

**OPERATIONS EXCELLENCE – IMPROVING PROCESSES, TOOLS & HABITS**

## Job Design

### Managing Job Overload and Balancing Workload

Every area of a business has experienced that appalling sense of having far too much work to do and too little time to do it in. Executives can choose to ignore this, resulting in higher levels of turnover and costly overtime, or look they can take more effective approach to designing and staffing their departments. The immediate savings of doing so can be up to 10% of a company's annual payroll cost annually.

The payoff is to work more intelligently, by focusing on the things that are important for job success and reducing the time that employees spend on low priority tasks. Job Design is the first step in doing this.

To do an excellent job, an employee needs to fully understand what is expected of them. While this may seem obvious, in the haste of a new, fast-moving, high-pressure role, it is oftentimes something that is easy to overlook.

By considering the priorities of the department, and what constitutes success within that department, employees can focus on these activities and minimize work on other tasks as much as possible. This helps organizations get the greatest return from the work you do, and keep workload under control.

Any area can be 'deconstructed' in terms of its sub-component tasks. Departments are merely a collection of activities that go on at a given time.

### **The Area Workload Analysis or (AWA):**

The workload analysis is a core component of job design. It can include:

**Description of the Activity** – this reads like a job description. It shows all of the 'value-added' tasks that a department does, and usually categorizes tasks by role.

**The Frequency of the Activity** – this is simply whether the task is conducted daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually.

**The Anticipated Number of Times the Activity Takes Place** (Volume) – for example, a shipping area may express work volumes in terms of packages, containers, or trailers loaded.

**The Standard Time Required to Complete each Activity** – this is simply an estimation of the amount of time needed to complete one activity in itself. If loading a trailer will take the department 30 minutes without lost time, enter that figure as the ‘standard’.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Volume</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Workload</b>
Create box	1300	Daily	3.5 Mins	75.8 Hours

## How to Use the Tool:

To conduct a job design session, go through the following steps:

### 1. Review formal job documentation:

- Look at your job description. Identify the key objectives and priorities within it.
- Look at the forms for the periodic performance reviews. These show precisely the behaviors that will be rewarded and, by implication, show those that will be punished.
- Find out what training is available for the role. Ensure that you attend appropriate training so that you know as much as possible about what you need to know.
- Map out the process – the job components usually follow the rough process required to bring your product to market.

### 2. Find out who the top achievers are, and understand why they are successful:

Inside or outside the organization, there may be people in a similar role to you who are seen as highly successful. Find out how they work, and what they do to generate this success. Look at what they do, and learn from them. Understand what skills make them successful, and use their standard as the ‘benchmark’ for job design elsewhere.

### **3. Sum the workload for the entire department**

Once the job design has been completed, check the values by asking employees to 'sanity check' it. Observation can also be used to ensure that standards are accurate. Total up the workload for the area.

### **4. Make adjustments**

Once the total hours required has been calculated, try increasing the value to account for factors such as:

Downtime

Lost Productivity

Absenteeism

Vacation

The tool should be sanity checked to ensure that the total workload is somewhat consistent with reality. One would not staff a McDonalds restaurant with 500 employees regardless of location, so consider the output of your tool. The total number provided by the tool will of course change when work volumes change, so it is important to update the tool frequently.

## **Summary:**

Job design is a four-step technique for:

- Understanding the workload and staffing level needed for success;
- Ensuring that the department is focused solely on the activities that constitute success in the role.
- Making sure that resource allocation is optimized – ie: your company is not overpaying for overtime, when regular hours could have been normally substituted for.

Job Design is just one of many practical action-oriented techniques for reducing the stress of job overload, overtime and turnover. These and other techniques can help you to resolve structural problems within jobs, work more effectively with your employees and improve the way teams function.