

Medical Professionals Benefit from Self-Directed ‘Job Crafting’

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One of the first field tests of a technique known as *job crafting*, in which employees proactively optimize their work environment, has linked the approach with improvements in employee well-being and performance.

A team of researchers from The Netherlands, China, and Germany studied the effects of a single job-crafting training session in a Dutch medical system. Their findings, along with previous correlational studies, show that job crafting is a sound strategy and that employees can shape their own environments and experiences to improve both their experience at work and their performance.

Organizational researchers coined the term ‘job crafting’ in 2001 after finding that some employees spontaneously manage their resources at work to better suit their strengths and weaknesses. Since then, studies on job crafting have identified three strategies for job redesign: seeking challenges, seeking resources, and reducing demands.

The researchers ran two studies in The Netherlands. The first involved doctors specializing in one medical area, and the second involved nurses. The experiments started with a 3-hour job crafting training seminar to introduce the principles and suggest ways participants could reshape their workdays

around those principles. The participants were surveyed once every 3 months to get measures before and after training.

The nurses and doctors filled out surveys to measure the extent that they were adopting the job crafting techniques: seeking challenges (e.g. volunteering for work or a committee), seeking resources (asking peers for feedback or help), and reducing demands (working more efficiently or delegating when appropriate). The surveys also measured well-being and job performance. Well-being included questions about work engagement, exhaustion, and health. Participants rated their agreement with statements like “I am immersed in my job” (engagement), and “After work, I usually feel worn out and weary” (exhaustion).

The scientists report that doctors used the ‘seeking challenges’ techniques while nurses used and benefited more by seeking resources. Neither group seemed to use the ‘reducing demands’ technique as a result of the intervention, and there was some evidence that reducing demands among doctors and nurses could be associated with increased exhaustion.

In addition, since medical specialists showed different associations and implemented different job-crafting skills than nurses, the researchers suggested that “job redesign interventions be adapted to meet the changing needs of today’s organizations and individuals to create a “win-win” situation for all involved.”

The authors conclude that “organizations should encourage employees to craft their jobs and provide them with opportunities to “fit” their jobs to their strengths, skills, and working preferences.”

Job engagement is an important factor in job performance and satisfaction. In a 2011 article in [Current Directions in Psychological Science](#), APS Fellow Arnold Bakker writes that job engagement is not only associated with productivity, creativity, and dedication but that “engaged workers proactively change their work environment in order to stay engaged.” The new findings from Dutch medical centers suggest that this relationship may be a two-way street. Engaged workers change their work environment, and changing one’s work environment may help with engagement.

References

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