

## **PA 720 - Organizational Behavior Concept: Job Enrichment**

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#### Introduction

The concept of Job Enrichment is a very broad theory within the field of organizational behavior that is applicable within all sectors of organization. Used synonymously with “job enlargement”, the term job enrichment refers to different methods that are aimed at increasing employee’s job motivation, satisfaction, self-worth, in an attempt to ultimately increase the overall employee productivity within the organization. Research studies conducted on Job Enrichment and its influence on employee productivity date back to the 1950s and 1960s and throughout those years a wide variety of methods have emerged. Most commonly job enrichment is attributed to the process of job redesign in order to reverse the negative effects monotony of employee tasks, which will include boredom, lack of autonomy and dissatisfaction. Other variances of job enrichment include providing worker incentives by involving the employee in the decision making process, the implementation of quality work groups and team building, and job independence as an incentive to increase productivity.

#### Evolution of the concept of Job Enrichment

Beginning in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up until present day, the theory of job enrichment has offered many compelling concepts to increase employee productivity while simultaneously enriching the employees work experience, all of which remain applicable today. The early works which established Job enrichment among organizational behavior theorists was Frederick Herzberg’s “Hygiene Theory” and Hackman and Oldham’s “Job Characteristic Model”.

## The Hygiene Theory

The central figure in developing the theory of job enrichment within the framework of organizational behavior was Frederick Herzberg who's pivotal "Hygiene Theory" has contributed a solid basis and foundation for subsequent generations to expand upon. According to Herzberg, for a worker to be happy and therefore productive the environmental factors of his workplace must not cause him discomfort. Herzberg further asserts that although providing employees with a more comfortable environment may in turn make them more productive, this does not necessarily mean they will be motivated to perform their duties. (Simonds & Orife, 1975) Herzberg believed that the process of motivating workers is by enhancing their feeling of responsibility and connection to their work. In this case, Herzberg proclaims that it is the work itself that is rewarding. Managers can help the employees connect to their work by giving them more authority over the job, as well as offering direct and individual feedback.

## The Job Characteristics Model

In 1975 Hackman and Oldham advanced the ideas of Herzberg by introducing what they called "The Job Characteristics Model". "This model is formulated on the assumption that if five core job characteristics are present, three psychological states critical to motivation are produced, resulting in positive outcomes." (Griffin, Patterson, & West, 2001) The five core job characteristics consist of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Hackman and Oldham state that the three psychological states that motivation is dependent upon are experienced meaningfulness of work, responsibility for work outcomes, and knowledge of results. Hackman and

Oldham then proclaim that to the degree that these psychological states are present, high personal employee work motivation will result.

### Relevance of Job Enrichment in 2007

The early works of Herzberg and Hackman & Oldham have provided a feasible and effective framework for increasing employee productivity through job enrichment that is just as applicable today as it was when their research was first conducted. Within the past half century there have been numerous researches conducted that provides useful empirical evidence to illustrate the rewards and benefits of job enrichment. We will further discuss each method that an organization can implement in an attempt to improve worker productivity through job implementation.

### Employee autonomy

In a study analyzing job independence as an incentive device to increase employee productivity, Kay Mitusch emphasizes that when employee autonomy is present it can compensate for an organization lacking an extrinsic reward program yet still remain productive. “This is pivotal for explaining why workers in independent, responsible jobs are willing to invest in their jobs even if there is no reliable, formalized system of rewarding them.” (Mitusch, 2000) To provide further evidence of the success of employee autonomy as a method of job enrichment Griffin, Patterson, and West explored the relationship between teams and satisfaction using data from a large research project in the U.K. that investigated management practices and employee attitudes in manufacturing companies. The researchers conducted this study by distributing a questionnaire survey which asked them to rank their preferred working conditions in response to hypothetical situations which were designed to relate to their actual work duties. The study showed

that “job enrichment was positively related to job autonomy but was not significantly related to perceptions of supervisory support.” (Griffin, Patterson, and West, 2001) The researchers also concluded that “while both autonomy and supervisory support were important positive influences on job satisfaction, the positive association of teamwork on job autonomy was explained by job enrichment that accompanied teamwork and could not be attributed to teamwork itself.” (Griffin, Patterson, and West, 2001) This data shows that by simply trusting an employee’s expertise at his or her job and allowing them to operate more independently an employee will develop an increased level of job satisfaction and in turn increase the productive output of that worker.

### Skill Variety

Another technique to enrich an employee’s work experience is to utilize employees with a wide range of skills so they can apply them to their daily work routine. In his article *White Collar Job Enrichment: The Pay Board Experience*, Tim McNamar explored the Pay Board’s experience with job enrichment. “By replacing a traditional method of processing cases with an approach built around work groups performing interrelated tasks, it increased productivity, provided better motivation, and vastly improved opportunities for individual self-actualization and esteem.” (McNamar, 1973) By changing the previous operational procedures and by allowing employees to engage in more of a shared task structure, the Pay Board experienced increased productivity across the spectrum. “The decision to adopt a team concept for case management was not due to any of the traditional reasons given for blue collar job enrichment – high absenteeism, low morale, and the like. Rather, it was instituted in hopes that it would drastically increase productivity. Nevertheless, the approach turned out to provide a variety of

benefits, many of which directly related to the question of job enrichment.” (McNamar, 1973) Also, the inclusion of employees in critical decisions that will effect the organization as a whole, shows improvement in the employee’s morale regarding their importance within the organization and in turn increase their motivation. “In general, research on participative decision making has found that participation improves employees’ attitudes and increases their organizational commitment and job satisfaction.” (DeLancer Julnes, 2001)

### Job Feedback

Another key aspect of job enrichment can be achieved through the simple process of providing employees with useful feedback concerning the work performance along with clearly established expectations. “Job enrichment focuses on creating individual tasks that give people feedback, increase their influence how work is done, require them to use a variety of skills, and give them a whole piece of work.” (Mohrman, Lawler, Mohrman, 1992)

### Task significance and task identity

The installation of job enrichment by way of task significance is the extent to which an employee’s work has a meaningful impact on other jobs in the same workplace. This can be accomplished with the installation of teams within the employee work population. “Teamwork typically involves groups of interdependent employees who work cooperatively to achieve group outcomes. Effective team implementation can enhance the motivational properties of work and increase job satisfaction.” (Griffin, Patterson, and West, 2001) A direct correlation between task significance and task identity can be seen by the use of teams and specific job duties. The idea of task identity is the measure to

which the job requires completion of a number of whole and identifiable pieces of work. “Theoretically, the choice between teams and individual job enrichment should be made based upon the technology of the workplace. Teams are more complicated to build and to maintain, but may be necessary if the work is such that no one individual can do a whole part of it and get feedback about it. Teams are often appropriate, for example, in process production facilities such as a chemical plants and oil refineries and in complex service organizations such as banks and airlines. Where the technology allows an individual to do a whole task or offer a whole service, individual designs are preferred because they are simpler to install and give the individual more direct feedback.” (Mohrman, Lawler, Mohrman , 1992) The city of Rockville, MD conducted an experiment where managers and line staff collaborated in the decision making process and the result was astonishing, including cost savings, improvement of morale and the appreciation of the need for productivity within the organization increased. “The key ingredients in the program’s success was the consultation with supervisors and employees and their involvement in selecting the projects.” (Hobbs, 1976)

#### Counter argument of job enrichment

Despite all of the overwhelming evidence of the success that is attributed in implementing job enrichment programs there is a minority of speculators that job enrichment is not always the best option when an organization’s sole objective is to reduce costs. “The possible increase in the satisfaction of the employees is probably not a sufficient reason for managers to support job enrichment programs. A survey by Reif and Schoderbek showed that the main objective of top management in companies introducing job enrichment programs was to reduce costs. Hence, management support for a new job

design approach has to be gained through a cost-benefit treatment to job design.”

(Globerson, 1977) If a company's sole aim is to reduce costs then investing in your current work force might not be the preferable avenue. However, if an organization or company is interested in fully utilizing its talented workforce and provide increased worker motivation and in turn increase worker productivity, then adopting a job enrichment program is the most effective option.

### Conclusion

Throughout the last few decades, the implementation of a job enrichment program has successfully shown to increase employee's job motivation, satisfaction, self-worth, in an attempt to ultimately increase the overall employee productivity within the organization. No matter what the function or sector of an organization whether it be a government agency, non-profit organization, or company operating within the private sector, the implementation of job enrichment into your organization will result in the key areas of employee production and worker motivation. It is obvious through years of conducted research that a happy and motivated workforce coupled with an effective and flexible management will ultimately result in a highly productive organization.

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