



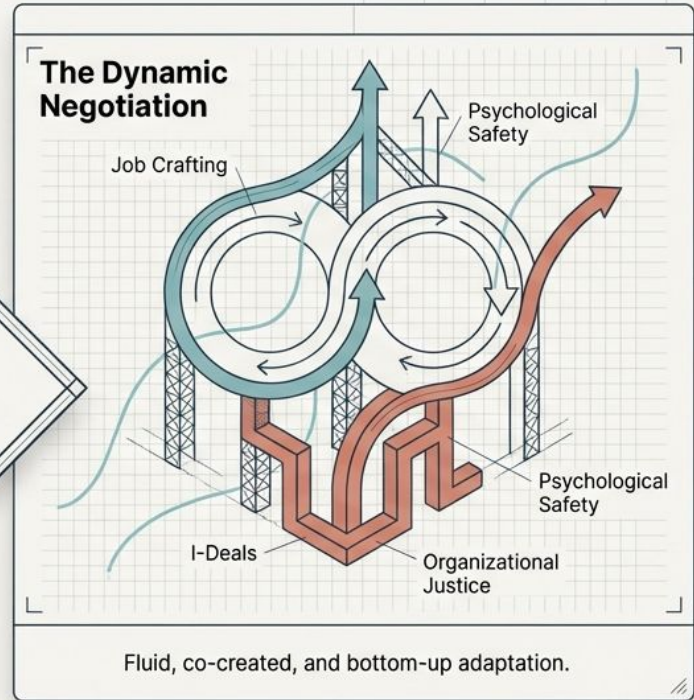
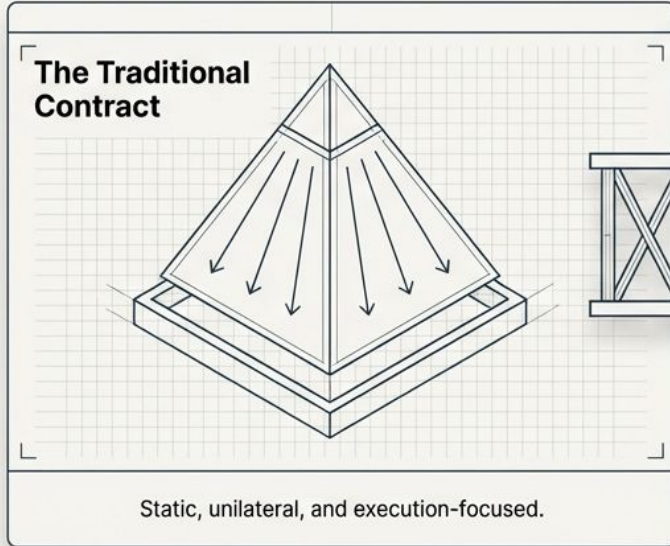
Architecting the Proactive Organization

How Psychological Safety and Organizational
Justice Drive Work Engagement.

Based on the research of Jonathan H. Westover, PhD, integrating global
corporate evidence with a landmark study of 324 Spanish employees.

The traditional unilateral employment contract has eroded

Job design is no longer a static managerial prerogative. It is a shared, dynamic responsibility. Organizations must rely on proactive employees who shape their work, but generic 'empowerment' initiatives consistently fail without the right structural architecture.



Proactive work redesign manifests as two fundamentally distinct engines



Expansive Job Crafting

Employees informally alter the "how" of work. They proactively expand role boundaries by volunteering for stretch assignments, reframing tasks, and seeking developmental feedback.



Idiosyncratic Deals (I-Deals)

Employees formally negotiate the "what" and "when" of work. They secure bespoke, mutually beneficial arrangements for flexibility, customized training, or personalized responsibilities.

Diagnosing the nature of employee-driven redesign

Diagnostic Dimension	Job Crafting	Idiosyncratic Deals (I-Deals)
Nature of Change	Informal, incremental, and continuous	Formal, negotiated, and episodic
Primary Focus	Altering the 'How' of work	Altering the 'What' or 'When' of work
Initiation Phase	Individual, without explicit managerial approval	Requires supervisor buy-in and formal documentation
Optimal Environment	High job autonomy and role ambiguity	High Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and strong reciprocity
Real-World Example	A hospital nurse reframing routine patient interactions to emphasize relational care.	A retail associate negotiating a custom modified schedule to attend evening classes.

The measurable impact of proactive work architectures

Organizational & Individual ROI of Job Crafting



+12% Revenue Growth: Teams with high crafting density adapt faster to market shifts (observed in Fortune 500 sales units).



Enhanced Wellbeing: Increases subjective wellbeing and intrinsic motivation while reducing emotional exhaustion, even when objective workload remains constant.

Organizational & Individual ROI of I-Deals



-23% Turnover Intent: Employees with development i-deals demonstrate significantly higher retention.



+18% In-Role Performance: Fulfills fundamental psychological needs for autonomy and competence, driving sustained discretionary effort.

Distinct psychological mediators govern the pathways to engagement

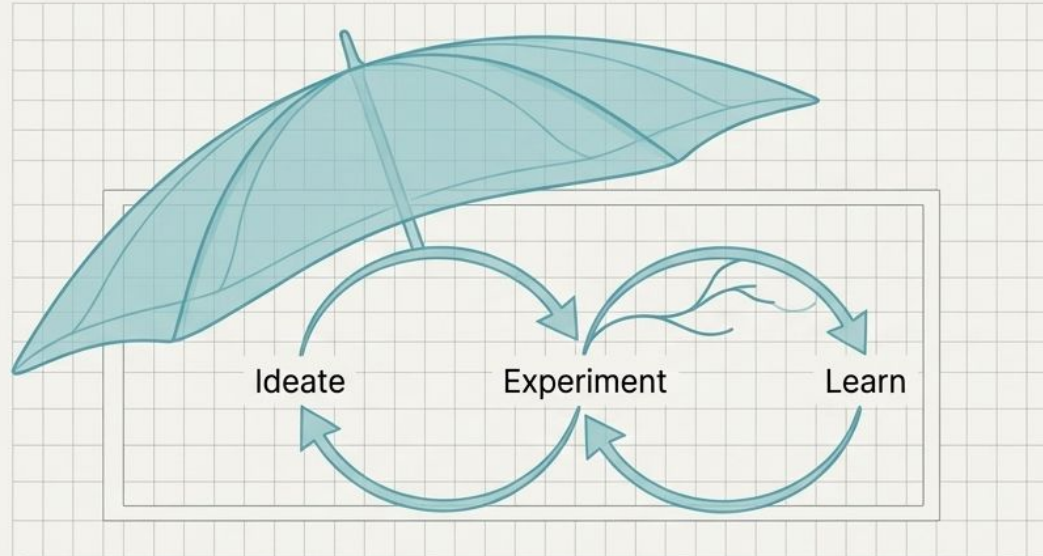
The Spanish Three-Wave Study reveals a critical puzzle: blanket 'empowerment' fails because crafting and i-deals operate through entirely distinct psychological mechanisms.



Key Takeaway: Context-sensitive interventions are mandatory. You must foster safety to enable crafting, and justice to legitimize i-deals.

Psychological safety enables expansive job crafting

Safety—the shared belief that a team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking—reduces the fear of failure, encouraging employees to stretch task boundaries confidently.



Impact: Healthcare units with high psychological safety see a **27% increase** in process improvement suggestions and **19%** greater adoption of crafted innovations.

Leadership Levels:

- ✓ **Model vulnerability:** Leaders admit errors and publicly solicit corrective feedback.
- ✓ **Structure reflection rituals:** Weekly retrospectives frame setbacks as data, not failures.
- ✓ **Reward intelligent failure:** Celebrate well-designed experiments that miss expected outcomes.
- ✓ **Coach for interpersonal risk-taking:** Train employees to navigate the interpersonal friction of boundary expansion.

Safety-driven crafting in practice



Microsoft

Action: Shifted to a “learn-it-all” culture under Satya Nadella. Performance reviews were redesigned to emphasize learning velocity over error avoidance.

Outcome: A 12-point engagement increase over three years, alongside a massive rise in internal, crafted tech solutions to customer pain points without fear of career repercussions.



Pixar

Action: Institutionalized safety through “Braintrust” sessions. Peers offer candid, constructive criticism without the hierarchical authority to mandate changes.

Outcome: Empowers directors to expansively craft narrative structures, testing unconventional approaches while trusting feedback is intended to elevate the work, not diminish the creator.

Organizational justice legitimizes idiosyncratic deals

Justice—procedural, distributive, and interactional fairness—is the necessary condition for i-deals. Without it, bespoke arrangements breed zero-sum thinking, envy, and withdrawal among peers.



Leadership Levers:

- ✓ **Transparent eligibility frameworks:** Publish exact criteria for when i-deals are feasible.
- ✓ **Structured negotiation protocols:** Provide templates to ensure consistent information exchange.
- ✓ **Third-party oversight:** Use HR or peer panels to assess high-stakes deals, reducing arbitrary manager discretion.
- ✓ **Communication of rationales:** Explain granted or denied deals using objective criteria.

Impact: Procedural justice highly correlates ($r = 0.43$) with willingness to negotiate i-deals, and transparent criteria increase peer acceptance of i-deals by 30%.

Justice-driven i-deals in practice



Salesforce

Action: Deployed the “Success from Anywhere” portal. Removed pure manager discretion. Employees submit business justifications online, and HR analytics track approval rates to identify bias.

Outcome: Maintained stable/improved Net Promoter Scores by prioritizing procedural fairness while enabling thousands of bespoke, hybrid work arrangements.



Unilever

Action: Implemented the “U-Work” program with strictly published eligibility criteria (role requirements, customer impact) and trained managers in consistent decision-making.

Outcome: Enhanced organizational commitment across the board. Even employees who were denied i-deals - deals reported higher trust due to the transparent, equitable process.

Building proactive capability across the workforce

Ambient culture is insufficient. Organizations must actively train the capabilities required to craft and negotiate work, as traditional controls stifle initiative.

Employee Capabilities

Job Crafting Workshops

Mapping energy drains/sources and committing to small role experiments (e.g., Adobe's "Check-In" training drove a 14-point engagement lift).

Negotiation Skills

Building business cases for i-deals to increase successful, mutual-benefit conversations.

Manager Capabilities

Autonomy-Supportive Coaching

Co-creating solutions rather than imposing constraints (e.g., ING Bank trained managers to facilitate squads, increasing crafting frequency from 41% to 68%).

Role Redesign Simulations

Practicing how to evaluate i-deals to balance flexibility with fairness.

Designing job architectures that absorb flexibility

Bureaucratic role descriptions and narrow spans of control constrain proactive redesign. Structural empowerment correlates with 32% higher crafting frequency and 27% more i-deal negotiations.

Architectural Enablers

Broad Role Definitions

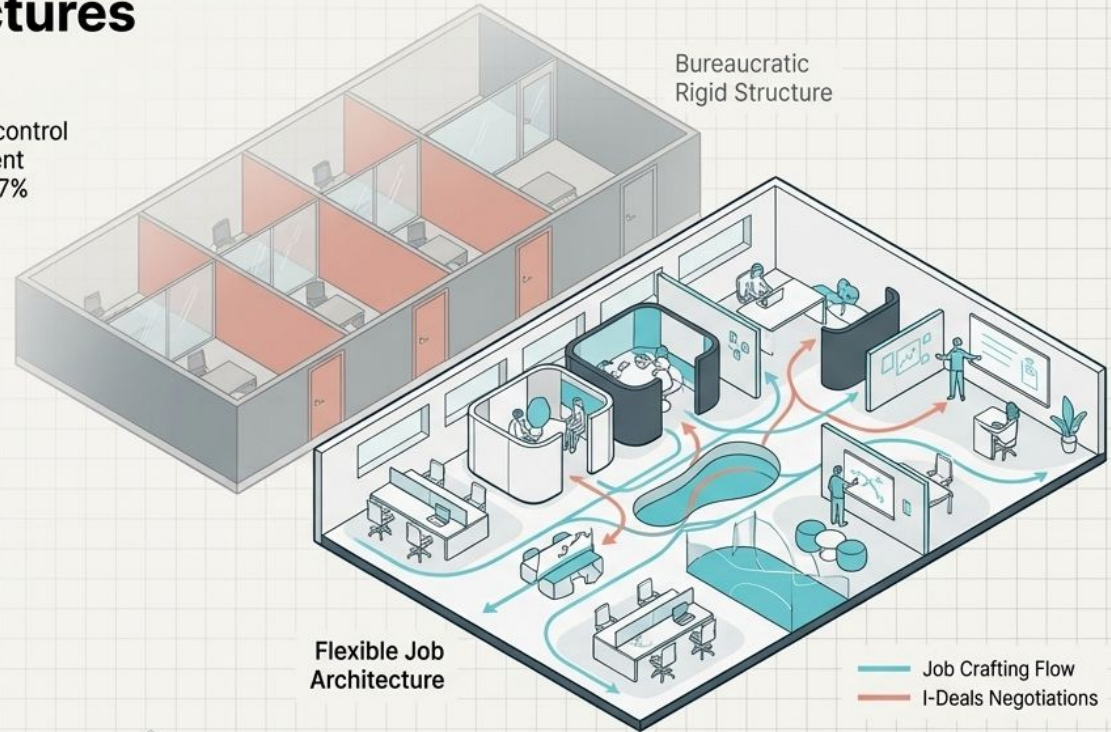
Specify required outcomes, but leave the execution methods open.

Distributed Authority

Push budget and project decisions to the team level to enable rapid experimentation.

Cross-Functional Mobility

Build internal gig platforms or rotational programs to formalize crafting into career paths.

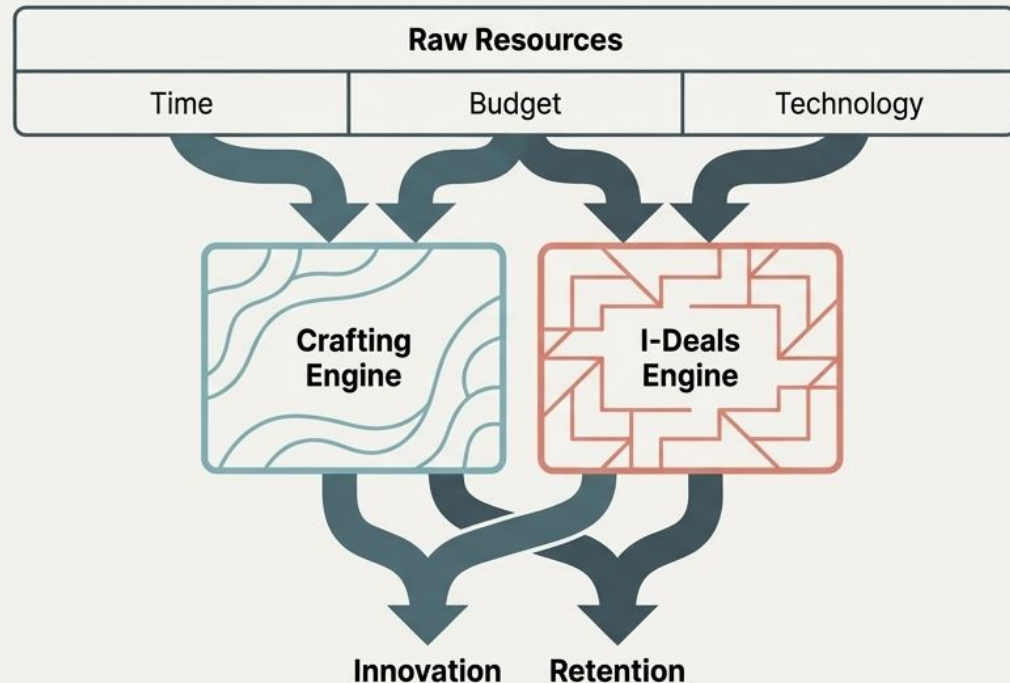


Corporate Examples:

W.L. Gore's title-less lattice structure based on followership (>95% retention); Haier's thousands of self-organizing micro-enterprises negotiating internal resources (+23% revenue per employee).

Resourcing proactive initiatives to sustain momentum

Unfunded initiative is rhetorical and demoralizing. Failing to resource crafting or i-deals implicitly communicates that proactive behavior is not genuinely valued by the organization.



Resource Mechanisms

Innovation Time Budgets

Allocating dedicated time (e.g., 3M's 15% time policy) for self-directed projects without immediate ROI demands, driving a 35% increase in crafting frequency.

Development Funds for I-Deals

Providing accessible budget pools for bespoke training. Accenture's "Career Marketplace" allows employees to allocate up to \$5,000 for learning aligned with crafted trajectories, reducing regrettable attrition by 17%.

Pilot Protections

Temporarily suspending standard KPIs for employees piloting i-deals or testing crafted roles.

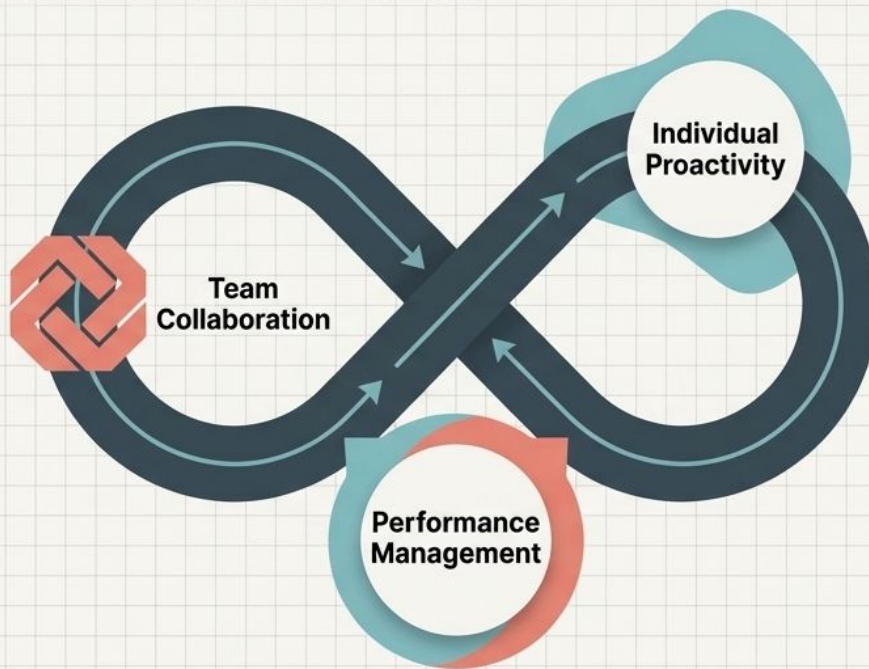
Embedding proactive redesign into systemic team workflows

Sustainable capability requires moving beyond individual heroes and integrating proactive design into the core performance and team architecture.

Systemic Check-ins

Evolve performance metrics to reward growth and collaborative crafting rather than strict compliance.

Deloitte's 'Performance Achievement' system focuses on future-focused strengths, resulting in 90% fairness perception and +14% engagement.

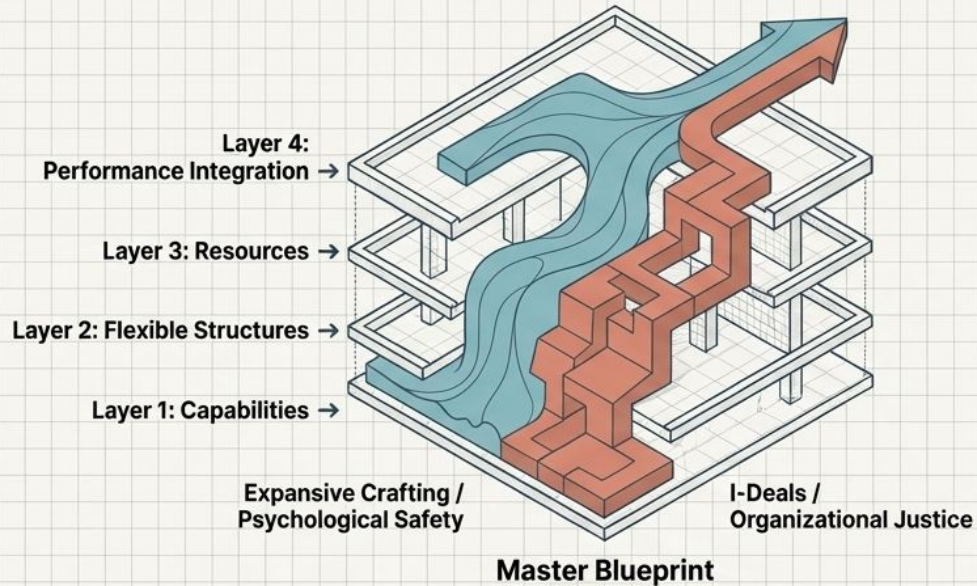


Collective Crafting






Transition from individual deals to team-level negotiated flexibility.

Spotify's autonomous squads utilize regular retrospectives to collectively redesign workflows, distribute tasks equitably, and negotiate shared sprint goals, building psychological contracts.

The Integrated Proactive Ecosystem



The Blueprint Mandate:

1. Build Psychological Safety to unleash Expansive Crafting. 
2. Build Organizational Justice to legitimize I-Deals. 
3. Fund them with tangible resources. 
4. Embed them in flexible job architectures. 
5. Measure them in your systemic performance systems. 

Transform job design from a static managerial constraint into a dynamic, shared capability that powers adaptability, innovation, and human flourishing.