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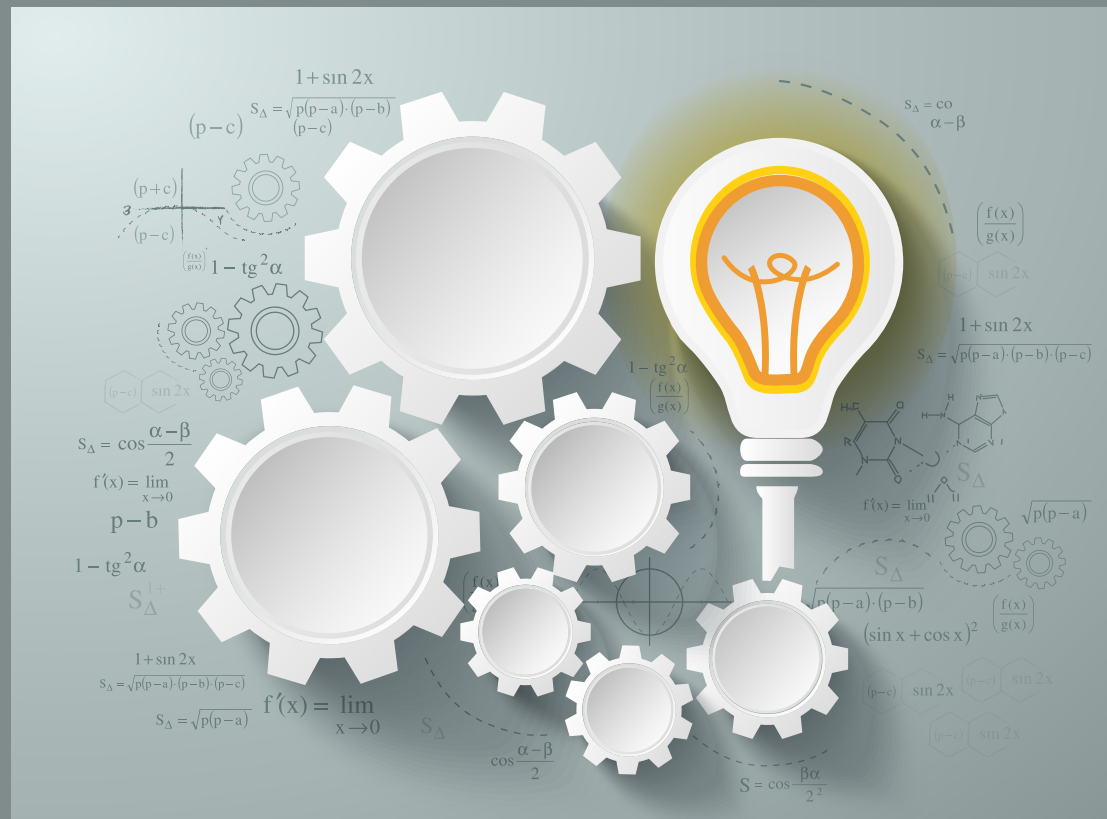
Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich  
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# Swiss HR-Barometer 2014

Experience of work and job crafting

## Executive Summary

English



# Executive Summary

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## Current edition

The Swiss Human Relations Barometer (HR Barometer), now in its eighth edition, investigates labour relations and working conditions as well as workplace attitudes and behaviour among employees in Switzerland. The focus of the HR Barometer this year – experience of work and job crafting – examines the interplay of job crafting, measures at a corporate level that impact job design, and how work is experienced. Job crafting encompasses everything that employees do to improve their personal job situation.

## Sample

The sample underlying this year's survey is based on the sample register of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. The survey was conducted between March and June 2014 using a mixed-mode approach, whereby responses could be provided in writing or online. This year's survey looked at the responses of 1,401 employees from the German, French and Italian-speaking regions of Switzerland.

## Focus: The experience of work

Employees put work and the family at the top of their list of priorities, followed by leisure. A positive experience of work is thus a key contributor to employees' quality of life, wellbeing and motivation. Three quarters of those surveyed are somewhat or entirely satisfied with their work, while just one in ten respondents admitted to feeling bored at the workplace sometimes, often or almost always. The picture is slightly less rosy when it comes to stress: around one quarter (27%) of respondents said that they had often or almost always felt stressed in the previous three months, while a further third reported feeling occasionally stressed in that time. A negative experience of work can lead to health issues and problems with sleeping: around two thirds of those surveyed sometimes, often or almost always experience difficulties with falling or remaining asleep.

## Focus: Job crafting by employees

Most employees in Switzerland regularly engage in job crafting, i.e. they take an active role in shaping their own job. This finds them using a variety of strategies, including seeking challenges, accessing resources and reducing burdens. The prevalence of these strategies varies. Most commonly (80%), employees often or constantly seek to access resources, i.e. social support and training opportunities. Almost two thirds (62%) of those surveyed regularly seek fresh challenges, while 32% make regular efforts to reduce their emotional, mental or physical strain.

## Focus: Factors that contribute to job crafting

Job crafting primarily occurs in corporate settings where employees take a negative view of their jobs or where certain factors that contribute to job crafting are present. Stress and job insecurity lead to employees seeking to reduce their workload. Conversely, the greater the employee participation

and the more feedback they receive, the more they seek challenges and resources.

**Focus:**  
**Measures at a corporate level**

Positivity in the workplace is of key importance to employee motivation and performance. How employees experience their work can be influenced by the implementation of measures at a corporate level. Participation, co-determination and job variety can be particularly effective in this regard. Good relations with line managers also help instil job satisfaction, prevent boredom and reduce stress. Moreover, the existence of a «psychological contract» can boost the positive experience. This occurs when the expectations of employees and employers are communicated transparently and, as far as possible, reciprocally.

**Focus:**  
**Reciprocal interaction**

Job design is not purely a top-down process. Employees also contribute to shaping their job situation in line with their specific needs and goals. As stakeholders, they optimise the employer's job design to improve their workplace experience. This implies a reciprocal interaction between job design at a corporate level, job crafting at an employee level, and the workplace experience of the employees. Job crafting, then, does not replace the employer's job design. Rather, where the conditions are favourable, job crafting and corporate job design reinforce each other and together contribute to positivity in the workplace.

**Trend:**  
**Career orientations**

In Switzerland, traditional career orientations remain common. More than 50% of those surveyed have promotion-oriented career expectations, whereas 12% are security-oriented in their preferences. This year's trend shows a slight decrease in the security-oriented perspective. At the same time, the proportion of employees with an autonomous career orientation has increased to 23% – five percentage points more than in 2011. Rather than attach importance to traditional values such as security and continuity, these individuals prefer to manage their own career trajectories and change jobs more frequently. The rise in their number is also a sign that employees are increasingly prepared to be flexible.

**Trend:**  
**Job design**

Most respondents agree that the various elements required for job design – skill variety, task identity, task significance, feedback, autonomy – are, on the whole, completely in place or more in place than not. The most prevalent of these elements is skill variety, which 86% of respondents experience as completely in place or more in place than not. By contrast there is room for improvement in respect of task identity, task significance and autonomy.

**Trend:**  
**Performance management  
and employee development**

In the area of performance management, little more than half of employees receive regular feedback on their performance. Moreover, around one third are not offered any opportunity for development in the form of formal further training. If formal further training is offered, it tends to be focused on the development of expertise rather than the fostering of social skills.

**Trend:**  
**Psychological contract**

The data relating to the psychological contract confirms the trend of recent years: the gap between employee expectations and what employers do to meet these expectations has widened. Employees feel themselves to be at a disadvantage, in particular in relation to adequate remuneration and internal development opportunities. Dissatisfaction with pay amongst employees in Switzerland has been growing since 2011. Employees also consider there to be room for improvement in the area of personnel development.

**Trend:**  
**Trust in the employer**

The results relating to trust in the employer have not changed in comparison to the 2012 survey. Whereas around 70% of employees trust their employer, 18% have doubts about their employer's trustworthiness, and 10% have little or no trust in their employer.

**Trend:**  
**Job insecurity**

Job insecurity in Switzerland has been growing steadily since 2009. This year's survey has revealed that one third of employees are moderately or very concerned about losing their job. The increasing sense of job uncertainty does not appear to be compensated by employees' (perceived) employability: in the event of redundancy, only one in two is confident of finding a similar job. In addition, around half of employees are concerned – some seriously – about unwelcome changes in their duties or employment conditions. What employees fear most is an increasing workload, followed by a loss of influence over changes in the workplace. Thirdly, they fear possible restructuring. Compared to the previous survey, concern has grown in particular over restructuring within employees' own departments.

**Trend:**  
**Job satisfaction and career satisfaction**

Although general satisfaction with work and career remains high, there is definitely room for improvement: one third of respondents report that they are not exposed to any formal career planning measures. On the other hand, one third report that they regularly hold career discussions with their employers. A closer examination of the work satisfaction issue reveals that almost 30% of employees reported satisfaction only because they have lowered their job expectations. This proportion of «resigned satisfied» employees has risen by at least 10% since 2008.

**Conclusions**

This year's HR Barometer indicates that labour relations in Switzerland are continuing to evolve. The economic aspects of labour relations are gaining ground compared to loyalty and retention. The traditional career model based on progression through a company's ranks and long years of service, though still widespread, is slowly being displaced by a desire to forge a career based on personal interests – which includes more frequent changes of employer. It appears that individual job crafting and corporate job design somehow interact to create, for most employees, a positive spiral of positive conditions and positivity in the workplace. A minority, however, report a negative spiral exhibiting a negative experience as well as withdrawal and a dwindling sense of initiative. The high proportion of «resigned satisfied» employees and fixed dissatisfied employees is also an expression of this ne-

gative interaction. In order to allow the substantial economic benefit, which arises from ascribing a high value to work, to continue to filter through, employers must not only foster talented and key employees, but also ensure that employees who feel disadvantaged do not continue to fall further behind.

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ISBN: 978-3-033-04783-9

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