

# Redesigning Jobs

By JOHN C. CRYSTAL and RICHARD S. DEEMS



Redesigning jobs can be cost-effective as well as personnel-effective as organizations\*

change to meet society's changes. The process of redesigning jobs, which allows an organization to use existing personnel and avoid the high cost of recruitment, hiring and duplicative training, consists of asking the right questions and finding the answers to those questions.

Each organization can adapt the process to its own unique setting. Some may want to include it as an ongoing part of their total human resource development strategy, while others may want to use the process as major reorganization takes place.

As the illustration shows, there are four tracks to this process: Track 1, in which the focus is on the worker; Track 2, in which the focus is on the organization; Track 3, in which the focus is on the future; and Track 4, which puts it all together into the redesigned job.

## Track 1—Skills, values and goals

Employee's skills, values and life/career goals are identified in Track 1 by answering three questions:

*Question 1*—What are a person's skills and talents? Skill identification systems developed by John C. Crystal (described in *Where Do I Go From Here With My Life?*) or adapted by Richard N. Bolles (described in *What Color Is Your Parachute?*) are highly effective for this track. Though other forms of skill iden-

tification exist, our experience has consistently been that the Crystal-Bolles process yields more information, creates less confusion and results in more personal self-enhancement than any other system.

*Question 2*—Which skills does a person most enjoy using? Once a person's skills have been identified, it is important to deter-

mine which of those several hundred functional, transferable skills the person most enjoys using. These most-enjoyed skills are typically the person's most highly refined skills. Since it is more productive to put employees in positions where they use their preferred skills, the answer to this question becomes important for redesigning jobs.

*Question 3*—What is important in a person's life? Values, the things a person prizes and acts on, are an integral dimension of this model. Several career development specialists across the nation share the belief that what is often called "job dissatisfaction" is not so much dissatisfaction with the tasks a person performs as it is a conflict of values with the working conditions, people or goals of the organization.

The best "fit" between organizational needs and an employee's contributions occurs when an organization's values and the purposes of the

employee's work agree with the employee's values.

## Track 2—The organization

In Track 2, the focus shifts from the employee to the organization and the factors affecting the organization:

*Question 1*—What are the forces, both internal and external, affecting the organization?

External factors are those things outside the organization, over which the organization may have little control. Examples of external factors are: rise in the nation's middle-aged population; new technologies; changing governmental regulations (or deregulations); or even the general economy.

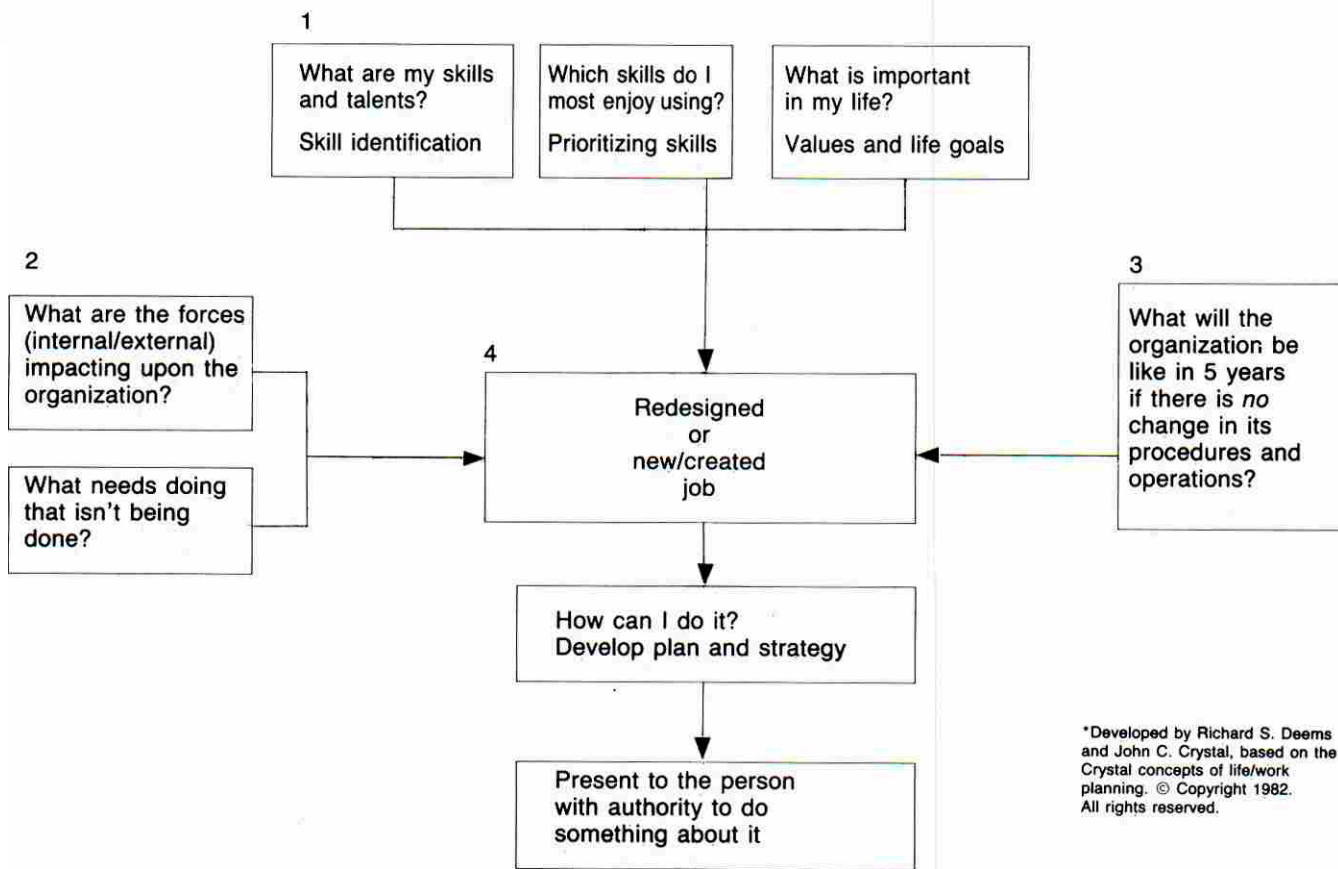
Internal factors relate to those contingencies within the organization which are directly controllable by the organization. Some examples of internal factors are: management style; hiring freeze; expansion of profits; or responding to EEO guidelines.

By identifying and analyzing the factors affecting an organization, one can begin to delineate areas within the organization needing special attention.

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\*The term "organization" is used here to mean any kind of administrative unit; it can refer to a department, section, whole company or agency.





\*Developed by Richard S. Deems and John C. Crystal, based on the Crystal concepts of life/work planning. © Copyright 1982. All rights reserved.

*Question 2*—What needs doing that isn't being done? Since a job derives from an unmet need, redesigned jobs focus on what needs to be done. Another way to approach this track is to identify the organization's problems. A re-examination of forces and priorities from the previous question should yield a number of problem areas which translate into things that should be done. Annual reports may also provide clues; brainstorming sessions may be helpful as well. Ultimately, however, this question may be answered best in relation to the answers from Track 3.

**Track 3—The organization and the future**

There is only one question in Track 3, but it is an extremely important one: What will the organization be like in five years

if there is *no* change in its procedures and operations?

There seems to be a tendency to gloss over this question, or to avoid a detailed answer. Yet, the answer to this question may significantly alter the effectiveness of redesigning jobs.

Projective charts may help employees and managers visualize probable and plausible future outcomes and more clearly indicate problem areas.

This kind of projective chart helps a person visualize a probable outcome, given *no* organizational change. Such a visualization has more power than merely a display of numbers when targeting an organization's areas of need.

The more extensive and detailed the answers for Track 3, the more information a person has to work with creatively in Track 4.

**Track 4—Putting it all together**

In order to put it all together into a redesigned job, employees and superiors must understand one basic fact: A job exists to meet an unmet need. This basic understanding is essential to the successful completion of Track 4. Because needs change, some jobs no longer exist, and other, new jobs, emerge. This is reflected in the U.S. Department of Labor's projection that about one-third of the job openings during the 1980s will be for jobs that did not exist in 1979.

At this point in the process, the flow chart should be duplicated on a large piece of paper (poster board, brown wrapping paper, etc.), and the boxes filled in with the appropriate answers. Then employees can peruse the questions and the

answers and let creativity work. The following questions help focus more sharply on this final step:

**Question 1**—The focusing question is: What needs doing that I'd really like to do—and in which I can eagerly invest myself? There are three components to this question:

- **What needs doing?** This component can be a summary of Tracks 2 and 3 and can be a listing of things that need doing. Some, in working through Tracks 2 and 3, may have begun to put separate items together which are related in one way or another.

- **What needs doing that I'd like to do?** This component is the result of mixing prioritized skills and values/goals. It necessitates specific unmet need or set of discriminating between *all* those things that need doing so *only* those things that fit a person's

value system and skill preferences remain.

- **What are those things that need doing in which I can eagerly invest myself?** A person can further refine the list of things that need doing so only those that generate a person's enthusiasm and eagerness remain. If the employee can identify several things that need doing and in which he or she would *really* like to be involved, the enthusiasm will be highly visible to others.

**Question 2**—How can I do it? The person now needs to strategize and develop, in as much detail as possible, the way he or she proposes to meet some related needs. At this point, one may be involved in creating a whole new job or blending the important aspects of one's existing job with meeting other new, unmet needs.

The focus of this proposal is on skills to be used, tasks to be per-

formed and responsibilities to be assumed. It can include specific problems to be attacked along with the strategies for resolving each of those problems. It might also include time-lines or resources needed, or even possible consequences of action/no action. The plan's format will vary depending on the needs, organization and particular style in which each person chooses to meet those needs.

**Question 3**—How should the plan be presented? Each organization will need to decide early in this process what the end result will be and how employees will report on their redesigned job assignments. It could be done in individual sessions or in unit sessions. Once an employee has gone through the work and effort of redesigning jobs, his or her input must be seriously considered in final decision making.

The plan can take many forms, but most will probably include objectives, strategies and perhaps even time-lines in an organized, direct and concise fashion. Some might include projecting probable consequences of action/no action.

### Summary

Organizations change, and with change, new needs emerge and existing needs diminish. Doing business in the 1980s the same way as in the 1970s can lead most organizations to decreased productivity and efficiency.

Organizations can increase productivity and morale by implementing a program of redesigning jobs. Jobs can be restructured by identifying employees' most refined skills, most enjoyed skills and most productive work environments and by identifying changing organizational needs. By restructuring jobs, employers and employees can successfully meet changing needs.

—TDJ

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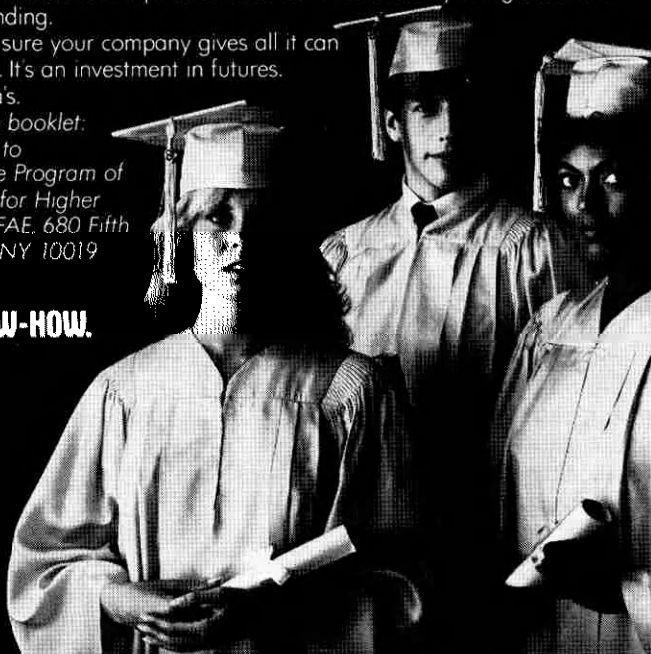
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