

# [Job crafting essay](https://assignbuster.com/job-crafting-essay/)

Job Crafting and Meaningful Work 2

The design of employees’ jobs can significantly shape how they experience the meaningfulness of their work (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Grant, 2007). A job design is comprised of the tasks and relationships assigned to one person in an organization (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991). However, research suggests that job designs may be starting points from which employees introduce changes to their tasks and relationships at work, and such changes are captured by the concept of “ job crafting.”

Specifically, job crafting is the process of employees redefining and reimagining their job designs in personally meaningful ways (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). These changes, in turn, can influence the meaningfulness of the work. By “ meaningful work,” we refer to work that employees believe is significant in that it serves an important purpose (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). We use the term “ meaningfulness” to capture the amount or degree of significance employees believe their work possesses (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010).

Meaningfulness is associated with numerous work-related benefits, including increased job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Grant, 2007; Rosso et al., 2010). Although we recognize that meaningful work may come with negative side effects (e. g., Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), for our purposes in this chapter, we follow the trend in the literature and treat meaningfulness as a generally positive or beneficial outcome for individuals and organizations (Rosso et al. 2010).

Job crafting is a way to think about job design that puts employees “ in the driver’s seat” in cultivating meaningfulness in their work. Job crafters can proactively reshape the boundaries of their jobs using three categories of job crafting techniques: task, relational, and cognitive crafting. Task crafting involves employees altering the set of responsibilities prescribed by a formal job description, by adding or dropping tasks, altering the nature of tasks, or changing how

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Much time, energy, and attention are allocated to various tasks (e. g., a tech-savvy customer service representative offering to help her colleagues with their IT issues). Relational crafting involves changing how, when, or with whom employees interact with in the execution of their jobs (e. g., a software engineer forming a collaborative relationship with a marketing analyst). And finally, cognitive crafting involves employees changing the way they perceive the tasks and relationships that make up their jobs (e. g., a ticket salesperson seeing the job as an essential part of providing people with entertainment, not just processing orders).

Through using any combination of these three types of job crafting techniques, employees become job crafters, altering the boundaries of their jobs in ways that change how they experience the meaningfulness of their work. Job crafting is not an isolated, one-time event. On the contrary, job crafting is a continuous process that is likely influenced by where employees are in their career trajectories (Fried, Grant, Levi, Hadani, & Slowik, 2007) and the social context in which they do their work (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010). A core feature of job crafting is that employees initiate and carry out alterations in their jobs from the bottomup, rather than managers directing changes from the top-down like many job redesign interventions.

This enables employees to leverage the unique knowledge they have of their jobs and themselves to craft their jobs in ways that create more meaningfulness. For example, a history teacher who has had a longtime passion for performing music could incorporate music into his curriculum (task crafting), collaborate with the music teacher in his school (relational crafting), and draw parallels between the act of teaching in front of a classroom and the experience of performing music (cognitive crafting). By crafting his job in these ways, this teacher is able to incorporate musical performance and the experience of being a musician.

Job Crafting and Meaningful Work 4 which are valued parts of his identity—into his life at work, thus bringing new meaningfulness into his work (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010). Job crafting is particularly critical as a path to meaningfulness in modern work contexts (Wrzesniewski, Berg, & Dutton, 2010). The idea of employees working from a fixed job description is becoming less common over time (Mohrman & Cohen, 1995). In our rapidly changing knowledge economy, organizations are placing more of a premium on employee proactivity (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Instead of just reacting to a set of job responsibilities, employees’ personal initiatives in shaping their jobs often deliver benefits to organizations by fostering innovativeness and adaptability (Frese & Fay, 2001). Freedom to take initiative opens up opportunities for employees to create meaningful experiences for themselves through job crafting.

In addition, job crafting is an especially important process for cultivating work engagement and satisfaction in a workforce that is experiencing increasing dissatisfaction with work (Conference Board, 2010) and retiring later in life (Johnson, Butrica, & Mommaerts, 2010). At the same time, many members of Generations X and Y hold the view that they can “ be anything they want to be” (Twenge, 2006, p. 72), and thus have strong expectations for the meaningfulness they would like to derive from their careers.

These demographic and employment trends contribute to pressure for employees to stay in less than ideal jobs for longer periods of time, making it more likely that employees will need to re-engineer their jobs from within as a way to find increased meaningfulness or foster engagement. From an organization’s perspective, these trends produce similar pressures to keep productive employees in their jobs. Thus, both employees and organizations stand to benefit from job crafting as a way of sparking new meaningfulness or rekindling old meaningfulness in long-held jobs.

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In this chapter, we aim to explain how job crafting can be a powerful process for cultivating meaningful work experiences. We begin by summarizing insights from theory and research in the growing literature on job crafting, then give recommendations for how job crafting can be utilized in organizations, and conclude with promising areas for future research and practice on job crafting.

Theoretical and Empirical Literature The literature on job crafting is relatively new, but has been expanding rapidly over the past few years. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) established the theoretical framework of job crafting, including the three forms described above. Their model was based on insights from previous research on how hairdressers, engineers, nurses, chefs, and hospital cleaners crafted their jobs, often without support or recognition from their organizations or from “ higher-ups.”

A key theoretical insight from their original conceptual piece was that employees construct their own experiences of the meaningfulness in their work by thinking about and performing their jobs in particular ways. Thus, the job design that is formally prescribed to an employee from the topdown is only part of how the meaningfulness of the job is constructed—the other part is initiated and driven by the employee through job crafting (see Figure 1). Insert Figure 1 about here

Several scholars have elaborated Wrzesniewski and Dutton’s (2001) original job crafting framework. In a study of salespersons, Lyons (2008) found that employees’ cognitive ability, quality of self-image, perceived level of control, and readiness to change all predicted the extent to which they engaged in job crafting, such that employees who rated higher in these measures engaged in more job crafting. Consistent with these findings, Clegg and Spencer (2007)

Job Crafting and Meaningful Work 6 theorized that employees would be more likely to engage in job crafting when they are performing well and perceived by themselves and others as competent and trustworthy. In a study of early childhood educators, Leana, Appelbaum, and Shevchuk (2009) introduced the idea of “ collaborative job crafting,” in which employees work together to collectively redesign their jobs. They found that educators who engaged in collaborative job crafting tended to perform better than those who did less collaborative crafting, especially for less experienced educators. In addition to higher performance, job crafting also has been associated with increased levels of resilience in the face of adversity at work (Ghitulescu, 2007) and increased emotional well-being (French, 2009).