

How the organizing of work influences experiences of work



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Consider how the organizing of work influences experiences of work.

Introduction

The question of how the organization of work influences the experiences of work can take on many differing connotations depending upon the viewpoint that is being utilized to address the foregoing. From a dictionary point of view, work is defined as follows (American Heritage Dictionary, 2005):

“ 1. Physical or mental activity that is directed toward the accomplishment or production of something.”

As well as the activity of “... looking for work...” one’s occupation, the production of some measured unit of accomplishment, as well as one’s occupation (American Heritage Dictionary, 2005). Watson (2003) indicates that work is an activity “... in which everyone in the world is involved...” and utilizes the examples of those who are employed as well as one tending to their garden, the owner of a building as the landlord, investors and even those who have servants. Given the broad based meaning that can be and is associated with this word, as a concept in this connotation work shall be thought of as those activities one performs for compensation. Polanyi (1944) saw work as a creative activity whose goal is human development. And while in our modern society this view might tend to be slightly utopian its undertones nevertheless have merit.

The very question of how the organizing of work influences the experience of work makes reference to, although indirectly, work as something that can be thought of as enjoyable, or to the contrary depending upon not only what is

being done but how one views said activity. The experiences one has at work can run the gamut from inferior to exceptional, for want of more descriptive terminology. As such, we shall examine this question from the standpoint of the work experience as the feeling and or satisfaction one derives and thus how that work when organized either contributes to or diminishes from the foregoing.

For those of us for whom work is a means to either earn a living, practice a profession or support oneself and their family, it plays an extremely important part of our lives in terms of time spend at said activity, as well as in terms of how the experience of this activity impacts upon, influences one and acts upon us outside of it. Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs provides us with a guide to exploring the realm of work and its influences on the individual as it contains compelling insights into the psychology of who we are and how we function internally. His theory of personality states that are contained in Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is as follows:

1. Physiological Needs

This is the basic biological need for food, air water and warmth and represents those which come first in our search for satisfaction.

2. Safety Needs

After the satisfaction of safety needs, the needs for security take precedence. And after this need is met, we move onto the third need.

3. Needs of Love, Affection and Belongingness

Maslow (1954) indicates that we seek to overcome our feelings of loneliness along with alienation, and this entails the giving as well as receiving of love, belonging and affection.

4. Needs for Esteem

This need addresses the subject of work organization as it entails the need for esteem. This aspect was also referred to by Polanyi (1944) in terms of work being an aspect of human development. Maslow (1954) refers to this need as self esteem emanating from within an individual as well as that which one receives from others, along with the need for a stable relationship environment in which to thrive. This aspect is extremely important as to how one's work organization is, and interacts with this key human personality quotient.

5. Needs for Self Actualization

When all of the preceding needs have been satisfied, then Maslow (1954) indicates that the self-actualization need becomes active. Simply put, this means that a person will gravitate towards doing what they were born to do. The short, yet important examination of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs aids in the understanding of the deeper seated aspects of how the organization of work influences the experiences of work. From the preceding it should be evident that if one's work is organized logically and contains a level of diversity and creativity as evidenced by changes of pace, then it will fit within Maslow's hierarchy and thus be more satisfying. Watson (2003) refers to the sociology aspects of work in that it aids in the employer, manager as well as employee to make "...better informed judgments..."

concerning the work at hand and how to go about performing it. The foregoing is highly important in equating the question as one's experiences at work might be deemed as satisfying if they can see it progressing towards a more fulfilling method or way of getting said work accomplished. This ongoing organizing and re-organizing, if conducted in an intelligent and progressive manner, might be as rewarding as one who's work experience is at a firm where the work flow organization is scientifically as close to perfect as can be humanly ordained.

Varied levels of frustration are inhibiting factors which can and do affect our thinking as well as levels of performance. The elimination of such frustrations through insightful work organization represents a positive contribution to increasing one's satisfaction experience in this regard. Techniques such as Just-In-Time, Total Quality as well as Lean Production techniques as referred to by Fiona Wilson (2004) in and of themselves do not produce or create job satisfaction as they are constructs from which to organize and customize work to fit the organization, management, the corporate culture and the individual. Lest we forget, all business enterprises are composed of flesh and blood individuals who all fall under Maslow's (1954) humanistic guidelines. As such, in constructing or organizing the work process we need to be mindful that repetition breeds boredom and boredom breeds discontentment (Noon et al, 2002). Within the context of work organization are all manner of sub routines and associated aspects that impact upon it. Ergonomics, aesthetics, colors, materials, light, sound, work space, distance between other workers, the amount of space one has to function in, the static or non static nature of the work all are factors in its organization.

Thus, to think of the subject as one confined to office personnel belies its meaning and intent as it has applicability for factory, farm, forestry, management, field personnel and back office employees or executives. It entails how interesting, challenging, creative and diverse it is or can be made to be as a function of how it is organized or structured (Watson, 2003). Management in equating the production variables needed to be met in the attainment of work output must be mindful of exactly how said work is performed in order to create techniques that seek out and enlist the input of those actually doing said functions to aid them in structuring, modifying and upgrading work procedures and how it is organized. Those who perform the function on a daily basis can also be assisted by management taking part in said work functions to reach determinations on a first hand basis as to what potential modifications and or improvements can be made or added to make the work experience more productive as well as satisfying.

And work organization, as mentioned by Watson (2003), Wilson (2004), and Noon et al (2002) does not just consist of the work itself, it includes the social, contemporaries one works with, the working relationship manner in terms of contribution in a what is being done as well as job satisfaction.

Understanding that work is something that is performed by human beings who all represent personalities under Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is a foundational construct by which to accomplish making the experience one that translates into higher output and professionalism.

Conclusion

Hochschild (1997) helps to provide a level of understanding concerning the need to reduce work to human terms as he found that for most individuals their work takes precedence over their home life. While the foregoing is not universally true, as indicated by Jacobs *et al* (2001) the importance of providing within the organizational matrix a means to attain higher levels of job satisfaction is nevertheless a function that encompasses understanding that personal fulfillment along with our wants, needs, desires and individual goals are inner facets present in varying degrees in all of us. The corporate culture that understands the human equation in consort with the need of the company to generate profits and compete in an increasing globally influenced sphere is the organization that is well on its way to producing individuals whose contributions will exceed those of competitive companies who have not yet elevated their thinking to encompass the importance of their personnel as the key resource driving the bottom line.

Thus, the organization of work and its influence(s) with respect to the experiences of work is not solely about how many words per minute are being typed, or how many units being built, it is about the individuals performing those tasks and their personal levels of commitment to same. The higher their relative levels of contribution in the process from a work as well as suggestion point of view, the higher will be their commitment and contributions in terms of quality of work and performance. And this represents the experience that truly defines influencing the work experience through organizing it for the individual.

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