# TOH@UTC Job Crafting Guide

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Job crafting refers to the process through which employees work with their supervisors to actively modify aspects, elements, or features of their jobs to better align with personal strengths and interests, while avoiding any fundamental changes to the core responsibilities of their job. Job crafting plays a crucial role in UTC's Total Organizational Health (TOH@UTC) initiative because it directly contributes to the well-being and effectiveness of individual employees and the overall organization by impacting employee autonomy, ownership, sense of purpose and meaning, etc. At the heart of this transformative process is the reality that even within the most routine work roles and seemingly restrictive work environments, there is an opportunity for organizations and employees to collaborate in creating an optimal and best-fitting work experience.

Incorporating job crafting into TOH efforts in a specific work unit demonstrates a commitment to creating a workplace where employees are not just passive participants, but active contributors to their own well-being and the organization's health. Job crafting can be a valuable tool for supervisors who are seeking ways to help experienced employees stay engaged and increase their sense of ownership over the work being done. Job crafting can also be a useful method to help employees gain more control over their personal career development.

## What You Need for Job Crafting to Work:

- **Employee self-awareness:** To most effectively engage in job crafting, employees should have a clear understanding of their job-related knowledge, skills, ability, and competency strengths as well as their personal job- and career-related aspirations.
- **A shared belief that change is possible:** It is crucial for employees and their supervisors to believe that they can make positive changes to their jobs and that their leaders will support them in doing so.
- **Trust and safety:** Employees must trust their immediate supervisors and higher-level leaders to feel safe when discussing ideas and possibilities for crafting work assignments and arrangements to improve fit or alignment.
- **Opportunities to be flexible:** Supervisors and other leaders can facilitate job crafting discussions and actions by providing a flexible work environment with opportunities for experimentation that allows employees to test new approaches to and ways of working.
- **Simplicity and sustainability:** Job crafting efforts that succeed often involve small, manageable changes that are simple to implement and do not overwhelm employees or organizational systems and processes with increased demands or complex ripple effects. Small adjustments over time can lead to very large improvements in employees' experiences and their functioning within specific jobs or work situations.

## Examples of Effective Job Crafting:

Because job crafting is an inherently personal process that requires employee participation and supervisor support, there is not one single way to "job craft" – here are a few examples, however of how job crafting can be effective in a variety of different jobs or work roles:

- **In housekeeping/janitorial service work:** Candice, a housekeeper at a university hospital, began job crafting to find greater meaning in her work. She recognized that her cleaning responsibilities could have a more significant impact on patients and their families, so she reframed her role as a form of healing. This cognitive shift led her to focus on tasks that facilitated patient recovery, such as extra care during the cold season and ensuring necessary supplies. By building relationships with patients and their families and using her emotional intelligence, Candice tailored her job to provide care and support, ultimately deriving a deeper sense of purpose from her work (Dutton & Wrzensniewski, 2020).
- **In middle management:** Fatina was a middle manager in the marketing department of a large company who felt stuck in her position despite her good performance. To resolve those feelings, she job crafted. She assessed how much of her time she was spending on her tasks and rebalanced them to better fit her interests. For example, she leveraged her interest in social media and her desire to focus more on marketing strategizing to increase the use of social media in the marketing department. This resulted in her seeing herself as an innovator rather than stuck in the daily slog of marketing operations (Wzreniewski et al., 2010).
- **In food service work:** At the most basic level, a cook's job responsibilities are to prepare and cook food to order while minimizing food waste and maintaining a clean kitchen. Wzreniewski and Dutton (2001) shared an example of cooks' job crafting from an ethnographic study published in 1996. Cooks break dishes down into tasks allowing them to work together to be more efficient. This changes the number of tasks a cook completes from "one dish" to contributing a component of many dishes. Many cooks view their tasks, not just as completing a customer's order, but as an artistic opportunity to make the dish look "nice" or "good". In a way, this reframes their work from food preparer to culinary artist. Another way cooks may reframe their work is to consider it as an experience or providing nutritious meals to their community rather than "feeding the masses" (Wrzeniewski & Dutton, 2001).

## Job Crafting Opportunities within UTC:

Job crafting is an option in just about every job. Not all employees need to engage in job crafting, but many employees may benefit from some degree of job crafting as a way of improving personal motivation and sense of ownership over their work. Job crafting is modifying aspects, elements, or features of a job to better align with personal strengths and interests without changing core responsibilities. In other words, what can you and your direct report do to make their core responsibilities more meaningful, purposeful, or engaging. Here are a few examples of what this might look like for different types of UTC employees:

- **Grounds crew**
  - Take ownership of the design and maintenance of a specific garden area as an expression of personal landscaping interests and abilities.
  - Pursue opportunities to develop new skills, such as learning how to conduct regular or specialized maintenance of equipment
  - Propose and develop educational resources related to the campus grounds, such as signage that indicates native versus non-native plants on campus.

- **Janitorial staff**
  - Build relationships with colleagues and supervisors creating a sense of comradery by actively participating in team meetings and engaging in friendly and casual conversation.
  - Smile and participate in pleasant conversation with building occupants to help create a friendly work environment for yourself and your colleagues.
  - Offer praise and gratitude when you see your colleague working hard.
  - Leverage your interpersonal skills and work experience to act as a mentor for a new team member. This guidance and support could result in healthier working relationships.
- **Faculty member**
  - Encourage discussion and debate by infusing lectures with real-world applications, examples, and hypotheticals stimulating both you and your students.
  - Foster cross-departmental relationships and support by collaborating with other faculty members on interdisciplinary projects.
  - Reframe student demands as an opportunity to not just be an educator but a mentor to your students offering additional support and guidance when needed.
- **Library staff**
  - Utilize personal expertise to develop new workshops or seminars.
  - Take ownership of a particular library collection by reorganizing it to solve a problem you have observed, such as accessibility issues.
  - Actively promote resources and research assistance services to encourage students to view librarians as knowledge curators.
- **Food services staff**
  - Create a welcoming environment by learning students' names and take pride in the fact that the work you and your colleagues do is essential to overall campus thriving.
  - Develop a new skill by offering to plan and execute a special event or catering order.
  - Offer new menu ideas or food choices to management
- **Campus security/safety staff**
  - Participating in additional security training courses to enhance skills.
  - Build relationships and demonstrate your knowledge by offering to lead safety drills or training sessions for other staff members.
  - In addition to maintaining campus safety, choose to be approachable and helpful as campus ambassadors rather than operating in the background.

If you are interested in giving job crafting a try, these resources and the following supervisor's guide should help. If you want more help implementing job crafting in your work unit, please contact the TOH@UTC team at toh@utc.edu.

# A Supervisor's Guide to Job Crafting

## Step 1: Prepare for Job Crafting

### 1.1 Identify Potential Candidates
- Look for employees who exhibit self-awareness, demonstrate adaptability, show a willingness to take initiative, and are proactive in solving problems.
- Consider those you see with growth potential and wish to retain.

### 1.2 Cultivate a Job Crafting Culture
- Encourage open communication and a supportive environment. As a supervisor you need to make employees feel comfortable to suggest changes to their roles. Promote psychological safety by welcoming differing opinions and ideas, and letting your staff know that you are open to their input.
  - Consider starting this process by having an open and honest conversation with team members after something goes right in your work area and you want to explore how to increase the chances of this happening again (or when something goes wrong and you want to troubleshoot as a group how to avoid that happening again).
- Foster discussions about job crafting by letting your direct reports know that you trust them to own their role and do what is best in that role for the team.

## Step 2: Introduction and Employee Introspection about Job Crafting

### 2.1 Introduction and Context Setting
- Begin by explaining the purpose of a meeting to discuss job crafting – here at UTC, this could be framed as an opportunity to improve TOH within your work unit.
- Emphasize that job crafting empowers employees to enhance their roles which requires their participation to be successful.
- Highlight UTC's commitment to creating a workplace where employees actively contribute to their own and each other's health, safety, and well-being (this is at the heart of the TOH@UTC initiative).
- Share examples of impactful job crafting initiatives, some of which can be found earlier in this document and in the [TOH@UTC blog post about job crafting](#).

### 2.2 Empower Employee Introspection
- Explore the employee's strengths, interests, and aspirations.
- Use open-ended questions to guide the discussion.
  - "What aspects of your current role do you find most fulfilling?"
  - "What are your strengths? How do you believe you can leverage your strengths to contribute in a new way?"
  - "What aspects of the role do you want to learn more about or be more involved in?"
- Leverage assessments to help employees understand their strengths.
- Analyze their current tasks to identify job crafting opportunities.
  - What tasks do they enjoy most?
  - What tasks do they least enjoy and how can they be adapted to align more with the employee's interests?
  - What new tasks or challenges would they like to take on?
  - Focusing on an employee's strengths is an excellent strategy for fostering their growth.

**Step 3: Challenge and Risk Analysis**
- Working with your employee(s), collaboratively assess potential obstacles and challenges that may arise during the job crafting process.
- Brainstorm solutions and workarounds together.
- Identify any additional demands or resources necessary for successful crafting of one or more jobs in your area or department.

**Step 4: Goal Setting**
- Encourage manageable changes aligned with strengths and organizational goals.
- Focus on long-term effectiveness and sustainability.
- Help employees set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) job crafting goals to track their progress and motivate them.

**Step 5: Identify and Provide Support and Resources**
- Offer your support and commitment to helping employees implement their job crafting plan.
  - This can come through your providing mentorship, teaching a new skill, or making a professional connection with someone who may be able to provide special guidance.
- Provide opportunities for experimentation and new approaches.
- Schedule regular check-ins to discuss progress and challenges.
- Continue to promote a culture of adaptability where job crafting is encouraged.
- Promote a culture of job crafting by sharing successful efforts to job craft with others in your unit and with others in the university.

**Step 6: Follow-up and Evaluation**
- Continuously monitor the process by scheduling follow-up meetings to review progress and make necessary adjustments.
- Help employees reflect on how the job crafting process has impacted their daily experience at work and connect their job crafting efforts to outcomes the employee cares about (such as having a positive impact on others) to deepen their sense of purpose and meaning in their work
- Celebrate achievements, both big and small.

# Resources Supporting this Job Crafting Guide and Recommended Reading

*This guide was developed from information found in the following resources. For more information on the job crafting process, please refer to any of these readings or contact the TOH@UTC team at* toh@utc.edu.

**Bakker, A.B. & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art.** *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 22***(3), 309-328.** https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115

> The central aim of this article is to give an overview of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which incorporates different working conditions to focus on both negative and positive indicators of employee well-being. In this article, theory is used to explain the connection between job crafting and employee health and performance.

**Berg, J. M., Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2010). Perceiving and responding to challenges in job crafting at different ranks: When proactivity requires adaptivity.** *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *31***(2/3), 158–186.** http://www.jstor.org/stable/41683901

> This article explores the issues that may arise while job crafting within different contexts and provides recommendations for addressing them. As the circumstances of an employee's position often varies, this article illustrates the importance of adaptivity and flexibility while executing job crafting.

**Carucci, R. & Shappell, J. (2020, March 18). How to job craft as a team.** *Harvard Business Review*. **https://hbr.org/2020/03/how-to-job-craft-as-a-team**.

> For some managers, job crafting may be easier and more productive to implement on a team level rather than an individual level. This article provides a detailed 3-step process on how to foster job crafting for groups of employees at a time.

**Dutton, J.E. & Wrzesniewski, A. (2020, March 12). What job crafting looks like.** *Harvard Business Review*. **https://hbr.org/2020/03/what-job-crafting-looks-like**

> These authors highlight three different forms of job crafting: task crafting (changing the type, scope, sequence, and number of tasks that make up a job), relational crafting (altering who an employee interacts with in their work), and cognitive crafting (modifying the way an employee interprets their tasks). Viewing job crafting from these perspectives can provide details on how to approach job crafting in unique situations.

**Frankiewicz, B. (2020, March 23). How to let your employees job craft.** *Harvard Business Review*. **https://hbr.org/2020/03/how-to-let-your-employees-job-craft.**

> The main premise of this article is the value that job crafting can have for the relationship between an employer and their employees. It highlights the role that job crafting can have in improving productivity, engagement, and well-being, which helps to cultivate trust between a manager and their staff.

Lazazzara, T. M., & de Gennaro, D. (2020). **The process of reinventing a job: A meta–synthesis of qualitative job crafting research.** *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 116*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.01.001

> This comprehensive analysis of various job crafting studies outlines the different ways that job crafting can have a positive impact on employee and organizational effectiveness. It also describes the different elements that constitute successful job crafting.

Letona-Ibanez, Martinez-Rodriguez, S., Ortiz-Marques, N., Carrasco, M., & Amillano, A. (2021). **Job crafting and work engagement: The mediating role of work meaning.** *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(10), 5383. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18105383

> These researchers emphasize that job crafting is most effective for increasing engagement when employees understand that making these changes can aid them in finding more meaning in their work. Thus, this article explains why communicating this particular benefit of job crafting can be especially motivating for employees.

Moore, C. (2019, May 17). *What is job crafting?* **Positive Psychology.com.** https://positivepsychology.com/job-crafting/#examples.

> This article includes some examples and instructional videos on how to implement job crafting in different workplaces. The author also touches on how a workshop on job crafting might be conducted.

Rudolph, C.W., Katz, I.M., Lavigne, K.N.; Zacher, H. (2017). **Job crafting: A meta-analysis of relationships with individual differences, job characteristics, and work outcomes.** *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 102, 112-138. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2017.05.008

> As a review of many different research studies, this article provides evidence for the positive effect that job crafting can have on employee commitment, job satisfaction, and engagement.

Wrzesniewski, A., Berg, J. M., & Dutton, J. E. (2010). **Managing yourself: Turn the job you have into the job you want.** *Harvard Business Review, 88*(6), 114-117. https://hbr.org/2010/06/managing-yourself-turn-the-job-you-have-into-the-job-you-want.

> These authors provide various examples of successful job crafting and describe the different perspectives and methods an employee can utilize to craft their own role. They also discuss what workplace components are needed for job crafting to be effective.

Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). **Crafting a Job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work.** *The Academy of Management Review*, *26*(2), 179. https://doi.org/10.2307/259118

> By connecting job crafting to its theoretical roots, this article further explains the different forms that job crafting can take and offers a detailed viewpoint on its value in the workplace.