

What is Job Design – Meaning and Definition

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Job design is the logical sequence to job analysis. It involves conscious efforts to organize tasks, duties and responsibilities into a unit of work so as to achieve organizational objectives. It deals with the allocation and arrangement or organizational work activities and tasks into sets where a singular set of activities constitutes a “job” and which is subsequently performed by a job incumbent.

Davis (1966) has defined job design as “the specification of the content, methods and relationships of jobs in order to satisfy technological and organizational requirements as well as the social and personal requirements of the job holder”.

The main goal of designing a job is as follows:

- i. Facilitating the interest of employees towards the job and enhancing their satisfaction
- ii. Increasing employee motivation and productivity
- iii. Enhancing employees’ skills by identifying their training needs
- iv. Covering the modern needs of employee participation
- v. Ensuring safer working environment
- vi. Making the communication process clear and effective in the organization
- vii. Improving the quality of working life of employees
- viii. Eliminating the unnecessary levels of supervision, checking, and control
- ix. Establishing high-level standards for customer service
- x. Minimizing cost by reducing wastage.

Importance of Job Design:

Job design and work organization deal with the specifications of the content, methods, and relationships of jobs in an integrated manner to satisfy technological and organizational requirements as well as the personal needs of employees.

During the 1970s, the challenge before HRM professionals dealing with job designs was to find out how organizations achieve results in the wake of loss of productive effort resulting

from industrial actions and absenteeism, increased demand for employee participation, and imposition of various employee legislations.

During the 1980s a major change occurred in the working environment in the form of introduction of new technologies and a shift in the cost of production in favour of machines as against workforce. In this period of recession, the need for retrenchment of employees also arose. All these factors changed the perspective of job design.

It was only in the 1990s that a real challenge in terms of optimum job design and work organization arose to respond to the fast-changing environmental conditions. This resulted in giving a greater importance and adopting a new approach towards job design.

Job Design Objectives:

Objective # 1. Quality:

The ability of staff to produce high-quality products and services can be affected by job design. This includes avoiding errors in the short term, but also includes designing jobs which encourage staff to improve that job itself in such a way as to make errors less likely.

Objective # 2. Speed:

Sometimes speed of response is the dominant objective to be achieved in job design. For example, the way in which the jobs of emergency service personnel are organised (the range of tasks for which they are trained, the sequence of activities in their approved procedures, the autonomy which they have to decide on appropriate action, and so on) will go a long way to determine their ability to respond promptly to emergencies and perhaps save lives.

Objective # 3. Dependability:

Dependable supply of goods and services is usually influenced, in some way, by job design. For example, in the postal services, working arrangements, multiskilling, accurate use of sorting equipment through good staff machine interface design, and the 'design' of postal staff's clothing, can all aid dependable delivery of letters and parcels.

Objective # 4. Flexibility:

Job design can affect the ability of the operation to change the nature of its activities. New product or service flexibility, mix flexibility, volume flexibility and delivery flexibility are all dependent to some extent on job design. For example, staff who have been trained in several tasks (multi-skilling) may find it easier to cope with a wide variety of models and new product or service introductions.

Objective # 5. Cost:

All the elements of job design described above will have an effect on the productivity, and therefore, the cost of the job. Productivity in this context means the ratio of output to labour input- for example, the number of customers served per hour or the number of products made per worker. In addition, job design will influence two other particularly important objectives.

Objective # 6. Health and Safety:

Whatever else a job design achieves, it must not endanger the well-being of the person who does the job, other staff of the operation, the customers who might be present in the operation, or those who use any products made by the operation.

Objective # 7. Quality of Working Life:

The design of any job should take into account its effect on job security, intrinsic interest, and variety, opportunities for development, stress level and attitude of the person performing the job.

Job design principles help in tackling and managing the following issues:

- i. Work overload;
- ii. Work under load;
- iii. Repetitiveness leading to drudgery and adverse effect on productivity;
- iv. Work and people isolation;
- v. Multiple shifts;
- vi. Managing pending filling-up of vacancies;
- vii. Excessive working hours; and