

Redesigning the job of a retail sales clerk through job enrichment essay sample

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Introduction

There are always those special abilities that various employees possess that greatly improve their efficiency at the workplace. It is however likely that some of these abilities may not always be utilized as employees are subjected to routine which leads to lack of flexibility, boredom and dissatisfaction (Mione, 2006). Frederick Herzberg who was an American psychologist developed the idea that employees were motivated when their skills were into use and when there was autonomy in the job (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). This attempt of motivation is what is referred to as job enrichment. The process of job enrichment involves expanding the job scope in a vertical manner. The employee gets more responsibilities which in normal circumstances would have been regarded to be the duty of an employee in a higher position. What this implies is that adding responsibilities at the same position does not consist of job enrichment but to what is referred to as job enlargement (Ehin, 2000). To illustrate the application of job enrichment as a tool for employee motivation, this paper will focus on redesigning the job of a retail sales clerk. It will also look into the possible constraints likely to be encountered and a plan to overcome any resistance to change by the worker.

Basic job duties of the retail sales clerk

The sales clerk acts as a cashier. This duty involves checking of price tags of the goods, summing the totals of the goods purchased by the customers, collection of cash from customers, issuing receipts and giving back change.

The retail sales clerk is responsible for the display area and has a duty to make sure that the merchandise has well labeled price tags. It is also the duty of the clerk to replenish stock on the display and to keep the display area orderly at all times.

Another duty of the sales clerk is catering to the customer needs such as giving basic information that they may need about the products. Basically, the sales clerk should assist any customer who needs help in identifying various goods, their uses and their prices.

The retail sales clerk engages in simple clerical work. This includes recording of the day's sales in the sales day book and making a summary of the various goods sold. The sales clerk may also be required to prepare a summary of sales at the end of every month or every week.

Assistance in inventory taking is also considered a duty of the sales clerk. A sales clerk is involved in the direct counting of the goods available at the store so as to ensure that all the goods supplied to the store are accounted for.

Newly designed duties

The retail sales clerk will act as a cashier performing the sales transactions which include summing up the total worth of a customer's goods, collecting payment and giving receipts.

Apart from arranging the display area, the sales clerk will make summaries on the quality of the goods displayed on the shelves. This will help to answer

customer questions better. The summaries could also incorporate customer's view of the product which the sales clerks will be responsible for collection. The job characteristic used here is task autonomy.

The sales clerk will be responsible for customer questions and queries. The role of the customer care desk will be taken in shifts and every sales clerk will have an opportunity to serve the customers. This will require knowledge in customer care and extensive knowledge of the products. The job characteristic used is skill variety and task significance.

The retail sales clerk shall be responsible for maintaining a profit and loss summary for each week in addition to simple clerical jobs. This will require the knowledge on the prices of goods which can then be compared with the number of sales made to obtain the profits for that week instead of waiting for the accountant to make a monthly summary. Skills in accounting and on how to make a profit and loss summary will be required. The job characteristic used here is skill variety and task identity.

The sales clerk will be involved directly in inventory taking. The process of inventory taking will determine the amount of stock available in the store. A sales clerk shall record all the data collected on the available stock which should be determined as soon as the inventory taking is complete. It therefore applies the job characteristic of job-based feedback. This role also provides task variety.

Implications of job redesign.

Accomplishing enrichment may not be as easy as it may appear to be. There is bound to be numerous changes within the organization to incorporate such a change. As much as job redesign is considered a motivating factor, not all employees will find changes favorable to them and they may not like the new responsibilities even though they provide them with an opportunity for personal growth. (Armstrong, 2003). Preparing these workers for the changes which may include the use of incentives such as salary increments and training which may be quite expensive to the company (Naquin and Holton, 2003). The management may also have a hard time in dealing with the employees before they can adjust to the new changes.

Several factors may prompt workers to reject the newly enriched job. Some workers may fear the new responsibilities while others are simply lazy and do not want additional tasks on top of what they have been doing (Caluwé and Vermaak, 2003). The reasons for fear include the perceived accountability required for the enriched job, fear of failure due to inadequate knowledge and fear of the unknown. This can however be overcome through training. Some workers may also feel like they will work more for less remuneration especially where there is no accompanying salary increase with the job enrichment (Naquin and Holton 2003).

The new job design is likely to impact on productivity, commitment and stress. As Dan, (1994) notes, routine can lead to boredom and hence decrease productivity. Job redesigning should therefore eliminate workers unproductively. The increased tasks will not only provide autonomy to the job but also develop the worker's experience which is a motivating factor.

Productivity may however deteriorate if employees are not ready to take the changes or if the management does not follow the progress of the employees closely following the redesign. Commitment is likely to increase as worker's responsibilities increase since more is required from them. Since they want to prove that they can handle the new job, workers are more likely to get more committed to their work. Stress levels may increase depending on how the employees handle their new roles. Employees who easily adjust to their new responsibilities are likely to have lower stress levels than those who do not adjust easily or those with a negative attitude towards the changes (Caluwé and Vermaak, 2003).

Overcoming the challenges associated with change

A plan to overcome resistance to changes by workers would basically include ways to make them appreciate the job and move with the changes (Cunningham and Eberle, 1990). The first thing to do is to get the views that the employees have on the job enrichment that has just been introduced before convincing them that the changes are for the better of their personal growth. The next thing should be to consider whether the employees have adequate skills and knowledge to cope with these kinds of changes. This will ensure that any need for further training is identified so that workers may feel more adequate to do the additional tasks. Supportive resources such as technology and assistant staff to work under these employees can also be provided to ease the responsibilities (Miner, 2005). If this is not possible, constant job rotation and job sharing will help the employees adjust to the changes better. A plan to redesign physical facilities processes and

procedures would also be considered to give the job a whole new outlook so that the employee would easily give it a try. In order to make the employees feel appreciated and not over worked, a supportive corporate culture including supportive management and staff interaction should be encouraged. Ensuring free information flow will aid the employees to seek clarification and to air their views about the changes in their jobs such that any necessary changes to make them more comfortable may be undertaken. (Caluwé and Vermaak, 2003)

Motivation is an important element of the plan. Recognition, appreciation, encouragement and employee rewards will highly improve job excellence. Armstrong (2003) indicates that better salaries and benefits after addition of more responsibilities is essential to encourage the employee to perform the extra task. Clear definitions of rewards available to employees should be made while incorporating the kind of rewards they will receive for exceptional performance. This should be coupled with constant training to ensure improvement of skills.

Conclusion

Job enrichment not only provides employees with opportunities for personal growth, achievement and recognition but also produces better results for the business as a whole. Managers should therefore seek to redesign the current jobs so as to motivate their employees. It is essential that employees develop better task identity. From the illustration for example, the sales clerk is assigned more responsibilities such that there can be a break from the monotony of sales. The new responsibilities also offer an opportunity to learn

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and utilize new skills such as customer care and accounting. If properly planned, job enrichment can lead to higher productivity, less employee absenteeism and less staff turnover. In a situation where the employees do not like the changes in their jobs, the results could be disastrous hence the need to come up with adequate plans to help the employees adjust to the changes. These may include training before the actual changes can be implemented, redesign of facilities and increase in salaries and benefits as a way of motivating the employees. Even though training may appear costly at first, the results would be better productivity in the long-run.

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