

## Technology And Work Satisfaction

Technology relates to both the physical aspects of machines, equipment, processes and work layout, and the actual methods, systems and procedures involved in the carrying out of work. Technology is therefore a major influence on the general climate of the organization and the behavior of people at work.

During a study in a new American car assembly, developed by Chrysler, Walker and Guest, researchers examined the effects of mass production. They describe the characteristics of assembly line as: repetitious and machine paced; involving a minimum of skill; using predetermined techniques with no choice of tools or methods; and closely defined divisions of the production process. The workers were able to perform their jobs with only 'surface mental attention'.

The nature of the job, the technological layout and the high level of noise restricted the amount of social interaction and contacts that workers could have with each other. The opportunities for interpersonal relationships were important, and when these were missing the workers felt deprived. The workers' main contact with authority was through the supervisors and this was an important factor in job satisfaction. There was little contact with the managers and as a result relationships with management were considered of little importance. They also had a higher rate of absenteeism than workers did in jobs with fewer characteristics of mass production.

Although these negative results exist in most of today's business units, information technology can have a severe positive impact on job satisfaction. New patterns of work organization are demanded, the nature and content of individual jobs is altered, the function and structure of work groups is subject to change, supervision systems are being renewed, responsibilities are shifted, and the management task adopts a new role.

Speaking generally, the major effect of computers, robots, and other new technologies on job design seems to be that the role of the human half of the partnership has changed, not that it has become less important. The new technology is creating a need for better-trained employees, in almost every case. The computerization of the banking industry has considerably expanded not diminished, teller training needs for example.

Because automation increase the need for skilled employees, research finds that the people who see automation as a threat to their job security tend to be skilled in opposition to those with higher skill levels. Employees with high skill levels react more favorably, seeing the situation as creating opportunities for them to expand their work skills.

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### About the Author

Kadence Buchanan writes articles for <http://forsocietiessake.com/> - In addition, Kadence also writes articles for <http://4homelife.net/> and <http://familyinformationsource.com/>