

# JOB REDESIGN

# SQUARE PEGS, ROUND HOLES

Instead of always searching for ‘perfect’ candidates, perhaps it’s time for HR to examine the job roles in their organisation. *HRD* chats about job redesign with **Leonard Ling**, founder and principal consultant, Solutionsatwork

## **HRD: Why the emphasis on job redesign?**

**Leonard Ling:** Singapore has a small workforce that will shrink even further as 900,000 locals, or about a quarter of the local workforce, is expected to retire in the next 15 years. The ultra-low fertility rate of below 1.4, way under the replacement rate of 2.1 to maintain population levels, means we will not be able to fully replace these workers in the long term. Employers will need to adapt to a leaner and more mature workforce. They will need to find ways to manage with fewer workers and jobs need to be redesigned to help more workers remain productive over a longer period of time.

## **HRD: How can employers embark on job redesign?**

**LL:** Job redesign can be fairly simple yet cost-effective. Three levels of redesign can be explored.

### » a. Task level redesign

Being the simplest form of redesign, employers can make specific tasks simpler, faster, and/or safer for workers. For example, employers can introduce barcode scanning to make stocktaking easier, speedier and more accurate.

### » b. Job level redesign

Employers can redesign the work that a

worker performs to make the job more productive and/or more attractive to a particular profile of workers. For example, a safety inspector’s job can be enhanced to include an element of safety education to enhance the job value.

### » c. Process level redesign

This is the most complex form of redesign and takes into account the end-to-end

to traditional companies in the hospitality sector.

Task level and job level redesign can often be done in-house. Employers can start by fostering a culture of continuous improvement and involving employees to seek inputs on how various tasks or work processes can be improved. Resources should be made available for experimentation or pilot testing and

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process as well as the interactions between related processes. In most instances, process level redesign results in transformational change and can enable the employer to create sustainable competitive advantage over its competitors. For example, the way that accommodation is supplied and how consumers select, order, use, and pay for their accommodation has been fundamentally redesigned to leverage on technology, and companies such as Airbnb have become strong competitors

successful projects should be rewarded to spur even more improvement initiatives.

## **HRD: As the workforce shrinks, will the average Singapore worker spend an increasing amount of time at the office?**

**LL:** On the contrary. Properly executed job and process redesign often leads to more balanced work-life arrangements. Jobs and processes are tightly intertwined, and meaningful redesign requires both to



## REDESIGN RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers can tap into a wide spectrum of grants and initiatives to embark on their job redesign projects. Among the tools on offer:



The **Job Redesign Toolkit**, developed by the Tripartite Committee on Employability of Older Workers, outlines an approach to future-proof the workforce, identify critical jobs and skills, and to match the right people to the right jobs.



Employers can attend the two-day **SNEF Job Redesign Clinic** to adopt a structured approach to identify areas for redesign and take practical steps to start redesign projects at the workplace.



**SIM University** also conducts a one-day job redesign course to equip management consultants with practical knowledge and skills to redesign tasks to suit older workers and ensure a safe and productive workplace.



Under **WorkPro**, employers can receive up to \$300,000 under the Job Redesign Grant to implement job redesign projects and make jobs more suitable for their older workers.

be aligned to common objectives, such as efficiency, productivity, and sustainability. A more productive job means a worker can add the same value in a shorter time to improve work-life harmony.

Job redesign can also improve work-life harmony more directly by redesigning jobs specifically for sharing between two or more people, for flexible working arrangements, or to suit workers who may wish to only work on a part-time basis.

### HRD: What outcomes can employers expect from job redesign?

**LL:** All redesign initiatives have the potential to deliver positive outcomes when well thought out and properly executed. Employers

who embark on task level and job level redesign often enjoy improved attraction and retention of workers. Employers who embark on more ambitious process redesign efforts can be rewarded with a host of additional benefits, such as improved business outcomes, reduced operating costs, improved customer satisfaction, enhanced quality, and a happier, more engaged, and more productive workforce.

### HRD: What advice do you have for companies who wish to embark on job redesign initiatives?

**LL:** Job redesign must be strategic and must support the achievement of the long-term business objectives. The most effective

job redesign initiatives adopt a continuous approach through subtle changes along the way and making improvements consistently over time. Employers should explore simple solutions and resist the temptation to purchase technology or machines just because they are available. Employers should be mindful that if a process is poorly designed to begin with, the automation of that process is unlikely to make it any better. In fact, it might amplify the poor process. **HRD**

**Leonard Ling** is the Founder and Principal Consultant at Solutionsatwork Pte Ltd. Solutionsatwork is a home-grown boutique consultancy specialising in HR and process-related projects. Find out more at [www.solutionsatwork.com.sg](http://www.solutionsatwork.com.sg).

