

JOB CRAFTING

JOB CRAFTING

The Art of Redesigning a Job

BY

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EPIGRAPH

*Abbiamo voluto cambiare il mondo
e ci siamo ritrovati con la vita disfatta
ma la notte è stata bella
chi dice che l'amore è a perdere
ha già perso l'amore.*

— Jacques Prévert (1949)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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His research interests include the analysis of individual strategies and organizational levers that can promote employees’ well-being and job satisfaction, such as job crafting behaviors. Other research interests also focus on public management competencies and administrative leadership. Davide de Gennaro published several articles and chapters in scientific journals (e.g., *Journal of Vocational Behavior*), books (e.g., edited by Springer International Publishing), and conference proceedings (e.g., Academy of Management). Furthermore, despite his young age, Davide has participated to more than 20 international conferences as a speaker.

PREFACE

Has your job started weighing you down? Is it a source of discomfort; don't you like it as much as you used to? If so, your first thought should probably be: "I'm looking for a new job". In reality, there is a less drastic solution: to work to redesign some of job's aspects, so as to better shape it on your interests, abilities, needs, and – consequently – return to appreciate it and being more efficient.

This DIY, spontaneous, and proactive approach has a name: job crafting, which can be translated as "work personalization" or "individual job redesign." It is not synonymous with revolution, but with evolution: the basic idea is that individual initiative can produce small but decisive changes in carrying out one's work. This is the case, for example, of a teacher who gets bored explaining the lesson always in the same way, so he or she uses songs or videos to make teaching more enjoyable. The result? Less boredom and more time to devote to stimulating tasks.

Indeed, thinking about it, the perfect job does not exist. What do you like about your job, what do you enjoy? At least twenty seconds of silence. The answers are there, I know, but sometimes they are hidden by fatigue, by the need to change something, by habit, by the feeling that it could always be better. In fluid times like modern ones, in which there is this difficulty in appreciating all the features of a job, sometimes you have to invent it – you have the possibility to look at things differently.

The job crafting expression was proposed in 2001 by two psychologists – Amy Wrzesniewski and Jane E. Dutton – in an attempt to describe a possible magic: that of transforming the work you have into the work you love (also said: if you can't do the work you love, at least try to love the work you do). Therefore, if you don't like the work you do but the prospect of leaving it still seems too far away, three simple rules could change your (work) life: task crafting (reconsider the things you do), relational crafting (reconsider your colleagues, supervisors, and clients), and cognitive crafting (reconsider the way you think about your work). In other words, doing job crafting means trying to align one's inclinations and passions with job demands. Job crafting already exists in every work environment, or rather in any stimulating work environment.

Therefore, job crafting is not just about the most obvious aspect: that of modifying the proposed task, the nature of one's work, and the way in which it is carried out. Indeed, it would be a matter of reviewing the tasks and the daily activities in order to give more importance and devote more time to those we like, carefully choosing priorities, redefining work styles and processes, and questioning everything. There is more. There is also a cognitive modification, that is to change the way in which one's work is perceived, and a relational modification, for which the style and frequencies of work-related interactions change. By reviewing the perception you have of your job role, being able to better withstand the negative aspects of your work, improving your self-perception, and also relating to positive and cheerful people, distancing yourself from those who despise or envy you, selecting the people to take an example from. In practice, job crafting is about redesigning your work as a whole to make it more fulfilling.

The old organizational approaches to work have always stated that this ability to recur proactively was a prerogative

of managers, but they were often wrong, or at most not entirely true. Do you know why? Managers coordinate the work of others and are in a position to try to reorganize the contents of tasks, but only those who actually carry out the aforementioned tasks can really rework and re-propose them in an evolved key. Job crafting means for a worker to take proactive behavior so as to make his or her own work more satisfying and consistent with one's personal inclinations and abilities. It is a matter of re-elaborating, perhaps with a good dose of creativity, one's own role and tasks, making them take on new, more challenging, more visible, and more satisfying connotations. This behavior experienced a boom during the last recession in the United States, when there were not many jobs available and job crafting became the easiest way to pleasantly accept one's own work.

This book has been imagined and designed with the aim of investigating the phenomenon of job crafting, in the light of almost 20 years of studies on the subject, through a thorough investigation and trying to bring order to the various often disconnected studies. It is important to specify, however, that this book does not provide an exhaustive summary on the subject, given that this would have been extremely complex and of little use; on the contrary, the objective of this work is to provide a cognitive basis to encourage further developments in scientific research on the subject of job crafting. The goal is to allow an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon that naturally and spontaneously occurs within organizations and in the working life of all individuals, but which can be fostered and guided by creating suitable organizational and contextual conditions for its development in synergy with the organization's objectives. Indeed, job crafting has been widely recognized as being able to generate better results in terms of engagement, satisfaction, motivation, performance, and positive thinking.