harter, 2003).
- *Passions.* Job crafting in ways that create opportunities to pursue passions, or the activities and topics that spark deep interest (e.g., learning, teaching, using technology), can be a rich source of enjoyment, engagement, and meaningfulness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Vallerand et al., 2003; Wrzesniewski, Rozin, & Bennett, 2002).

Where possible, if employees can achieve better fit between these three characteristics and the jobs they craft, they can make work more meaningful. Specifically, because employees' motives, strengths, and passions tap into valued personal desires and abilities, job crafting that facilitates the expression of motives, strengths, and passions is likely to cultivate greater meaningfulness. In essence, these three categories can provide a more systematic basis for helping employees think about which aspects of themselves they should try to craft their jobs to better fit.

ESTABLISHING A JOB CRAFTING MIND-SET: FOCUSING ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL WINS

All of the strategies we have identified could be enhanced if an employee has a *mind-set*—defined as a particular way of seeing and interpreting

the world (e.g., Dweck, 2007; Langer, 1989)—that values and encourages this form of proactivity. Just as some people hold the mind-set that people's characteristics are fairly fixed and unchangeable and others believe that people can and do change substantially (Dweck, 1999), some employees tend to see their jobs as fixed and unchangeable, whereas others see their jobs as flexible and changeable. A job crafting mind-set starts with an underlying belief that job crafting is possible. In other words, job crafters must believe that their job is something that they can proactively shape, not a fixed entity that simply places unchangeable demands on them. Job crafting cannot occur without the belief that there are or could be opportunities to introduce changes to the job.

In addition to this underlying belief about the malleability of the job itself, a job crafting mind-set involves paying ongoing attention to where the opportunities are for crafting. Further, job crafting relies on a willingness to experiment with different aspects of the tasks and relationships the job comprises, as well as different ways of framing the significance of the work. Because making sizeable changes to one's job may be difficult, especially if these changes run counter to established norms or disrupt other people's work, a job crafting mind-set may be challenging to sustain over time as attempts at crafting fail or fall short of expectations. One strategy that may help sustain a job crafting mind-set is focusing on "small wins" (Weick, 1984). By defining success in terms of *small wins*—or relatively modest, incremental improvements—job crafters may avoid feeling frustrated or disillusioned and thus be able to better sustain their job crafting mind-set. In turn, as the small wins accrue over time, the incremental changes may grow into larger, more substantial changes to the job.

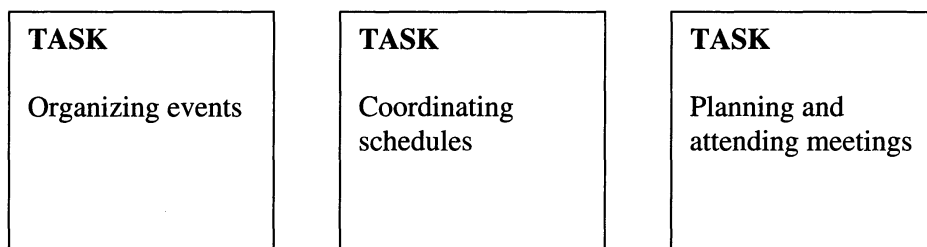
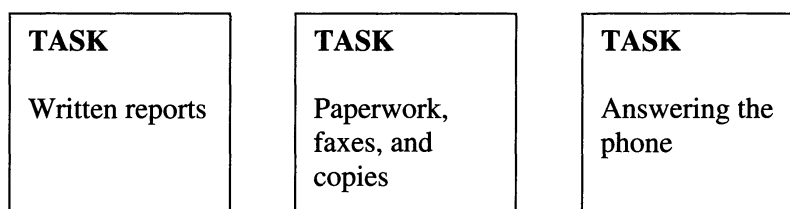
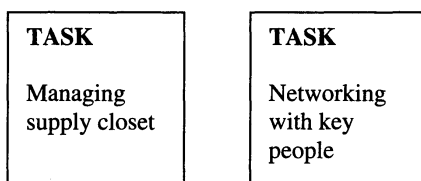
Finally, a job crafting mind-set might depend on something as simple as whether employees subscribe to the belief that change is positive or negative, appropriate or inappropriate. Employees with a job crafting mind-set believe they have the right to be the architect of their jobs, even in small ways, whereas other employees may instead feel that only managers or others in power have the freedom to suggest or introduce changes into the work. These beliefs about who has control over changing the job help to inform a mind-set that treats the job as either malleable or fixed; these beliefs may be reflected in whether employees see job crafting as positive or as breaking a set of unwritten rules. At its core, a job crafting mind-set grows from a frame of mind in which employees believe they have agency and that the exercise of their agency is desirable. Only then are employees likely to seize the opportunities for job crafting that they perceive or create.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: THE JOB CRAFTING EXERCISE

The *Job Crafting Exercise* is a tool that helps people identify opportunities to craft their jobs to better suit their motives, strengths, and passions. We developed this exercise on the basis of theory and qualitative empirical research on the ways in which employees are able to craft their jobs to cultivate meaningfulness, resulting in desirable outcomes for individuals and organizations. The exercise and all of the supplies needed to do it are sold as an instruction booklet by the Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business (see <http://www.jobcrafting.org>).

The main idea of the exercise is to have people think about their jobs as a flexible set of building blocks rather than just a fixed list of duties, as people tend to do once they settle into a job. By encouraging participants to think about their jobs in this flexible, visual way, the exercise fosters a job crafting mind-set, because participants come to see their jobs as more changeable. Participants begin by creating a *before sketch* to get a quick gauge of how they are currently spending their time, energy, and attention in their jobs. To do this, participants are asked to break their job into three categories of *task blocks*: Tasks that take up the most time, energy, and attention go into the largest blocks; tasks that take the least time, energy, and attention go in the smallest blocks; and tasks that fall somewhere in between go in medium-size blocks (see Figure 4.2). This first part of the exercise enables participants to see in a concise and clear way how they are allocating their personal resources at work.

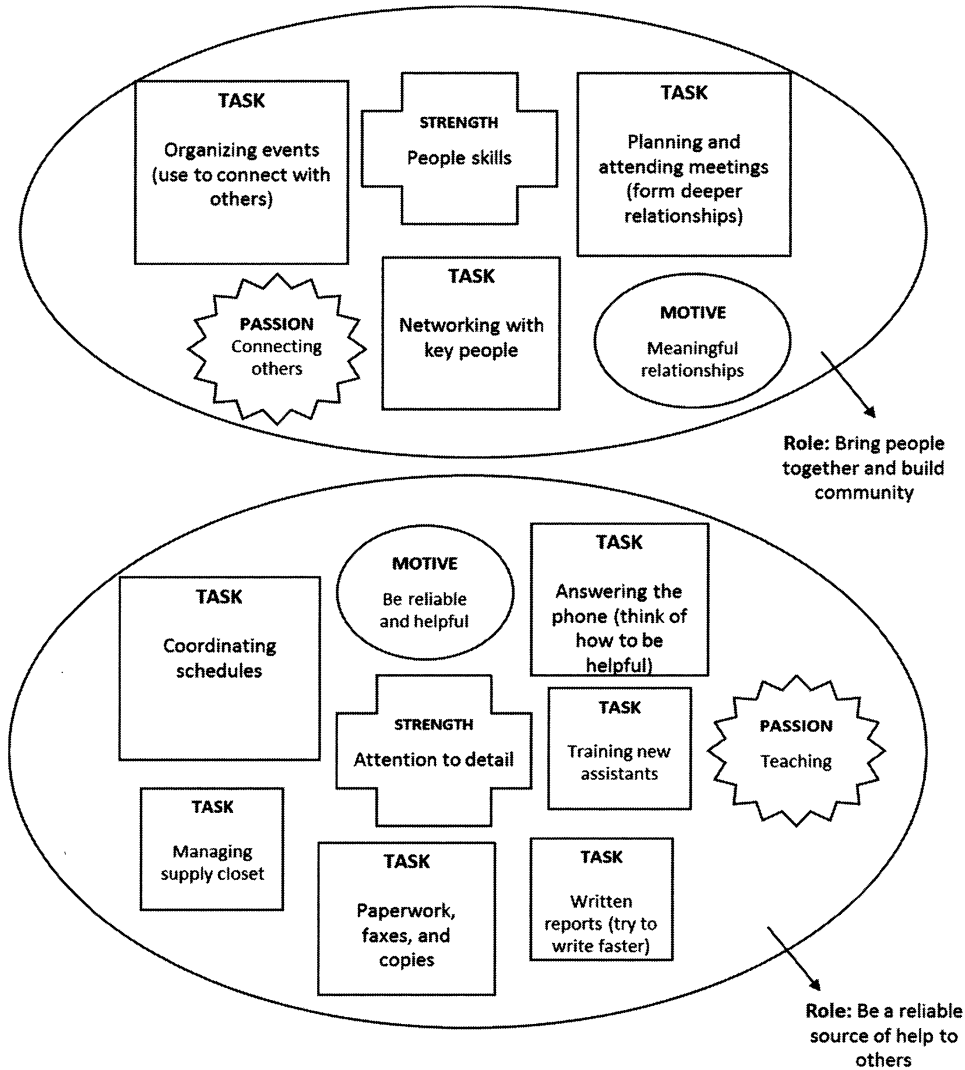
Participants then move to the second part of the exercise, where they create an *after diagram* (see Figure 4.3). Whereas the before sketch depicts how participants currently do their jobs, the after diagram is supposed to represent a more ideal (but still realistic) version of their jobs. In this way, the after diagram serves as an image of opportunities for how participants can craft their jobs to be more meaningful and hence more engaging and fulfilling. To create the after diagram, participants begin by identifying the three aforementioned important aspects of themselves at work: their motives, strengths, and passions. With these three aspects in mind, participants then create a new set of task blocks to symbolize how they would like to spend their time, energy, and attention in the future. Participants use their motives, strengths, and passions as criteria for assessing how well each task included in their jobs suits them. The final step of creating the after diagram is drawing *role frames* around groups of tasks that participants see as serving a common purpose. Role frames are intended to help participants engage in

FIGURE 4.2Most time, energy, and attention:Moderate level of time, energy, and attention:Least time, energy, and attention:

An administrative assistant's Before sketch (Part 1 of the Job Crafting Exercise). An example of how an administrative assistant approached her before sketch, which is the part of the Job Crafting Exercise that captures how one currently spends his or her time, energy, and attention on the job. Figure 4.3 depicts the administrative assistant's after diagram. From *Job Crafting Exercise*, by J. M. Berg, J. E. Dutton, and A. Wrzesniewski, 2008. Copyright 2008 by the Regents of the University of Michigan. Adapted with permission.

cognitive or perceptions crafting, because they help participants mentally label tasks in ways that are meaningful to them. Through arranging their after diagrams, participants reveal insights on how they can craft their jobs to enhance meaningfulness. The final step of the exercise is creating an action plan in which participants define specific goals and

FIGURE 4.3



An administrative assistant's After diagram (Part 2 of the Job Crafting Exercise). The administrative assistant's after diagram represents a more ideal (but still realistic) allocation of her time, energy, and attention. The administrative assistant added the task of "Training new assistants," moved "Written reports" to a small block, and moved "Networking with key people" to a medium block. From *Job Crafting Exercise*, by J. M. Berg, J. E. Dutton, and A. Wrzesniewski, 2008. Copyright 2008 by the Regents of the University of Michigan. Adapted with permission.

strategies in the near and long terms for making the more ideal version of the their job depicted in their after diagram into a reality.

SEEDING THE GROUND FOR JOB CRAFTING: FROM JOB DESCRIPTIONS TO JOB LANDSCAPES

As discussed earlier, our research has suggested that simply giving employees formal autonomy and power within a formal job design does not necessarily ensure that they will experience autonomy to craft their jobs. Even employees with a great deal of formal autonomy and power can feel constrained when it comes to job crafting because they tend to feel stuck in the daily grind of their jobs and see the set of tasks and relationships that make up their jobs as rigid and fixed (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010). This presents a challenge to organizations that value innovation and rapid adaptation, because an organization is unlikely to change much if its employees treat their job designs as fixed entities. This raises the question of how jobs can be designed to seed the ground for job crafting over the long run.

Our research has hinted that one key to designing jobs that facilitate job crafting may be in finding the right balance between structure and freedom. In addition to finding that employees with plenty of formal autonomy and power could still feel constrained in terms of their opportunities to craft, we also found that employees with little formal autonomy and power had to put in a great deal of effort to create opportunities to craft (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010). However, despite the extra effort required, it was relatively easier for these employees to recognize opportunities for crafting, thanks to their more structured job designs. Because their jobs included tasks that had clear means and ends established (e.g., you should service this machine using the following steps, or you must enter these data in this way), it was easier for them to see the “white space” in their jobs—that is, where they could fit in new tasks or relationships or drop tasks and relationships that were not important. In contrast, the higher rank employees’ job designs consisted in large part of end goals that they had to decide how to pursue on their own. This lack of structure, combined with the continuous pressure to pursue their end goals, seemed to make it more difficult for them to recognize opportunities to craft their jobs.

In other words, to color outside the lines of a job, one needs lines there in the first place. Thus, the challenge seems to be in creating job designs that provide employees with the right amount and type of structure so that they can recognize opportunities to craft but not have to put in too much effort to make the crafting happen. As a possible framework for striking this balance, we propose the idea of *job landscapes*. Traditionally, a job design (or job description) is a fixed list of duties and reporting relationships (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991). A job

landscape, however, includes two elements: (a) a list of general end goals assigned to an employee and (b) a set of interdependencies or ways in which these end goals overlap and relate to the end goals of other relevant employees or departments. By describing how one's own end goals are related to others' end goals, a job landscape creates a better understanding of how employees' work is interconnected with the work of those around them (e.g., a marketing employee's goals of creating and devising marketing strategies overlaps with research and development goals of creating and developing marketable products). Unlike a traditional job design, the focus of a job landscape is not necessarily on hierarchical relationships but rather on shared goals among individuals and units. However, job landscapes do not prescribe how these shared goals should be pursued—that is up to employees to decide in collaboration with those with whom they are interdependent.

Drawing from macro theories of landscape design (Levinthal & Warglien, 1999), interdependencies may provide the right balance between structure and freedom to enable job crafting; interdependencies make landscapes more rugged, meaning that the possible behavioral pathways available to individuals are constrained by the actions and responses of others, but they are also malleable in that all the parties can decide how to act on the basis of their unique knowledge of their situations rather than being controlled by a centralized body. By prescribing interdependencies and end goals but not how these goals should be pursued, job landscapes free the job from being a set of tasks and reporting relationships as in traditional job descriptions. Thus, although traditional job descriptions generally indicate a set of top-down, one-size-fits-all constraints on employees, job landscapes place employees in situations where they face both constraints as well as opportunities to work with others to customize their jobs from the bottom up. The key for job landscape designers is to make landscapes sufficiently rugged while not including interdependencies that are irrelevant or too numerous for employees to manage.

In addition to balancing structure and freedom in a way that may help enable task crafting, defining for employees how their work is interconnected with others' work may help provide them with raw materials for cultivating meaningfulness through cognitive and relational crafting. Because job landscapes make the relational interdependencies around the job holder clear, employees may have an easier time making sense of how their work has an impact on others in the organization, which may facilitate positive meaning making (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003) and foster increased motivation and performance (Grant, 2007, 2008).

In sum, job landscapes provide a different approach to designing jobs in organizations that value rapid innovation and adaptation, where job crafting is especially important. After all, an organization is unlikely to change much if the content of its employees' jobs stays the same. We

hope scholars and practitioners explore the concept of job landscapes and build knowledge of how and when they can be used to foster beneficial job crafting (see Table 4.1).

Future Directions for Theory, Research, and Practice

Because the academic literature on job crafting is relatively new, many important yet unanswered questions remain about the triggers, moderators, and outcomes of job crafting as a way of cultivating meaningfulness in work. First, we still know relatively little about what individual, interpersonal, occupational, and organizational factors enable or limit job crafting (Morgeson, Dierdorff, & Hmurovic, 2010). Are certain personality traits associated with specific forms of crafting? Are there particular managerial behaviors or group dynamics or practices that foster beneficial job crafting? Can job crafting be contagious, meaning that when one person job crafts, it can set off a chain as others in the same network also engage in crafting? What is the role of organizational culture in enabling or constraining job crafting?

Second, despite the fact that job crafting is an ongoing, dynamic process rather than a single time event, little theory or research has addressed the role of time in job crafting. Future longitudinal studies could explore different job crafting trajectories. Are there patterns in

TABLE 4.1

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Recommendations	Tested in practice	Derived from theory	Supported by research
Job crafting through changing tasks. ^{a,b}	✓	✓	✓
Job crafting through changing relationships. ^{a,c}	✓	✓	✓
Job crafting through changing perceptions. ^{a,c}	✓	✓	✓
Crafting a better person–job fit: Using motives ^d , strengths ^e , and passions. ^{a,f}	✓	✓	✓
Cultivating a job crafting mind-set.		✓	
Completing the Job Crafting Exercise. ^{a,g}	✓	✓	✓
Seeding the ground for job crafting: From job descriptions to job landscapes.		✓	

Note. ^aBerg, Grant, & Johnson (2010). ^bLeana, Appelbaum, & Shevchuk (2009). ^cWrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe (2003). ^dAmbrose & Kulik (1999). ^eClifton & Harter (2003). ^fCsikszentmihalyi (1990). ^gBerg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton (2010).

when employees attempt to craft and when it is most beneficial or costly? Do longer tenured employees engage in more job crafting, or is job crafting more the province of newer employees who can see more possibilities in the job before they become habituated to the work?

Third, although some research has linked job crafting with particular outcomes related to performance and perceptions of the work (e.g., Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Leana et al., 2009), there seems to be a need for more theory and research that link specific forms of crafting to particular individual and organizational outcomes, both positive and negative. For example, when and how can job crafting become a source of innovation at the group or organization level? Under what conditions are certain forms of crafting costly or likely to produce negative side effects for individuals and organizations (e.g., burnout, stress, or decreased performance)?

Not all jobs and situations are equally conducive to job crafting. Researchers and practitioners should take seriously the boundary conditions that apply. For example, some job structures require strict rule compliance and adherence to rigid procedures—for example, jobs in high reliability organizations such as air traffic controllers, nuclear plant technicians, emergency room staff, and firefighters (Roberts, 1990)—that may limit task and relational crafting (but may not restrict cognitive crafting as extensively). Similarly, some employees find themselves in organizations or units that restrict or punish efforts to redefine or craft their jobs, because the colleagues with whom they are interdependent demand that work be done a certain way, their managers demand that their jobs be performed in a prescribed way, or a combination of both. These powerful social pressures constitute a strong situation (Mischel & Shoda, 1995), which is likely to limit employees' opportunities to craft their tasks and relationships. It may still be possible to craft perceptions in such strong situations, although the altered perceptions of the job may be difficult to sustain over time if they run counter to situational pressures and demands from colleagues, managers, or both. In these sorts of constrained contexts, employees may benefit from being vigilant about the psychological, interpersonal, and performance costs of job crafting. On the basis of their assessments, employees could determine whether and when restrictions on crafting might warrant giving up on crafting or, in cases in which employees are highly dissatisfied, leaving the job or organization altogether.

Although there are limits to job crafting, we see lots of opportunities for practitioners and managers to learn more about applying job crafting in organizations. First, practitioners and managers could explore different methods for fostering beneficial job crafting. Is it best to encourage job crafting in one-on-one coaching situations, in group workshops, or through personally setting an example? Second, because

the Job Crafting Exercise is a relatively new tool, it has only been extensively tested with individuals doing the exercise by themselves. It may also be effective for some groups or teams to do together as a way to divide up work between one another or engage in collective job crafting (Leana et al., 2009) in which group members decide to change their jobs in agreed on ways. Third, although the Job Crafting Exercise can be useful for creating a plan to seize opportunities for job crafting, one of the challenges we most often hear from employees is implementing the plan they create during the exercise, because it is easy to fall back into old routines or get caught up in the day-to-day grind of the job and forget about job crafting. We invite practitioners and managers to experiment with various ways of helping employees carry out their job crafting intentions, such as helping employees strategize the best route to implementing their crafting and who to talk to about it, creating a program of incremental goals to create a more ideal version of the job, scheduling check-up meetings to discuss the employee's crafting progress, or setting aside time for pursuing crafting intentions.

Conclusion

Whether in the academic or the practical realm, job crafting offers an exciting way to understand how jobs are reengineered from the bottom up by employees to create more meaningful work. A focus on job crafting reminds researchers and practitioners that jobs are inherently malleable in thought and in action. Job crafting brings our attention to employees' everyday—yet sometimes remarkable—efforts to be resourceful on the job. In a world where meaningfulness may be in short supply, job crafting can be an important process through which employees cultivate meaningfulness and, in so doing, create valuable outcomes for themselves and their organizations.

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