

Chapter 7
JOB DESIGN AND WORK SCHEDULES [PowerPoint Slide 1]

Chapter 7 describes the major approaches to job design. Work teams as part of job design are described in Chapter 13. The chapter begins with a description of some important concepts of job design including the following: underlying dimensions of job design, job specialization, job descriptions, job enrichment, the job characteristics model, job involvement, job enlargement, and job rotation. Ergonomic factors are also described. In addition, modified work schedules are presented including telecommuting and the distributed workplace because scheduling is related to design. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the link between job design and high-performance work systems.

Learning Objectives

1. Explain the four major dimensions of job design plus job specialization and job description. .
2. Describe job enrichment, including the job characteristics model.
3. Describe job involvement, enlargement, and rotation.
4. Explain how workers use job crafting to modify their jobs.
5. Illustrate how ergonomic factors can be part of job design.
6. Summarize the various modified work schedules.
7. Explain how job design can contribute to a high performance work system.

Chapter Outline and Lecture Notes

There are two primary ways of subdividing the overall tasks of an enterprise. One is job design; the other is departmentalization (Chapter 8).

I. FOUR MAJOR DIMENSIONS OF JOB DESIGN PLUS JOB SPECIALIZATION AND JOB DESCRIPTION

Job design is the process of laying out job responsibilities and duties and describing how they are to be performed. Each position in the organization is supposed to contribute to the organization's goals. One way to understand job design is to examine the major dimensions and sub-dimensions of jobs. Job specialization and job descriptions are also important.

A. Task Characteristics [PowerPoint Slide 2]

Task characteristics focus on how the work itself is accomplished and the range and nature of the tasks associated with a particular job. *Autonomy* refers to how much freedom and independence the incumbent has to carry out the work assignment. *Task variety* is the degree to which the job requires the worker to use a wide variety of tasks. *Task significance* is the extent to which a job influences the lives or work of others inside and outside the organization. *Task identity* refers to the extent to which a job involves a whole piece of work that can be readily identified. *Feedback from others* is

the extent to which the job provides direct and clear information about the task's performance.

B. Knowledge Characteristics [PowerPoint Slide 3]

An obvious job dimension is the amount of knowledge, skill and ability demands placed on the job holder. *Job complexity* refers to the degree to which the job tasks are complex and difficult to perform. *Information processing* is the degree to which a job requires attending to and processing data and information. *Problem solving* refers to the degree to which a job requires unique ideas or solutions, and also involves diagnosing and solving nonroutine problems, and preventing or fixing errors. *Skill variety* is the extent to which a job requires the incumbent to use a variety of skills to perform the work. *Specialization* is the extent to which a job involves performing specialized tasks or possessing specialized knowledge and skills.

C. Social Characteristics [PowerPoint Slide 4]

Social characteristics relate to the interpersonal aspects of a job or the extent to which a job requires interaction with others. *Social support* refers to the degree to which a job involves the opportunity for advice and assistance from others. *Interdependence* reflects the degree to which the job depends on others—and others depend on the job—to accomplish a task. *Interaction outside the organization* refers to how much the job requires interaction and communication with people outside the organization. *Feedback from others* refers to the extent to which other workers provide information about performance.

D. Contextual Characteristics [PowerPoint Slide 5]

Contextual characteristics refer to the setting or environment of the job. *Ergonomics* indicates the degree to which a job allows correct posture or movement. *Physical demands* refer to the level of physical activity or effort required by a job. *Work conditions* relate directly to the environment in which the work is performed, including the presence of health hazards, noise, temperature, and cleanliness of the workplace. *Equipment use* is a sub-dimension of work conditions that reflects the variety and complexity of the technology and equipment incorporated into the job.

E. Job Dimension Differences between Professional and Nonprofessional Jobs [PowerPoint Slide 6]

Nonprofessional jobs require more physical demands. Professional jobs scored significantly higher on most of the other dimensions and sub-dimensions including job complexity, problem solving, and skill variety. Human-life focused jobs score higher on the dimension of significance, or impact on others.

F. Job Specialization and Job Design [PowerPoint Slide 7]

Job specialization is the degree to which the jobholder performs only a limited number of tasks. High-level specialists include an investment consultant for mutual funds, and a surgeon who concentrates on liver transplants. Specialists at the first job level are often referred to as entry-level workers, production specialists, support workers or operatives.

1. *Advantages and Disadvantages of Job Specialization* Job specialization allows for the development of expertise within the work force. Specialized jobs at lower occupational levels require less training than would the creation of generalists. However, specialization can lead to difficulties in coordination, and many employees dislike the monotony associated with specialization.
2. *Automation and Job Specialization* Automation is used to perform highly specialized tasks formerly performed by humans. A major purpose of automation is to increase productivity by reducing the labor content required to deliver a product or service. The computerization of the workplace represents automation in hundreds of ways, such as personal computers decreasing the need for clerical support in organizations. Automation enhances job satisfaction when annoying or dangerous tasks are removed, and automation does not result in job elimination.

G. Job Description and Job Design

Before designing a job, it is necessary to have a **job description**, a written statement of the key features of a job, along with the activities required to perform it effectively.

II. JOB ENRICHMENT AND THE JOB CHARACTERISTICS MODEL

Job enrichment is an approach to making jobs involve more challenge and responsibility, so they will be more appealing to most employees.

1. *Characteristics of an Enriched Job* The nine job dimensions that contribute to an enriched job are (1) direct feedback, (2) client relationships, (3) new learning, (4) control over method, (5) control over scheduling, (6) unique experience, (7) control over resources, (8) direct communication authority, and (9) personal accountability. The jobs of managers and information technology specialists are often over-enriched resulting in stress. [\[PowerPoint Slide 8\]](#)
2. *The Job Characteristics Model of Job Enrichment* The **job characteristics model** is an extension of job enrichment and focuses on the task and interpersonal dimensions of a job. Five measurable characteristics of jobs lead to improvements in employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance: (1) skill variety, (2) task identity, (3) task significance, (4) autonomy, and (5) feedback. [\[PowerPoint Slide 9\]](#)

These five core job characteristics relate to three critical psychological states: skill variety, task identity, and task significance. A redesigned job must lead to these three psychological states for workers to achieve positive job outcomes. [\[PowerPoint Slide 10\]](#)

3. *Guidelines for Implementing Job Enrichment* Employee interest in job enrichment should be given weight. Brainstorming is useful for pinpointing changes to make in the job for those seeking enrichment.

III. JOB INVOLVEMENT, ENLARGEMENT, AND ROTATION [\[PowerPoint Slide 11\]](#)

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The motivational aspects of jobs can also be improved through job involvement, job enlargement, and job rotation. **Job involvement** is the degree to which individuals are identified psychologically with their work. It also refers to the importance of work to a person's total self-image. **Job enlargement** refers to increasing the number and variety of tasks within a job. It is also referred to as *horizontal job loading*. Job enlargement can lead to challenges in handling multiple priorities. **Job rotation** is the temporary switching of job assignments, and can sometimes be achieved by two companies sharing workers.

IV. JOB CRAFTING AND JOB DESIGN [PowerPoint Slide 12]

The contemporary view is that a job description is only a guideline: the competent worker is not confined the constraints of a job description. He or she takes on many constructive activities not mentioned in the job description. Workers today must occupy flexible work roles. Employees craft their jobs by changing the tasks they perform and their contacts with others to make their jobs more meaningful.

Job crafting refers to the physical and mental changes workers make in the task or relationship aspects of their job. Three common types of job crafting are changing (1) the number and types of job tasks, (2) the interactions with others on the job, and (3) one's view of the job.

The various approaches to job design provide useful information about how jobs can be made more satisfying and lead to more productivity. Another consideration is **job embeddedness**—the array of forces attaching people to their jobs. One dimension of embeddedness is *links* or connections to people and the community. A second is the *sacrifice* that would be made if the job were left. Third is *fit*, or compatibility with the organization and the outside environment. [PowerPoint Slide 13]

V. ERGONOMICS AND JOB DESIGN [PowerPoint Slide 14]

A job should be laid out to decrease the chances that it will physically harm the incumbent. According to OSHA, **ergonomics** is the science of fitting the worker to the job. A key principle is that workers should be able to adopt several different postures that are safe and comfortable.

A. Musculoskeletal Disorders Including Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Musculoskeletal disorders represent more than 100 injuries that take place when there is a mismatch between the physical requirements of the job and the physical capacity of the human body. Overuse is a common problem.

Musculoskeletal disorders also include **cumulative trauma disorders**, injuries caused by repetitive motions over prolonged periods of time. These disorders account for almost one-half of occupational injuries and illnesses in the United States. The most frequent cumulative trauma disorder is **carpal tunnel syndrome**, which occurs when frequent wrist bending results in swelling, leading to a pinched nerve.

To help prevent and decrease the incidence of cumulative trauma disorder, many

companies are selecting equipment designed for this purpose. Rest breaks also help. Maintaining good posture is helpful, as is making less use of the mouse.

B. Back problems [PowerPoint Slide 15]

Back pain remains one of the most common complaints in the workplace. Many cases of back pain stem from ergonomic problems, including hunching to use the computer. Employers who make a good-faith effort to provide ergonomic support and try to engineer hazards out of the workplace are likely to get good cooperation. The good posture shown in Exhibit 7-7 will help prevent back problems, and so will knowing how to lift properly such as bending from the knees.

C. Noise Problems

Repetitive motion disorders and other musculoskeletal disorders are well-publicized ergonomic problems. Another recurring problem is uncomfortable noise levels. Constant ringing of cell phones and smart phones is another problem. Buzz in the office can create discomfort and physical problems, as demonstrated by one experiment with 40 female clerical workers.

VI. MODIFIED WORK SCHEDULES AND JOB DESIGN [PowerPoint Slide 16]

Many workers today have a choice in deviating from the traditional five-day, 40-hour work week. A **modified work schedule** is any formal departure from the traditional hours of work, excluding shift work and staggered work hours. In addition to being part of job design, modified work schedules can increase job satisfaction and enhance recruiting.

A. Flexible Working Hours [PowerPoint Slide 17]

Employees with **flexible working hours** are required to work certain core hours, but have some flexibility in starting and stopping times. Non-exempt employees are more likely to participate in flextime. Many employers believe that flexible working hours enhance productivity for reasons such as decreasing employee absenteeism and stress. Despite the popularity of flexible working hours, many of these programs were placed on hold during the Great Recession. Many employees hesitate to use flexible working hours (as well as other work/life programs) for fear of being perceived as not strongly committed.

Flexible working hours may not be suitable when workers are dependent upon one another during a specific time period. Employees who can work independently are the best suited for flexible working hours. Managers need to arrange tasks so the employee will have enough to do when other workers are not present.

B. Compressed Work Week [PowerPoint Slide 18]

A **compressed workweek** is a full-time schedule that allows employees to work 40 hours in less than five days. Compressed work weeks are well liked by employees whose lifestyle fits such a schedule. Many employees do not have the energy to work the prolonged days required the compressed work week.

C. Telecommuting and the Remote Workforce [PowerPoint Slide 19]

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An estimated 8 percent of the U. S. workforce conducts most of its work away from the company office, with this figure forecast to 40 percent by 2012. **Telecommuting** is an arrangement in which employees use computers to perform their regular work duties at home, in a satellite office, or remote worksite. Telecommuting also takes place at coffee shops, Wi-Fi cafés, boats, and RVs. Teleworkers also attend meetings on company premises and stay in contact by telephone and teleconferences. Many small businesses operate with informal telecommuting programs.

1. *Advantages of Telecommuting* Telecommuting makes life easier for employees and also helps employers. Productivity usually increases about 25 percent. Overhead, such as rent for office space, decreases. A wider range of employee talent can be reached. Telecommuting also makes a direct contribution to green initiatives for reasons such as less fuel used for commuting. [\[PowerPoint Slide 20\]](#)
2. *Disadvantages of Telecommuting.* Career retardation can occur, and negative tendencies such as workaholism and procrastination are reinforced. Loyalty and teamwork are difficult to develop. Teleworkers positioned in coffee shops may lose focus on company work. Also, the creativity-enhancing exchange of ideas is missing. [\[PowerPoint Slide 21\]](#)

Following are a few key suggestions that can lead to a successful telecommuting program. (See Exhibit 7-9.) For example, choose the right people for telecommuting, and make sure the telecommuter has suitable home environment for telecommuting. Also, clearly define productivity goals and deadlines. Telecommuting should be a reward for good work in the traditional office.

D. Job Sharing [\[PowerPoint Slide 22\]](#)

Job sharing is a work arrangement in which two people who work part-time share one job. The two job sharers divide the job according to their needs, such as dividing up the days of the workweek. Job sharing appeals mostly to people whose lifestyle does not allow a full-time job.

E. Part-Time and Temporary Work [\[PowerPoint Slide 23\]](#)

Part-time work is a modified work schedule offered by about two-thirds of employers. Managers and professionals who choose to reduce their working hours so as to have more time for personal life represent another category of part-time workers.

Temporary employment is at an all-time high, with some employers even hiring part-time managers, engineers, lawyers, and other high-level workers. Collectively, part-time and temporary employees constitute one-fourth to one-third of the workforce. Give that they are hired contingent upon an employer's need, they are referred to as **contingent workers**. Contingent employment now even takes place for executive positions, particularly for managers who can execute strategies and bring about operational efficiencies.

G. Shift Work [\[PowerPoint Slide 23\]](#)

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The purpose of shift work is to provide coverage during nonstandard hours. The three schedules are days, evening, and nights. Shift work is also a lifestyle that affects productivity. Shift work disrupts the natural rhythm of the body and creates job problems such as a high incidence of drug and alcohol problems. With proper training, employees can adjust better to shift work.

VII. JOB DESIGN AND HIGH PERFORMANCE WORK SYSTEMS [PowerPoint Slide 24]

High-performance work systems have been proposed in terms of both manufacturing settings, and the total work environment.

A. High-Performance Work Systems in a Manufacturing Environment

High-performing work systems are much like job enrichment. A **high-performing work system** is a way of organizing work so that front-line workers participate in decisions that have an impact on their jobs and the wider organization. For the system to work, workers must have reasonable autonomy in their jobs; access to helpers is needed; teams must be self-managing; and problem-solving and quality-improvement teams must be removed from their regular work. All four practices must be supported by the company's overall approach to human resource management.

B. High-Performance Jobs through Adjusting Worker Resources [PowerPoint Slide 25]

According to Robert Simons, for a company to attain its potential, each employee's supply of organizational resources should equal his or her need for these resources. The same supply-demand balance must apply to every function, every business unit, and the entire organization. Four basic spans are part of this approach: control, accountability, influence, and support. Each span can be adjusted so it is narrow or wide, much alike a high-to-low volume control. If the manager adjusts to the right settings, the job can be designed so a talented individual can execute the company's strategy with success.