



**Job Crafting for Veterinary Teams**  
**Saturday July 11, 2020**  
**Notes**

**Notes:** (Disclaimer: many real-life examples will be used to illustrate the points within; all stories, people, and examples are real; some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the innocent!)

**JOB CRAFTING: WHEN YOU MOLD THE JOB YOU HAVE TO MAKE IT MORE MEANINGFUL TO YOU. You can . . .**

- Customize your job, leverage your strengths, engage your passions
- Increase your job-related sense of . . .
  - Meaning
  - Satisfaction
  - Resilience
  - Engagement
  - Thriving
  - Efficacy

**USING A STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH**

- Playing to your strengths is highly **effective**
  - ***You will get FAR more mileage out of leveraging your strengths than you EVER will by trying to improve upon your weaknesses.***
  - Don Clifton, the father of Strengths-based psychology, first described and wrote about Clifton Strengths, the basis for a very powerful Strengths-based coaching modality
  - ***Beware the dark side of your strengths!***
  - Leveraging your strengths increases your overall efficacy
    - Think of positioning on a soccer field, or on a hockey rink
    - Results are best when each team member plays in their strongest position
- Leveraging your strengths can also increase your **enjoyment** of work and overall **satisfaction**
  - Martin Seligman describes this in Positive Psychology, and growing within one's strengths is a core tenet of his PERMA Theory of Wellbeing
  - Five Building Blocks of Wellbeing that promote flourishing (PERMA):
    - Positive Emotion
    - Engagement
    - Relationships
    - Meaning
    - Achievement



## Agents of Change COACHING

- He writes about “Using your signature strengths and virtues in the service of something much larger than yourself.” (Seligman 2004: 294)

### **WE ARE UP AGAINST A LONG TRADITION OF *GENERALISM* IN THE VETERINARY WORLD**

- The days of James Herriot are gone!
- Generalist veterinary medicine has long been our ideal
  - To some extent, generalism is still needed in
    - Rural practice, mixed animal practice
    - Smaller hospitals with fewer workers
  - It is often used as a management strategy, and generalism is a job requirement
    - We cross-train reception staff and tech staff in vet hospitals
    - General Practice DVMs do a wide variety of surgeries and treat a wide variety of medical conditions; but they may prefer some tasks to others
  - **The good, the bad, the ugly!** Generalism can be . . .
    - **Good** when . . .
      - the chips are down, you’re short-staffed, and you need everyone cross-trained to be able and willing to fill in for one another
      - it gives clients access to care for their pets which they can’t access
    - **Bad** you’re fully-staffed, and you spend most of your work day performing tasks you dislike or don’t feel confident about
    - **Ugly** when management creates a stigma around leveraging the strengths in workers, because “everyone should do everything”
      - **It’s important to break down this ugly area.** There’s a difference between being unwilling to help co-workers, and simply wanting to play to your own strengths – but these can get conflated in a way that will:
        - Lead to a toxic culture
        - Lead to an environment where there is no psychological safety
        - Actually discourage growth on the part of employees

### **SPECIALIZATION AND JOB CRAFTING, IN CONTRAST TO GENERALISM**

- What Specialization and Job Crafting have in common: they both . . .
  - Allow workers to develop and utilize their strengths
  - Create better outcomes for clients and patients, as well as businesses
- How Specialization differs from Job Crafting
  - Specialization:
    - Is overtly and explicitly delineated in your job description
    - Often requires additional training / education
    - Is easier to recognize, and is expected by supervisors



## Agents of Change COACHING

- Job Crafting:
  - Is comprised of actions that leverage your strengths WITHIN your existing job description
  - Does not require additional training / education, but may include this
  - Can be more difficult to recognize, may not be supported by supervisors

### ***Essentially, Job Crafting is about resourcefulness.***

- Resources from outside yourself: career prospects, training, autonomy within your workplace (you may have to actually *ask* for these!)
- Resources from within: optimism, growth mindset, sense of self-efficacy

### **HOW JOB CRAFTING WORKS**

- Dr. Amy Wrzesniewski, Professor at the Yale School of Management, has been researching and writing about Job Crafting since 2001
- First, what is a **JOB**?
  - “A job is a collection of tasks and interpersonal relationships assigned to one person within an organization” (Berg et al., 2007)
  - Designed by one’s supervisor to meet the goals of an organization, in a job description
  - Jobs come with varying degrees of autonomy
- Job Crafting occurs when you . . .
  - Use opportunities at work (within your job description) to
    - Customize your job
      - Changes in tasks
      - Changes in interactions
    - Leverage your strengths
    - Engage your passions
    - Increase your satisfaction
- **There are 3 different ways to Job Craft:**
  - **Task Crafting** – altering your boundaries at work
    - Increasing or decreasing the number of tasks
    - Changing the types of tasks, or the scope of your tasks
  - **Relational Crafting** – altering your interactions at work
    - Increasing/taking on more mentorship of others
    - Seeking different kinds of mentorship from others
    - Connecting with clients in new ways
  - **Cognitive Crafting** – changing your perception of your tasks
    - Changing mindset about specific tasks
    - Changing mindset about your job as a whole



- **Example of shelter med doctor: Will**
  - About Will: Medical Director for a decade at a very large, well-funded shelter. Responsible for all types of care for pets within shelter. Loves to teach. Loves surgery.
  - Task crafting: to leverage his love of teaching, he
    - Created mentorship program for practicing DVMs and vet students at shelter to trade mentorship for volunteer labor
  - Relational crafting:
    - Enjoyed connecting with mentees immensely
    - Augmented his teaching role and activities
  - Cognitive crafting:
    - He saw spay/neuter as poetry – no wasted words
    - Result: he was never bored, and always had a meaningful ideal to approach
- **Job Crafting evolves over time**
  - Early stages – MOTIVATIONAL reasons to Job Craft
    - Increase your sense of control over your own job
    - Increase your sense of meaning at your job
    - Cope with adversity at work
    - Fulfill passions that you hold outside of work
  - Crafting techniques/modalities (as above)
    - Task crafting
    - Relational Crafting
    - Cognitive Crafting
  - Individual outcomes
    - Your work is more in alignment with your values
    - Better balance at work -- Achievement AND Enjoyment
    - Increased meaning and confidence
    - Increased resiliency through: growth, competence, coping
  - Team and Business outcomes
    - Increased quality of medicine
    - Less turnover
    - Better business outcomes
    - Increased client satisfaction and improved client experience
    - Better culture, more efficacious teams
- **Supporting and Limiting Factors**
  - Job Crafting works better if you have
    - More autonomy at work



- Support for Job Crafting from your supervisors
- Support for Job Crafting from your co-workers
  - Culture of mutual support where you are not stigmatized for moving away from generalism
- But even in adverse conditions, Job Crafting can still be done ANYWHERE, in ANY size practice, regardless of the degree of autonomy you have.

### CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES

- All people we will look at here work for a single practice, came from a single team
  - Consolidator practice; large team; proactive clients; urban environment; 7 doctors, about 25 staff
  - VERY BUSY! VERY HIGH QUALITY
  - Very effective team with progressive management structure and a lot of support
    - Excellent leadership
    - Autonomy and delegation were culturally encouraged
- **Client Service Coordinator/Representative Examples**
  - **Laura –**
    - ABOUT: Long-term career goal of being a funeral director. Passionate about providing empathy to clients around end-of life care for their pets. 10+ years of customer service experience. Talented at connecting with people from all walks of life
    - HOW SHE JOB CRAFTED: Took on responsibility for designing the sympathy process for the hospital.
  - **Genevieve—**
    - ABOUT: Very extroverted; great communicator; LOVES researching and learning. Has personally suffered from kidney stones and multiple GI issues; had to advocate for herself to receive adequate medical care. Passionate about how changing her nutrition had helped her heal her body with her own medical issues.
    - HOW SHE JOB CRAFTED: Became passionate about nutritional interventions for pets with medical conditions. Created ordering programs for Rx diets for clients. Performed client consultations on Rx diets based on doctors' recommendations.
- **Veterinary Technician Examples**
  - **Renee –**
    - ABOUT: Introverted, hard-working. 12+ years of experience as a vet tech. Brilliant at anesthesia and brilliant as a surgery technician. Passionate about pain control. Academically passionate about mechanisms of drugs and physiologic changes during anesthesia. Driven to understand the WHY behind medical



- decisions of doctors. Uses her knowledge to be a strong advocate for pets at all times. Detail-oriented, hard worker, meticulous record-keeper.
- HOW SHE JOB CRAFTED: Transitioned to working mostly in surgery; training other surgery technicians; acting as technician lead on managing controlled drug inventory.
  - **Madison –**
    - ABOUT: Extroverted, ALWAYS enthusiastic. Very detail-oriented and passionate about organization. Talented at fixing things, mechanically. Good at thinking about processes and designing ways to make things work better in general.
    - HOW SHE JOB CRAFTED: Became responsible for ordering processes within the hospital. Often chooses to be the maintenance “hero” around the house.
  - **Veterinarian Examples:**
    - **Marisol –**
      - ABOUT: very energetic personality; thrives in busy hospital. Went to veterinary school in the UK and worked in urgent care for several years after. Loves surgery. Loves emergency medicine. Loves a fast work pace. Less comfortable with big displays of emotions; empathetic toward clients, but short on time.
      - HOW SHE JOB CRAFTED: Attends CE to gain proficiency with new surgical procedures and ER/Critical Care; offers new procedures for clients. Gladly takes on ER cases when the hospital is busy and other doctors are stressed.
    - **H (this is me) –**
      - ABOUT: outgoing and extroverted but always focused on creating meaningful connections with others. Less comfortable with surgery; uncomfortable with emergency medicine. Enjoys geriatric medicine, hospice care, and helping coordinate complicated care for clients. Has received positive reviews from clients due to the emotional support she provides.
      - HOW SHE JOB CRAFTED: Takes on euthanasias, behavior cases, and quality-of-life consults. Offers to do client communications for colleagues that love ER while those colleagues are handling the medical side of any emergency. Helps others resolve conflict with clients when this arises.
  - **Job Crafting Effects on Team Efficacy, Patient Care, and Client Experience**
    - Job Crafting can have the positive effects of:
      - Providing excellent experiences for clients
      - Increasing the quality of patient care
      - Making the team more effective
      - Fostering a culture of mutual support and helpfulness, because everyone knows who is best at different tasks



- **The culture effects are important to dig into here!**
  - Growth opportunities and CE tailored to individual interests and strengths are encouraged for ALL workers at all positions within the practice
  - Each person is encouraged and EXPECTED to leverage his/her strengths
  - Management and supervisors recognize that allowing job-crafting . . .
    - Decreases turnover
    - Improves patient care, client experience, and business outcomes
    - Promotes mastery by encouraging development of all

#### **WHAT MANAGERS AND LEADERS CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT JOB CRAFTING**

- Managers/leaders are in a unique position where they have more autonomy than other workers!
  - Job Design: is the creation of job descriptions, driven by leaders/management, is a process that occurs from the top down.
  - Job Crafting: is the process of customizing a job within an existing job description, driven by the individual employee, and is a process that occurs from the grass-roots up.
- Leaders can support and encourage Job Crafting by:
  - Designing job descriptions with autonomy built in
  - Modeling Job Crafting – especially Relational Crafting – by working alongside their employees to learn about the challenges they face, develop rapport, and earn trust.
  - Sticking up for their employees by either correcting, setting boundaries with, or re-negotiating relationships with:
    - Difficult employees
    - Difficult clients
  - Creating a process for employee performance reviews that:
    - Allows employees to identify and pursue their own directions of growth
    - Builds employees up by recognizing them for their strengths, and encourages growth in those areas of strength
    - Allows employees to volunteer for additional responsibilities in their areas of strength
    - Rewards employees for leveraging their strengths
  - Maintaining open communication about
    - When Job Crafting is FURTHERING organization goals
    - When Job Crafting is detracting from, or running counter to, organizational goals
  - Fostering a culture of trust where employees feel empowered to grow and take on risks, because there is psychological safety for the team and space for innovation.



## WHEN JOB CRAFTING GOES WRONG

- Everything has a good, bad, and ugly side. We've already discussed the good that can come of Job Crafting. What about the . . .
  - **BAD**
    - Organizations may inadvertently give employees unequal access to Job Crafting opportunities
    - Individuals may use Job Crafting to avoid assigned tasks/relationships that are actually important within their job descriptions
    - Some individuals may Job Craft in a way that goes against organizational goals
  - How to fix these? Leadership can . . .
    - Support Job Crafting and allow autonomy in general
    - Build Job Crafting into the performance review process to create a check-point of accountability for the employee, and an assurance for leadership that Job Crafting stays aligned with organizational goals
    - Keep lines of communication open and levels of trust high
  - **UGLY – Job Crafting employees can sometimes experience:**
    - Overwork/Burnout –
      - Taking on too much additional responsibility
      - Giving up too much personal time to pursue passions
      - Opening themselves to additional stress
    - Exploitation by their Employers
    - Regret – Especially pursuing a passion for a career/occupation outside their role
  - How to fix these? As an employee . . .
    - Be clear about your boundaries; advocate for yourself while still fulfilling your job responsibilities
    - Be willing to take some responsibilities off your plate and ask for help from co-workers and from your leadership
    - Prioritize your life outside of work to avoid workaholism
    - Stay in open communication with you leadership
    - In some cases, circumstances may eventually lead you to seek another position, or make a career change to a field more aligned with your passions
      - My example: I worked on a wonderful team with excellent support, and still sought career change. This is ok!

## STATEGIES FOR JOB CRAFTING ON SMALL TEAMS, OR IN WORKPLACES WITH LACK OF SUPPORT

- Remember that Job Crafting is something that can be done EVEN without support from your leadership, and EVEN on a smaller team.



## Agents of Change COACHING

- Cognitive Crafting – is always an option, even when your position lacks autonomy
- Relational Crafting – is usually an option, even when your position lacks autonomy
- Ask for a time-bound trial with a measurable result to determine the success of your innovation. Leaders might be willing to try something for a month, and then re-evaluate the success of the experiment, before making a permanent change.
- Seek out and gain permission for CE opportunities in the areas you want to grow; then offer expanded care as a return-on-investment for your supervisor, who encouraged your growth
- Job Crafting as a team –
  - Smaller teams might work democratically to reduce or expand their scope of service in order to
    - Gain more clientele in their areas of strength
    - Provide better service and more expertise in their areas of strength
    - Examples:
      - Reduce number of surgeries offered in order to offer more walk-in urgent care appointments if these are more needed by the clients
      - Expand to offer acupuncture / physical therapy if a new doctor is hired who is trained in these modalities
  - Individuals can identify a co-worker with strengths that are opposite/complementary to theirs, then trade tasks

**IN CONCLUSION:** Job Crafting has powerful implications for improving the efficacy of teams, and the satisfaction of individuals, in the challenging profession of veterinary care!

### **Resources/Reference:**

- What is Job Crafting, and Why Does it Matter?; Berg et al., 2007; Theory-to-Practice Briefing; Center for Positive Organizational Scholarship at the University of Michigan, Ross School of Business.
- What is Job Crafting? (Including 5 Examples and Exercises); Moore, Catherine, Psychologist and MBA, June 2020; [positivepsychology.com/job-crafting](http://positivepsychology.com/job-crafting).
- Strengthsfinder 2.0 from Gallop and Tom Rath – Discover your Clifton Strengths; Don Clifton, father of Strengths Psychology and Inventor of Clifton Strengths.
- Beyond Money: Toward and Economy of Wellbeing; Diener and Seligman, 2004; Psychological Science in the Public Interest.