



DESIGNING GOOD JOBS

INTRODUCTION

- Most jobs just evolve with little thought given to how they will be performed, how they link with other jobs or what their key purpose is.
- Yet good job design is pivotal in performance improvement, job satisfaction and employee retention.
- To create good jobs requires planning and thought.
- Most job descriptions are detailed and prescriptive task descriptions and bear very little relationship to job outputs. It is output statements with clear deliverables that are the important elements.
- Most jobs have 3-4 deliverables and a purpose i.e. why does a job exist?
- Annual objectives can be set in the context of the job purpose, but tuned to the current company priorities. People should be appraised on how well they have attained these with reference to their personal growth and co-ordination with others.
- There are two pre-conditions for creating good jobs:
 1. A well structured job design with deliverables and outputs
 2. An encouraging context in which that job fits i.e. designing a great job in a poor context is like trying to grow begonias in the desert. You need an encouraging job context.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF JOB DESIGN

- Output statements and deliverables are needed in all jobs. These set a clear and unambiguous direction and tell people clearly what they are expected to do. Asking people the simple question as to why their job exists can be alarmingly revealing.
- They also ensure individuals can have a sense of accomplishment or attainment when they have achieved their deliverables.
- At the same time, clear job output statements provide a basis for collaboration and avoid overlap and duplication. They define 'who does what'.
- In addition to deliverables, we all come to work to learn. This can be enhancing technical skills, technology, subject matter expertise and business skills amongst other things. Learning is a major contributor to personal growth which we all seek. All jobs need to have time to focus on learning, personal growth and development.
- In addition to deliverables and learning, we are social beings and work needs to give us an outlet to communicate and share. It is not just for social benefit but sharing and exchanging improves communication, helps spark ideas and leads to greater collaboration. Again there needs to be

time, space and encouragement. Thought needs to be given to how the social element of work should be encouraged, particularly where home working is prevalent. As well as the first three elements (deliverables, learning v social) all jobs need purpose. What's it all for? This is part of creating the right environment but jobs need to be purpose based. Why are we doing this? Why does my job exist and where does it fit in the overall organisation purpose? Making money, providing a social service, doing good or bettering ourselves and our customers? Whatever it is everyone should know that their job is for something.

CREATING A GREAT CONTEXT OR ENVIRONMENT

- Most of us have experienced a great place to work and some of us have experienced where it is less good. Despite the efforts of individuals, working in an unhealthy environment is unlikely to lead to great outputs, great job satisfaction or great performance.
- A good environment is a function of many things but key aspects would be:
 - An encouraging value set; clear and charismatic leadership, a defined, agreed and deliverable purpose; and a good set of physical conditions including pay.
- A bad context will have too much hierarchy, overlapping jobs, cost control over wealth creation, a lack of direction and a 'them and us' approach.
- Values are really how things get done. What do we really value – not simply what it says on value statements. How do things get done round here?
- Leadership means many things but there has to be a clear and well communicated strategy, good communications flow up and down the hierarchy, positive people management practices where people are treated with dignity, respect and encouragement, with no tolerance for poor performance or bad practices. There also needs to be good execution of strategy.
- The purpose of the business needs to be distinctive, accurate and well stated, not fluffy. Organisations should not be ashamed of making profit or cutting costs. Too much emphasis on the latest fashion can distract from the organisation's core mission.
- Pay has to be good based on performance, market conditions and seniority.
- Sometimes, a pleasant and prestigious environment is not really the thing that makes a difference. Similarly working in adverse conditions is not always a turnoff, if the work itself has inherent meaning.

OTHER KEY ELEMENTS

- Job descriptions need to be articulated to all employees. In addition to clear articulation there needs to be tracking and measuring as to how we are doing against what we are supposed to be doing. This is what performance appraisal should be about.
- We are in a changing context and as soon as we define jobs they are likely to change and evolve. We need to ensure sufficient flexibility in our system to create the right conditions for change and make sure that we stay up to date.