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JOB CONTROL

See EMPOWERMENT

JOB DESCRIPTION

A *job description* is a written summary of what is done on a job, how the work is accomplished, and why the work is performed. The purpose of a job description is to convey the essential features of a job to a person not familiar with the job in question. Job descriptions are the most common output of a job analysis and are used for a variety of purposes, including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, and job design.

Distinctions have been made between a job description and a position description. A *position description* summarizes what one person in an organization does, whereas a job description summarizes a number of related positions. A position description is typically used when an individual performs a relatively unique set of activities, and a job description is used when there is enough commonality across positions to justify treating multiple positions as a single job.

There is great variability in the structure and length of job descriptions. The job descriptions provided in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (DOT) are each a single paragraph in length and primarily describe the key tasks performed in the job. Other job descriptions vary from one to three pages and contain considerably more information. There are three essential parts to a job description. First, there should be some information that uniquely identifies the job. At a minimum, this would include a job title but can also include identifying details such as the department, location of the job, job code, pay range, grade level, and reporting relationships. Second, there should be a job summary that conveys the essential features of the job and what a worker does. Included in the job summary would be the purpose of the job. Enough information should be provided in the job summary to enable it to be differentiated from other jobs.

Third, there should be a listing of essential duties or work activities of the job. This listing would cover the what, how, and why of the job. Describing what a worker does involves considering the physical and mental activities that are performed on the job. Physical activities include actions that involve observable physical effort. For example, workers might assemble, inspect, or remove parts in the manufacture of an automobile engine. Mental activities include actions that involve unobservable mental effort. For example, workers might judge, evaluate, plan, or compare the performance of a key supplier of raw materials to the organization. Describing how work is accomplished involves considering the methods or procedures used to perform key job duties. These can include tools, equipment, routines, checklists, or other work aids. Describing why a worker performs these specific activities reflects the overriding purpose or reasons the duties are performed. In other words, it is important to articulate the purpose of specific duties (given the overall purpose of the job) in the job description.

Finally, some job descriptions contain additional information depending on the particular application. This might include identification of key responsibilities (useful for job evaluation purposes), a listing of accountabilities (the major results for which the work is accountable), a description of the working conditions (e.g., temperature, noise), and the nature of social relationships at work. Last, some job descriptions

identify the major knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) needed to perform the major work activities. The summarization KSAOs needed in a job have been referred to as a *job specification* and are often viewed as distinct enough to be treated separately from the job description because they serve to identify what individual differences are needed to perform the major work activities of the job.

—*Frederick P. Morgeson*

See also Job Analysis; Job Analysis Methods

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JOB DESIGN

Job design has generated substantial theoretical and empirical interest in the past decades. The purpose of this entry is to describe and evaluate the most significant approaches to job design.

DESIGNING JOBS FOR INDIVIDUALS

Industrial Engineering

The first to undertake job design for individuals was Frederick W. Taylor, who developed the industrial engineering or *scientific management* approach in 1911. Taylor's approach dictated four specifications. First, work should be studied scientifically to identify the most efficient method for accomplishing tasks and allocating them among employees. Second, employee–job fit should be optimized, so that employees should be mentally and physically capable of performing their jobs but not be overqualified. Third, employee training should be based on the scientific analysis of the work and regularly monitored to ensure optimum performance. Finally, employees should be motivated with monetary bonuses.

Advocates of the industrial engineering approach suggested that it would produce several positive outcomes for organizations, including an increased pool of job applicants capable of performing highly specialized and simplified jobs and the centralization of resources. The wage-lowering effect of this large job applicant pool would in turn reduce training costs, and resource centrality would increase the overall efficiency and productivity within the organization. As a result, by the 1950s, most manufacturing jobs were designed according to the industrial engineering approach. Additional research, however, revealed that the approach led to a number of unintended negative consequences. These consequences included dissatisfaction with routine and standardized tasks, increased tardiness, reduced motivation and productivity, and sabotage of work equipment. Thus, the gains of the industrial engineering approach were often more than offset by its negative effects. The problems associated with the industrial engineering approach led to the development of alternative approaches to job design. These new approaches focused on designing work for high productivity without the psychological costs to the employee. We discuss several of these approaches below.

Motivator-Hygiene Theory

The motivator-hygiene theory (MHT), which was developed by Frederick Herzberg and his colleagues in the 1960s, represents a significant deviation from the industrial engineering approach. Central to the theory is the distinction between motivator and hygiene factors. *Motivator factors* are intrinsic to the work itself and include responsibility, achievement, recognition, and personal growth in competence. *Hygiene factors* are associated with the job context or work setting and include relationships with peers and subordinates, quality of supervision, base wage or salary, benefits, and job security. According to MHT, motivator factors increase workers' motivation and satisfaction on the job, and hygiene factors merely prevent job dissatisfaction. High employee motivation and performance can thus be achieved by enriching jobs so that they have high levels of motivator factors. A central component of job enrichment is *vertical loading*, which adds planning and evaluation duties to jobs to increase responsibility, complexity, and personal growth. Herzberg's theory has inspired a plethora of research and several successful change projects that support the contribution of motivator

Encyclopedia of
Industrial and Organizational Psychology

1
Volume

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2007

A SAGE Reference Publication
SAGE Publications
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