



# Job crafting and extra-role behavior: The role of work engagement and flourishing

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates whether crafting of job demands and resources relates positively to extra-role behavior (i.e. contextual performance and creativity) through work engagement and flourishing. We collected data from 294 employees and their supervisors regarding employees' contextual performance and creativity. Results show that seeking resources had a positive indirect relationship with contextual performance through work engagement, and with creativity through work engagement and flourishing. Reducing demands had negative indirect relationships with both contextual performance and creativity through work engagement. We conclude that particularly seeking resources has important implications for extra-role behavior and discuss the practical implications of these findings.

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## 1. Introduction

In the present knowledge economy, the external environment is rapidly evolving and work roles are less clearly defined than in the past. Therefore, organizations increasingly rely on their employees to fill the gap between explicit job requirements and the emergent behaviors necessary for organizations to remain competitive. Extra-role behaviors such as employee creativity (i.e. novelty of ideas and solutions) and contextual performance (i.e. individual behaviors that support the social environment in which task behaviors are performed) may enhance an organization's responsiveness and adaptability (Amabile, 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; LePine, Hanson, Borman, & Motowidlo, 2001). Such behaviors are suggested to be an outcome of job design interventions (Farr, 1990). However, top-down job design interventions are generally found to be less effective than researchers and practitioners hope (Kompier, Cooper, & Geurts, 2000; Nielsen, Taris, & Cox, 2010), perhaps because they follow the philosophy of 'one size fits all' rather than the philosophy of 'which size fits you?'

In the present paper, we argue that facilitating bottom-up job redesign in the form of employee job crafting may create conditions that stimulate employees to voluntarily 'do more than is required'. The reason for this is that proactive behavior enhances confidence to behave in novel ways (Hornung & Rousseau, 2007). Moreover, when employees craft their job and work environment, this may result in an increased person-environment fit (Tims & Bakker, 2010). Proactive employees mobilize the resources they need to feel well, be motivated, and excel in their jobs (cf. Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012).

Specifically, we propose that employees' efforts to maximize resources by crafting their work characteristics (Demerouti, 2014) will indirectly contribute to extra-role behavior. Using conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2002), we argue that employees who create abundant resources will be engaged in their work and flourish in their life. Work engagement represents a positive

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fulfilling state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Flourishing represents a more general conceptualization of psychological well-being, characterized by individuals who perceive that their life is going well if they feel good and function effectively (Diener, Helliwell, Lucas, & Schimmack, 2009). By including both work engagement and flourishing as predictors of extra-role behaviors, we will be able to uncover whether individuals show such extra-role behaviors because they are highly motivated or because they feel good.

We focus on extra-role behavior in the form of creativity and contextual performance because both behaviors (1) are not included in formal job requirements, (2) are suggested to be outcomes of abundant resources (triggered by crafting), and (3) can be observed by supervisors and thus be measured without impression management concerns. In this way, the present study contributes to the literature by examining: (a) whether resources generated by individuals' proactive, job crafting behaviors are related to observable positive behaviors that are not explicitly required by their jobs; or (b) whether individuals do more than expected because they are highly motivated (i.e. engaged in their work) or because they feel good (i.e. flourishing). Whereas the relationship between job crafting and work engagement (e.g. Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012) as well as between work engagement and extra-role behavior (e.g. Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013) has been shown in previous studies, the indirect relationship of job crafting with supervisor-rated extra-role behavior via work engagement has yet not been established. Regarding flourishing, we still lack knowledge on its relationship with proactive and supervisor-rated extra-role behavior. Uncovering such beneficial effects of job crafting can explain why employee-initiated adjustments of work may be beneficial for employees and organizations, which has both theoretical and practical implications.

## 2. Theoretical background

Creativity and contextual performance represent two forms of voluntary, extra-role behaviors in the sense that they involve engaging in task-related behaviors at a level that is beyond minimally required or generally expected levels. According to Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) both concepts share the idea that the employee is going "above and beyond" the call of duty. Creativity refers to the production of new and useful ideas or problem solutions (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005). It generally refers to both the process and the product of idea generation or problem solving. Creativity can range from suggestions for incremental adaptations in work procedures to radical breakthroughs in the development of new products (Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004). Contextual performance is defined as work behaviors and activities that are not necessarily related to work tasks but that contribute to the social and psychological aspects of the organization (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Contextual performance contributes to organizational effectiveness, and "includes volunteering to carry out task activities that are not formally part of the job and helping and cooperating with others in the organization to get tasks accomplished" (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997, p. 100). Contextual performance can be directed towards the organization at large and towards individuals (Dalal, 2005; Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). Employees are generally suggested to show extra-role behaviors when they are highly motivated (Podsakoff et al., 2000); therefore, resources come at play.

We argue that the extent to which employees engage in these extra-role behaviors will be related to a process in which they create and invest resources of their environment. According to Hobfoll (2002), individuals are constantly striving to maximize and protect resources – objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and energies that are either valued in their own right, or act as a means to obtain valued objectives. Job resources can be provided to the employee, for instance, through top-down approaches (e.g., support and feedback from the supervisor). However, job resources can also be created or mobilized by the individual employee, for example, through a bottom-up approach such as job crafting (e.g., by asking for support and feedback from the supervisor). This is also in line with the suggestions of Dawis and Lofquist (1984) that individuals use strategies to increase correspondence between their environment (so-called reinforcers like rewards, colleagues, management) and their needs in order to increase fit. Having resources in the areas of one's goals motivates employees and makes them feel happy (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Diener, 2000; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). When relevant job resources are available, employees' level of motivation and well-being may be fostered, and these may enhance the likelihood of taking advantage of the current job resources and being able to create new ones. Indeed, employees are suggested to invest resources to build further resources; Hobfoll (2002) calls this 'gain spirals' or 'resource caravans'. Following this logic, we suggest that engaged and flourishing employees will have abundant resources to invest in their job and thus show behaviors that are not formally required by their job. Thus, employees with access to resources will exhibit enthusiasm in their job and behave in ways that benefit the organization and/or other employees (Dalal, 2005). We will now explain why job crafting is related to a resources-generation process.

### 2.1. Job crafting, work engagement, and flourishing

Job crafting represents actions employees take to alter the physical task boundaries of a job (i.e., type or number of activities), the cognitive task boundaries of a job (i.e., how one sees the job), and the relational boundaries of a job (i.e., whom one interacts with at work) (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), with the goal of becoming more engaged, satisfied, resilient, and thriving at work (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2008). Job crafting involves both active and reactive behaviors through which employees increase fit with their environment by changing it (cf. Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Eggerth, 2008; Tims & Bakker, 2010). Although Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001, p. 181) define job crafting as "everyday" behavior, Lyons (2008) found that on average only 1.5 crafting episodes occur *per year* using their conceptualization which is far from daily behavior. This is perhaps because individuals do not alter the perceptions regarding the significance of their work on a daily basis (cf. cognitive crafting).

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