

Chapter MP3 script 21

Work Structuring, Job Design and Business Process Re-engineering

In this recording we summarise the content of chapter 21 Work Structuring, Job Design and Business Process Re-engineering.

Studying this chapter should help you discuss the strengths and weaknesses of early ideas on the design of work; identify the main approaches to the design of work; evaluate the factors likely to influence job/ work design; list job characteristics thought critical to job satisfaction; list the main benefits of job enrichment; evaluate the business process reengineering approach; .

Introducing the chapter, the authors start with 1. This section of the book has been about management planning. In chapters 16 and 17 we considered organisational purpose, mission and strategy along with goals and objectives. In chapter 18 we considered mechanisms such as performance management systems to translate strategy into action, translating corporate objectives into managerial and team-based objectives at the operational level. Accomplishment of strategic goals is dependent upon human resources and in chapter 20 we discussed human resource planning. In the final chapter of this section we focus on the design of work (jobs). Organizational strategies should fit with the various parts of work within an organization.

2. The contemporary organisation needs people to work willingly, effectively and productively to achieve organisational goals and contribute to organisational success. No one can do all of the work of the organization and there is therefore a need to differentiate work and consider how work should be designed to meet organisational goals. Jobs are interdependent and must be designed to make a contribution to the organisation's overall mission and goals. As we will see in this chapter however, there are numerous approaches to designing jobs. An approach to job design that involves dividing a task into relatively small parts, each of which is accomplished by a single person is known as the division of labour. Job design involves determining the specific job tasks and responsibilities, the work environment, and the methods by which the tasks will be carried out to meet operational goals. According to Daft (2009:518) job design is the application of motivational theories to the structure of work in order to improve productivity and satisfaction.

3. The emphasis of this chapter is upon work and how that work is organised and designed. Work may be described in terms of labour, activities, jobs and tasks. Such terms are often used interchangeably. Job design requires knowledge of classical management theory (scientific management) and human relations theories (motivation) in particular – refer back to part 1 of the book. The scope of this chapter is more oriented towards the design of work at the level of the individual and small team and we give consideration to work design principles with this in mind. In the next chapter we turn our attention to design at the organizational level. Thus, this chapter is more about differentiation and the next about integration. This chapter examines some of the key issues involved in designing work for people, and outlines several important approaches which have been adopted in the search for the best ways of combining people's needs and aspirations with the constraints and opportunities offered by technology and work processes..

The key concepts discussed within this chapter are:

Business Process Reengineering (BPR) - The redesign of business processes in an effort to reduce costs, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and improve quality. BPR is characterized as radical rather than incremental in its approach to change and broad rather than narrow in its organization impact.; Division of labour - An approach to job design that involves dividing a task down into relatively small parts, each of which is accomplished by a single person.; job design - Involves determining the specific job tasks and responsibilities, the work environment, and the methods by which the tasks will be carried out to meet the goals of operations; Job Enlargement - The horizontal increasing of job responsibility, ie by the addition of tasks of a similar nature to be distinguished from job enrichment.; job enrichment - The process of vertically increasing the responsibilities of a job, by the addition of motivators, eg more discretion, improved job interest etc.; Job satisfaction - An attitude or internal state which is associated with the working environment and working experiences. In recent years it has been closely associated with improved job design and work organisation and the quality of working life.; Job simplification - An approach to job design based on a minimization of the range of tasks into the smallest convenient size to make the job efficient and cost effective.; .

Other terms discussed include:

Autonomous work groups; Business Process; job; Job analysis; Job characteristics model; Job rotation; Quality of working life; .

Summarising and concluding, the author(s) make the following comments - 30. Designing and redesigning jobs is not easy. Changes in one part of a job hierarchy are bound to bring about changes elsewhere. Change maybe welcome in one group, but not in another. This is likely to cause tensions between groups. Individuals may initially welcome change, but then feel less enthusiastic if related job conditions (pay, re-training etc) do not meet their needs. Supervisory staff may feel particularly threatened by any form of job redesign, but will expect to benefit ultimately. However, when work can be redesigned effectively, the rewards are twofold. For individuals, there is the opportunity to find personally challenging and satisfying work. For firms, there is the opportunity to achieve lower costs, better quality and improved productivity through a more effective match between the needs of people and the requirements of technology. The approach to work structuring and job design embodied in some aspects of Business Process Re-engineering focuses on key business processes rather than on tasks and operational structures in designing work. This may lead to job losses for some, but also to more interesting and challenging jobs for others. Organisations employing BPR may enjoy reduced costs of production and improved customer relations..

We have now reached the end of the chapter 'Work Structuring, Job Design and Business Process Re-engineering'.

There are a number of references for this chapter where further reading opportunities are identified for you.

Additionally, there are questions or activities to help develop and test your understanding of this chapter