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Job and Role Analysis and Design

Key concepts and terms

- Generic role
- Job
- Job analysis
- Job breakdown
- Job characteristics model
- Job description
- Job design
- Job enlargement
- Job enrichment
- Job rotation
- Role
- Role analysis
- Role profile

Learning outcomes

On completing this chapter you should be able to define these key concepts. You should also know about:

- The distinction between jobs and roles
- Job and role analysis methodology
- Producing job descriptions and role profiles
- Approaches to job design
- Role development

Introduction

The analysis and design of jobs and roles is one of the most important techniques in HRM. Job or role analysis provides the information required to produce job descriptions, role profiles and person and learning specifications. It is of fundamental importance in organization and job design, recruitment and selection, performance management, learning and development, management development, career management, job evaluation and the design of grade and pay structures. These constitute most of the key HRM activities. Job or role design is the means by which jobs can be made intrinsically motivating.

The terms 'job' and 'role' are often used interchangeably, but they are different, as defined below.

Job

A job is an organizational unit which consists of a group of defined tasks or activities to be carried out or duties to be performed.

Role

A role is the part played by individuals and the patterns of behaviour expected of them in fulfilling their work requirements. A role has been defined by Ivancevich *et al* (2008) as 'an organized set of behaviours'. Roles are about people as distinct from jobs, which are about tasks and duties. It is recognized more generally that organizations consist of people using their knowledge and skills to achieve results and working cooperatively together, rather than impersonal jobs contained in the boxes of an organization chart.

A generic role is a role in which essentially similar activities are carried out by a number of people, for example a team leader or a call centre agent. In effect, it covers an occupation rather than a single role.

Although reference is frequently made nowadays to roles, use is still made of the terms job analysis and job design, as discussed in this chapter.

Job and role analysis

Job analysis

Job analysis produces the following information about a job:

- Overall purpose: why the job exists and, in essence, what the job holder is expected to contribute.

- Organization: to whom the job holder reports and who reports to the job holder.

- Content: the nature and scope of the job in terms of the tasks and operations to be performed and duties to be carried out.

If the outcome of the job analysis is to be used for job evaluation purposes, the job will also be analysed in terms of the factors or criteria used in the job evaluation scheme.

The essence of job analysis is the application of systematic methods to the collection of information about job content. It is about data collection, and the basic steps are:

- Obtain documents such as existing organization, procedure or training manuals which give information about the job.

- Obtain from managers fundamental information concerning the job.

- Obtain from job holders similar information about their jobs.

Job analysis is best carried out through interviews but these can usefully be supplemented by questionnaires.

Role analysis

Role analysis uses the same techniques as job analysis but the focus is on identifying inputs (knowledge and skill and competency requirements) and required outcomes (key result areas or accountabilities) rather than simply listing the tasks to be carried out.

Job description

Job analysis provides the information required to produce a job description, which defines what job holders are required to do in terms of activities, duties or tasks. Job descriptions are prescriptive and inflexible, giving people the opportunity to say 'It's not in my job description', meaning that they only need to do the tasks listed there. They are more concerned with tasks than outcomes, and with the duties to be performed rather than the competencies required to perform them (technical competencies covering knowledge and skills, and behavioural competencies).

Role profile

A role profile defines outcomes, accountabilities and competencies for an individual role. It concentrates on outcomes rather than duties, and therefore provides better guidance than a job description on expectations, and does not constrain people to carrying out a prescribed set of tasks. Outcomes may be expressed as key result areas – elements of the role for which clear outputs and standards can be defined, each of which makes a significant contribution to

achieving its overall purpose. Alternatively, they may be termed accountabilities – areas of the role for which role holders are responsible in the form of being held to account for what they do and what they achieve.

A role profile does not prescribe in detail what has to be done to achieve the required outcomes. It therefore allows for greater flexibility than a job description, and is more easily updated to reflect changing demands.

Role profiles are person-oriented. A role can be described in behavioural terms – given certain expectations, this is how the person needs to behave to meet them. Because it identifies knowledge, skill and competency requirements, it also provides a better basis for recruitment and selection, performance management, and learning and development purposes.

Generic roles are defined in a generic role profile.

Job design

Job design specifies the contents, methods and relationships of jobs in order to satisfy work requirements for productivity, efficiency and quality, meet the personal needs of the job holder and thus increase levels of employee engagement. The process of job design starts with an analysis of the way in which work needs to be organized and what work therefore needs to be done – the tasks that have to be carried out if the purpose of the organization or an organizational unit is to be achieved.

The job characteristics model

A useful perspective on the factors affecting job design and motivation is provided by Hackman and Oldham's (1974) job characteristics model. They suggest that the 'critical psychological states' of 'experienced meaningfulness of work, experienced responsibility for outcomes of work and knowledge of the actual outcomes of work' strongly influence motivation, job satisfaction and performance. They identified the following characteristics of jobs that need to be taken into account in job design:

- variety;
- autonomy;
- required interaction;
- optional interaction;
- knowledge and skill required;
- responsibility.

Approaches to job design

Job design starts with an analysis of task requirements. These requirements will be a function of the purpose of the organization, its technology and its structure. The analysis has also to take into account the decision-making process – where and how decisions are made and the extent to which responsibility is devolved to individuals and work teams. These approaches are used as the basis for the methods of job design described below.

Approaches to job design

- Influence skill variety by providing opportunities for people to do several tasks and by combining tasks.

- Influence task identity by combining tasks and forming natural work units.

- Influence task significance by forming natural work units and informing people of the importance of their work.

- Influence autonomy by giving people responsibility for determining their own working systems.

- Influence feedback by establishing good relationships and opening feedback channels.

Source: Robertson and Smith (1985)

Job rotation

This is the movement of employees from one task to another to reduce monotony by increasing variety.

Job enlargement

This means combining previously fragmented tasks into one job, again to increase the variety and meaning of repetitive work.

Job enrichment

This goes beyond job enlargement to add greater autonomy and responsibility to a job, and is based on the job characteristics approach. Job enrichment aims to maximize the interest and challenge of work by providing the employee with a job that has these characteristics:

- It is a complete piece of work in the sense that the worker can identify a series of tasks or activities that end in a recognizable and definable product.

- It affords the employee as much variety, decision-making responsibility and control as possible in carrying out the work.

- It provides direct feedback through the work itself on how well the employee is doing his or her job.

Role development

Role development is the continuous process through which roles are defined or modified as work proceeds and evolves. Job design as described above takes place when a new job is created or an existing job is substantially changed, often following a reorganization. But the part people play in carrying out their roles can evolve over time as people grow into them and grow with them, and as incremental changes take place in the scope of the work and the degree to which individuals have freedom to act (their autonomy).

Roles are developed as people develop in them – responding to opportunities and changing demands, acquiring new skills and developing competencies. Role development is a continuous process which takes place in the context of day-to-day work, and is therefore a matter between managers and the members of their teams. It involves agreeing definitions of accountabilities, objectives and competency requirements as they evolve. When these change – as they probably will in all except the most routine jobs – it is desirable to achieve mutual understanding of new expectations.

Job and role analysis: key learning points

Job
A job is an organizational unit which consists of a group of defined tasks or activities to be carried out or duties to be performed.

Role
A role is the part played by individuals and the patterns of behaviour expected of them in fulfilling their work requirements.

Job analysis methodology and techniques
The essence of job analysis is the application of systematic methods to the collection of information about job content. It is essentially about data collection, and the basic steps are:

- obtain documents such as existing organization, procedure or training manuals which give information about the job;

- obtain from managers fundamental information concerning the job;

- obtain from job holders similar information about their jobs.

Job descriptions

Job descriptions should be based on the job analysis and should be as brief and factual as possible. The headings should be: job title, reporting to, reporting to job holder, main purpose of job, main activities, tasks or duties.

Role profile

A role profile defines outcomes, accountabilities and competencies for an individual role.

Role analysis methodology

Role analysis uses the same techniques as job analysis but the focus is on identifying inputs (knowledge and skill and competency requirements) and required outcomes (key result areas) rather than simply listing the tasks to be carried out.

Job design

- Job design specifies the contents, methods and relationships of jobs in order to satisfy work requirements for productivity, efficiency and quality, meet the personal needs of the job holder and thus increase levels of employee engagement.

- The process of job design is based on an analysis of the way in which work needs to be organized and what work therefore needs to be done – the tasks that have to be carried out if the purpose of the organization or an organizational unit is to be achieved.

Questions

1. What is the difference between a job and a role?

2. What is the essence of job analysis?

3. What is the process of job design?

4. What is the job characteristics model?

5. What is job enrichment and why is it important?

References

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