



JOB CRAFTING – A BUSINESS CASE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Inducing opportunities for co-creating sustainability in the banking sector

By Julia Twachtmann

Background Rising sustainability awareness increases the pressure on companies to shift towards more sustainable business practices in order to remain an attractive employer.

However, many companies have to limit employee's agency due to a necessary level of compliance. Thus, people begin to individually alter the boundaries of their daily jobs to implement sustainable values (i.e., sustainable job crafting). If this process remains unaligned with the company's higher mission, it can lead to a discrepancy between the employee and the employer, hemming the overall performance. However, if the interests of both parties are aligned, the process of job crafting can lead to higher job satisfaction positively affecting the company's performance.

Objective This study could understand employees' concerns to actively engage in the job crafting process, which was only achievable as the company's concerns were also explored. It drew on the phenomenon of **sustainable job crafting** (bottom-up), **sustainable intrapreneurship** (top-down), and **sustainability** while applying the concept of **co-creation** within the internal processes of a company.

Introduction Until now, this dynamic process between the perspectives of the employees and the employer during the sustainable job crafting process remained unattended by researchers. Thus, this study aimed to foster the understanding of the dynamic between employee and employer during the job crafting process by investigating the question: **How can a company and its employees co-create opportunities to foster sustainable job crafting processes – in order to ensure sustainable change?**

Methods In a qualitative **single case study**, at the ING bank in the Netherlands, this study assessed how both parties could induce opportunities to co-create a shift towards sustainability. Thereby applying the **Grounded Theory** as a meta-frame and using **Theoretical Sampling** in a postmodern manner to focus on the quality over their quantity. Eight people were interviewed in a **semi-structured** manner to learn from their experiences and to access their interpersonal habitat.

Single Case As a bank, ING has to comply with many legislations to maintain all business operations, thus limiting employee's agency. ING describes itself as a transparent and sustainable pioneer within the banking sector. Further, the company is large enough to provide a dynamic and diverse field with individual cases (e.g., management, co-worker, job crafter). Consequently, ING provided the ideal research ground for this study.



Results Roles of the key actors that could be identified.

- Sustainable Job Crafter – Driving & Bridging
- Sustainability Department – Leading & Enabling
- Department Management – Supporting & Directing
- Co-Workers & Fellow Employees – Reflecting & Embedding

Results A gap was identified between the status-quo and the identified ideal co-creation position between the key actors. The data shows that all actors identify certain positions for themselves and other actors, that would induce joint opportunities towards sustainability. However, the status quo of the positions and roles differs from that ideal, presenting a state where co-creation between employee and employer is not yet entirely possible.

The **ideal sustainable job crafter** was identified uniformly as being proactive and communicating their own values and motives openly within the department while embedding it in other people's mindsets. This includes arguing the case in a business fashion, ergo making a business case for sustainability.

Conclusions

- **Co-creating opportunities by combining top-down and bottom-up actions.** To elevate job crafting from a compelling mechanism into a tool of strategic use it is necessary to counter the bottom-up agency of employees with top-down action led by the employer. The top-down action is ideally introduced via sustainable intrapreneurship led by the company and is complemented by the full agency (bottom-up) concept of job crafting. Combined the two concepts can lead to the identified ideal co-creation outcome, subject to the condition that both parties ensure open communication.

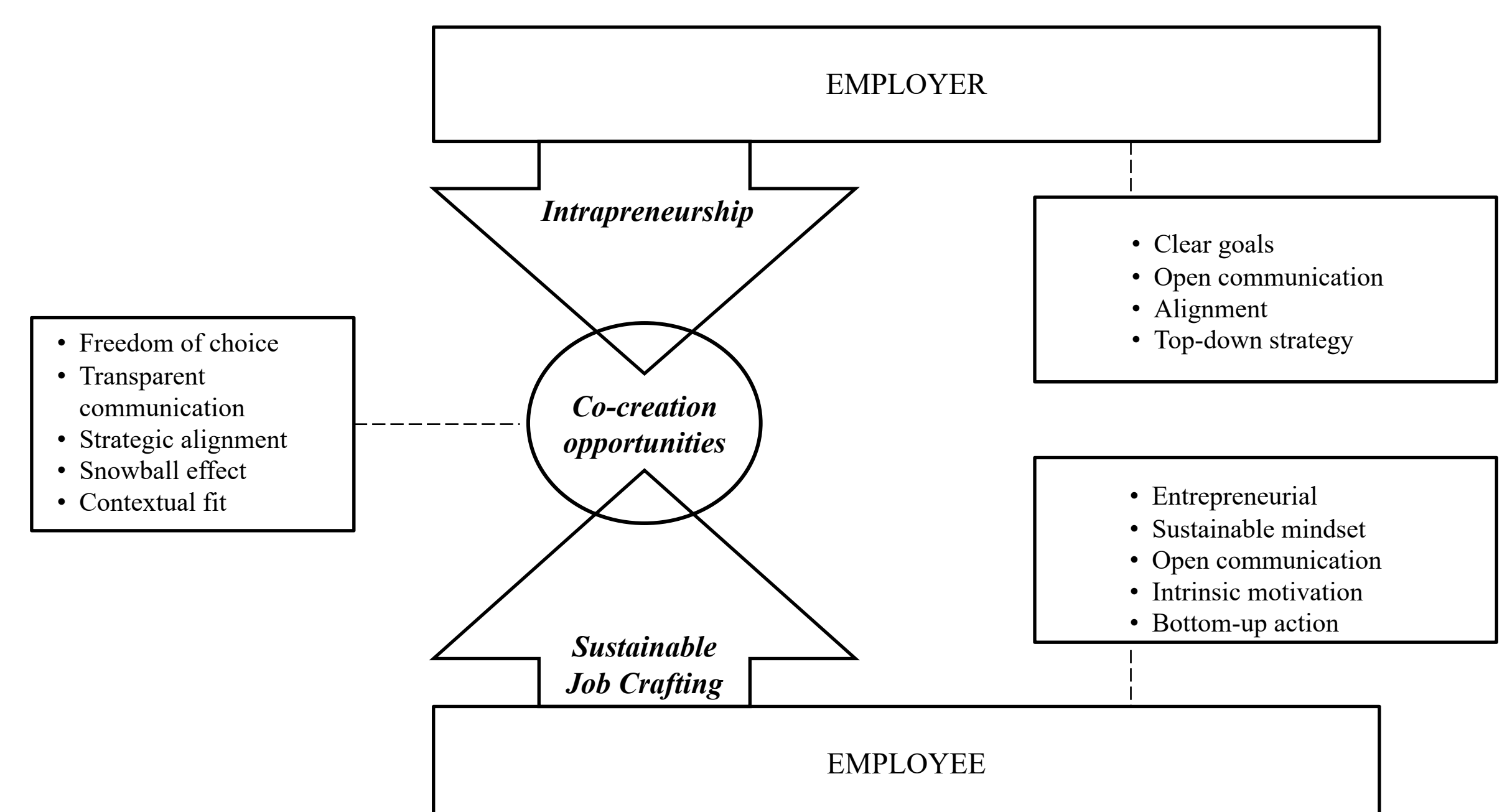


Figure 1: The Process of Opportunity Creation towards a Co-created Sustainable Change.

- **Communicating from barrier to opportunity.** Strategic communication between employee and employer is a critical barrier, and simultaneously the primary tool to induce co-creation opportunities. Therefore, both parties must communicate equally.
- **Sustainable job crafting only enfolds beyond own interest.** Sustainable job crafters are not satisfied with aligning their values with only their actions. Instead, the alignment of their values and actions needs also to suit the strategic alignment of the company's higher sustainable aim, which would allow them to better embed their initiatives into department. It is, thus, of crucial importance for a job crafting endeavour to be argued in a business case, relating to the goals and objectives of the whole department.