

Salzburg meets Graz

HOW JOB DESIGN SHAPES EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION FOR RELATIONAL
COORDINATION IN REMOTE WORK



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Relational Coordination

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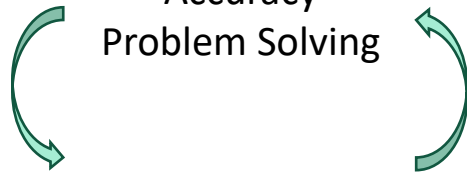
Effective Communication

Frequency

Timeliness

Accuracy

Problem Solving



Strong Relationships

Shared Goals

Shared Knowledge

Mutual Respect

(Hoffer Gittell, 2000, 2002)

- *Coordination = management of task interdependencies* (Malone & Crowston, 1994)
- Direct, network-based form of coordination (Bolton et al, 2021)
- »[...] relationships help to support [effective], and vice versa, enabling stakeholders to effectively coordinate work across boundaries.« (Bolten, Logan & Hoffer Gittell, 2021, p. 291)
- that typically benefits from physical proximity and/or a shared workspace (McEvoy, Escott & Bee, 2011)

RC & remote work

Advanced Communication Technologies (ACT) that allow for (semi-) synchronous communication replicate face-to-face communication (Fuchs & Reichel, 2021; Malhotra & Majchrzak, 2014). However, results about their effectiveness are mixed.



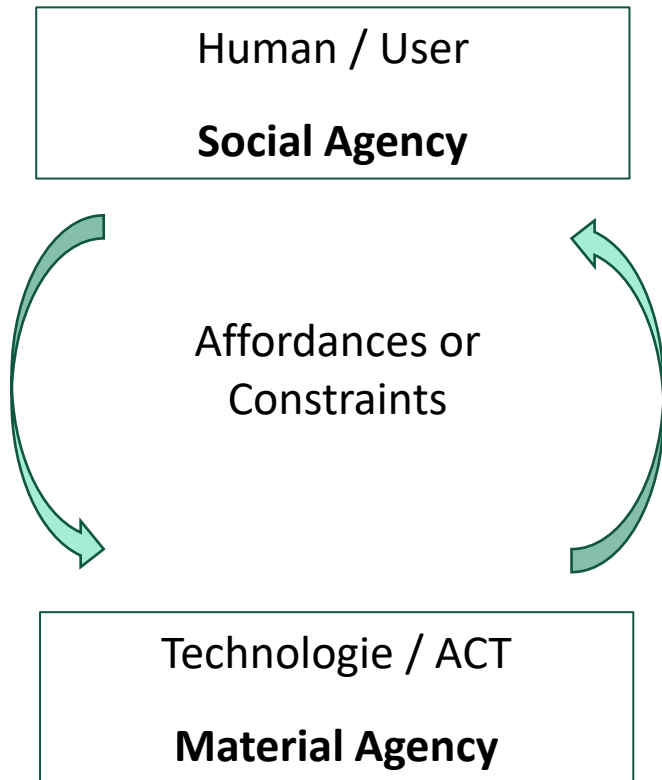
- Higher communication quality through targeted virtual interactions (Leonardi, Treem & Jackson, 2010)
- Synchronicity supports effective communication (Dennis, Fuller & Valacich, 2008)
- Combination of various information streams, fetatures and visual displays enhances collaboration (Malhotra & Majchrzak, 2004, 2012)



- ACTs are unable to foster spontaneous, informal interactions (Golden, Veiga & Dino, 2008)
- RE appropriate ACTs to create artificial distance (Leonardi, Treem & Jackson, 2010)
- Higher effort to assess co-workers knowledge (van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2020)

How to foster frequent, timely, accurate and problem solving communication through ACTs when employees are working remotely?

Affordance Perspective



- *An affordance is » the potential for behaviours associated with achieving an immediate concrete outcome arising from the relation between an object [...] and a goal-oriented actor.«*
(Volkoff & Srong, 2013, p. 823)
- Affordances are NOT static features or design choices, and a multitude of affordances can arise from one material agent (Faraj & Azad, 2012)

Sample

- 47 Interviewees
 - Two Case studies (n = 26)
 - Mixed Sample (n = 21)
- Qualitative Sampling Plan (Schreier et al., 2008)
 - Field of Work
 - IT-Knowledge / IT-Experience
 - Leadership
 - Tenure

Data collection and analysis

- Semi-structured Interviews
- Content structuring form of Qualitative Analysis (Schreier, 2012)
- Within – und Cross-Case Analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Findings







1. Affordances
2. Job Design and relevant context



Example for Affordances

Interconnectivity

»promotion of direct association with other members of the team or organization«

ACT affords Interconnectivity			
ACT provides internal repository, including all organizational users		Users choose recipient by typing or clicking on their name to initiate contact	
ACT connects sender directly to recipients' workstation		Recipients respond to communication request	 Fosters frequent communication
ACT allows users to schedule calls by sending invitations, including 'links' to recipients		Users send digital meeting invitation	
ACT automatically creates a calendar entry for each participant		Recipients accept meeting invitation or suggest an alternative date	 Fosters frequent communication

→ If enacted, fosters frequent communication

Example for Affordances

Interconnectivity

»promotion of direct association with other members of the team or organization«

”

You are somehow extremely connected and very close to each other again, even though you may be sitting in completely different corners and ends of the world. It has a great advantage that the people are much easier to grasp.
(Interview 1)

”

If you would otherwise just have said any information in the office, you now either have to schedule a [digital] meeting and wait until everyone is there, or you have to call everyone. And that's just [...] the hardest thing to do.
(Interview 17)

Frequent & Timely Communication

Interconnectivity

- *»promotion of direct association with other members of the team or organization«*
- Fosters Frequency

Immediacy

- *»facilitation of responsive and speedy cooperation«*
- Fosters Timeliness

Schedulability

- *»control over when to communicate«*
- Fosters Frequency IF Immediacy is also enacted
- Hampers Frequency & Timeliness if Immediacy is not enacted

Accurate & Problem Solving Communication

Shareability

- »ability to share sources with other collaborator without delay«
- Fosters Accuracy

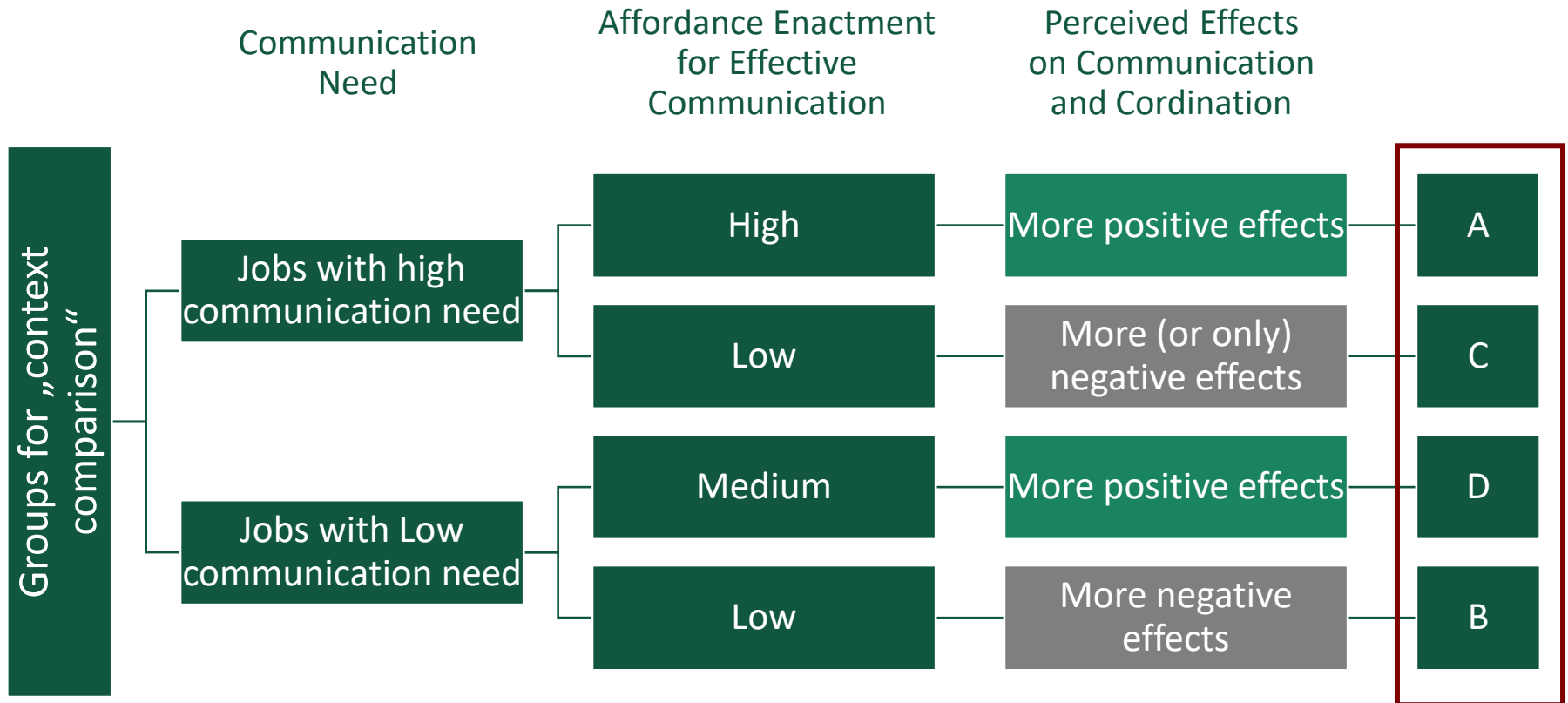
Cue Disclosability

- »ability to send a variety of communication cues, resulting in rich communication«
- Fosters Accuracy & Problem Solving

Cue Hideability

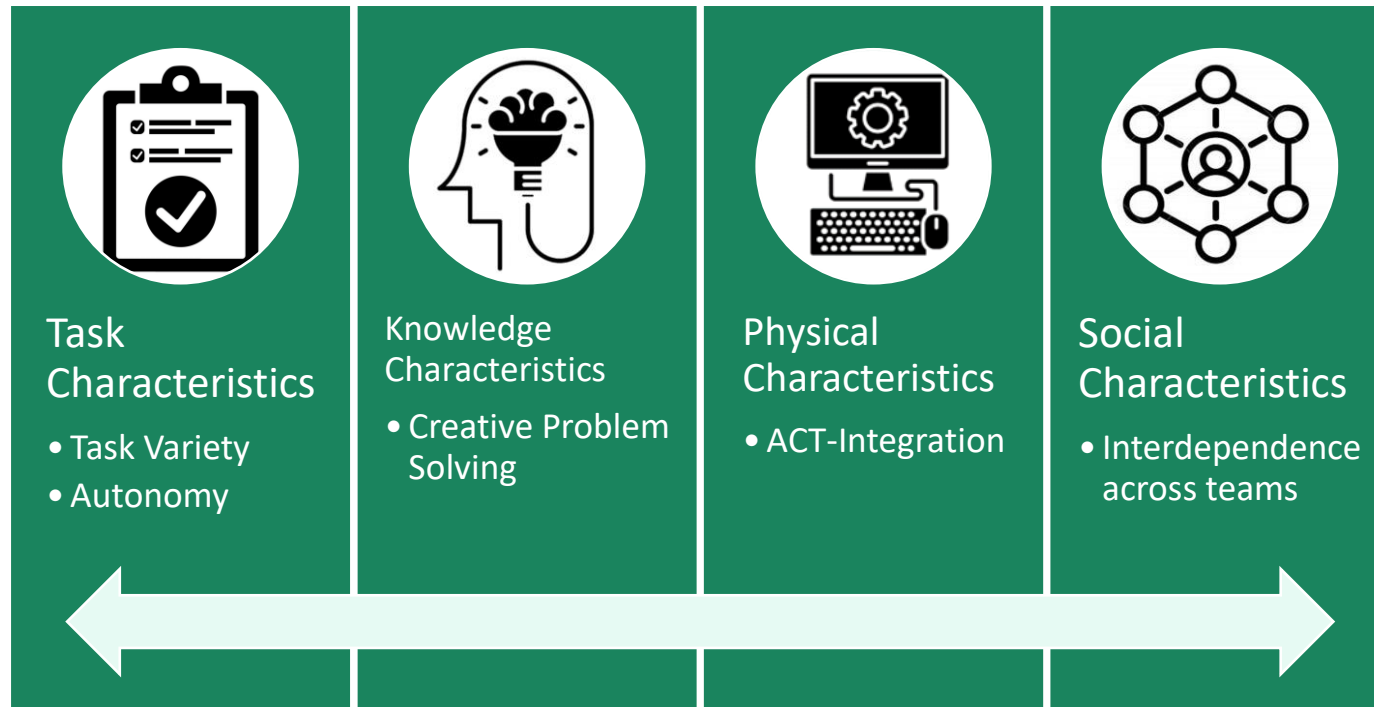
- »ability to withhold rich information cues«
- Hampers Accuracy & Problem Solving

Group Comparison

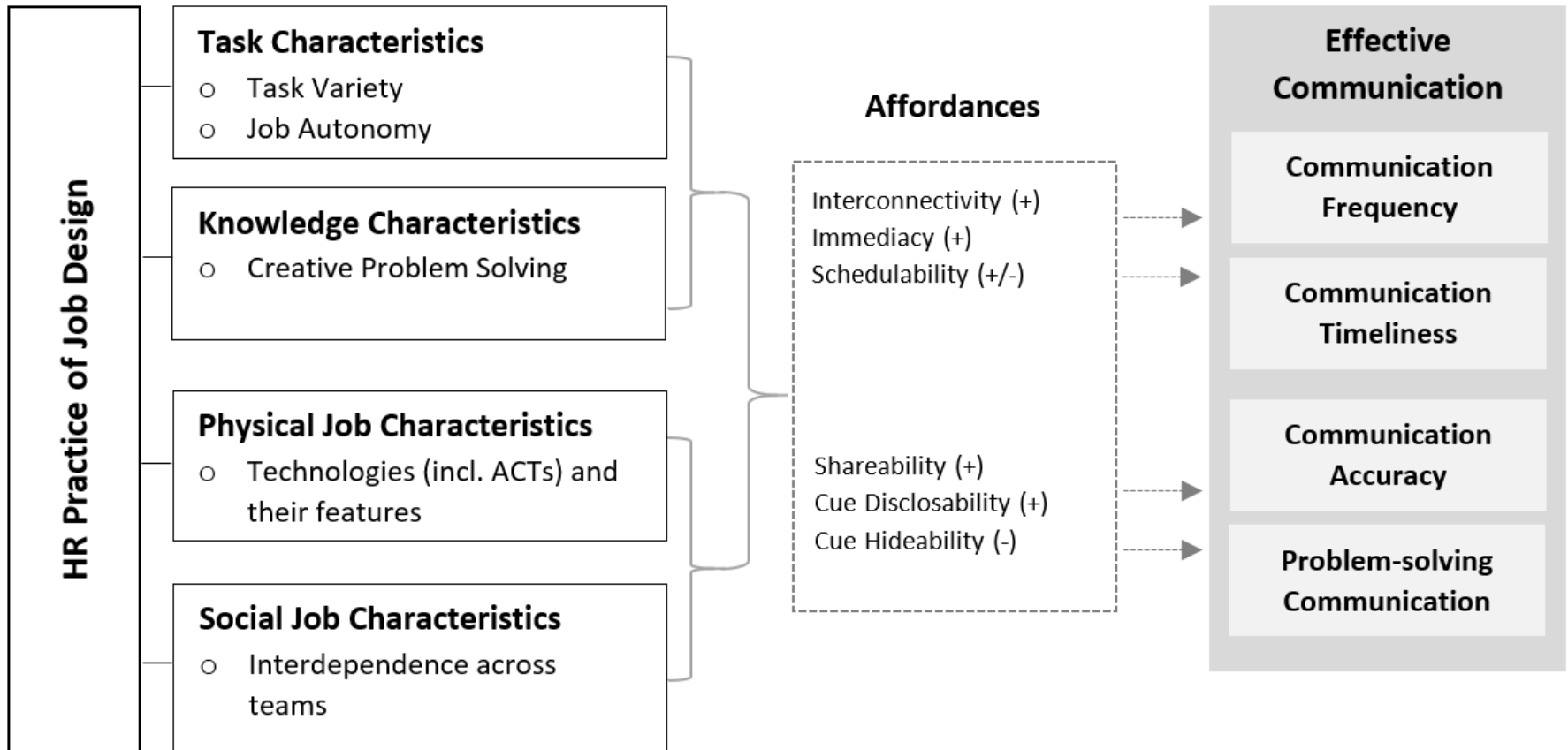


Job Design

The HR practice of job design is concerned with creating jobs that form an efficient structure that attract and motivate employees to fill and perform the jobs (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020)



Findings



Theoretical Implications

1. JOB DESIGN:

- a. Expanding existing job design models by integrating an affordance perspective (e.g., Grant, Fried, & Juillerat, 2011)
- b. Examining the influence of context factors (Leonardi & Barley, 2008; Orlikowski, 2007)
- c. Acknowledging and analyzing possibilities to influence user-ACT-interaction and related outcomes through job design

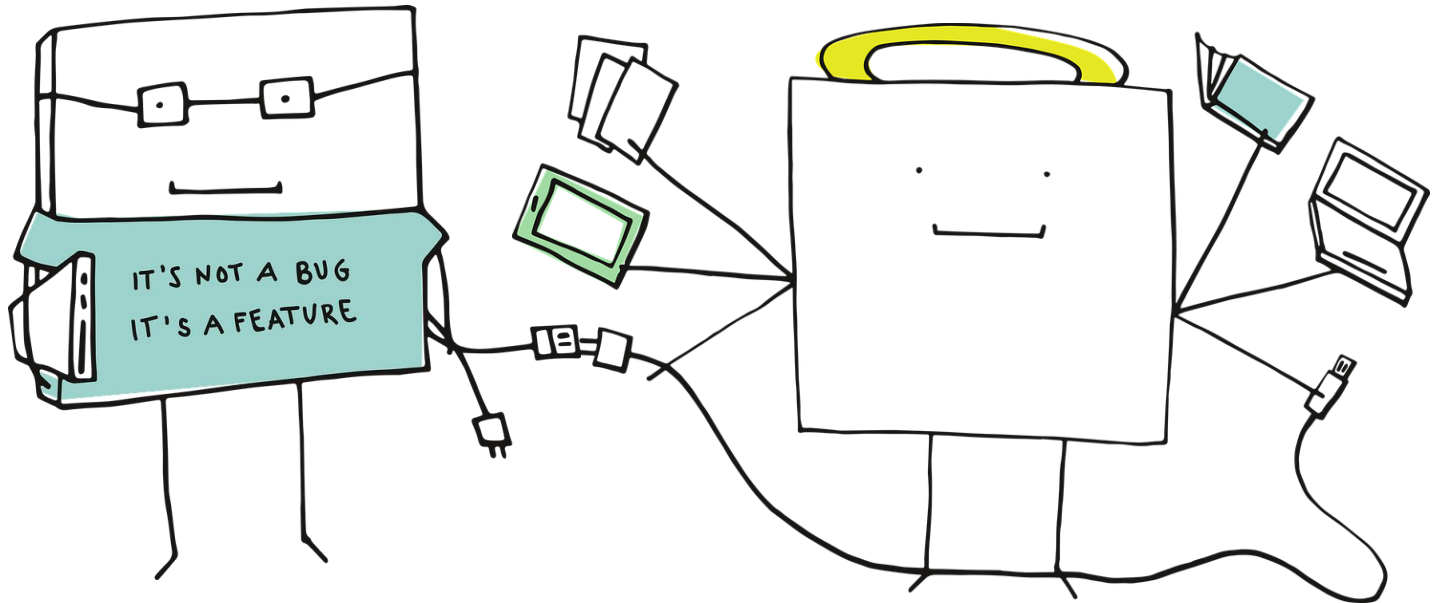
2. RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE:

- a. Answering calls for re-strengthening relational perspectives on job design (Gittell, Weinberg, Bennett, & Miller, 2008) by integrating relationship between social and material agency
- b. Determine affordances that mediate influence of job characteristics on outcomes

3. RELATIONAL COORDINATION:

- a. Understanding of *how* the relationship between user and ACT affects communication and relational coordination
- b. Explaining job design's role in shaping effective communication

Thank you



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Anhang: Stichprobenplan

		CompA Team membership		CompB Team membership		Mixed Sample Team membership		TOTAL
		< 1.5 years	>= 1.5 years	< 1.5 years	>= 1.5 years	< 1.5 years	>= 1.5 years	
Field of work	Leadership responsibility							
Jobs with low expected communication need	Yes		1 (1)		2 (1)	1 (0)	3 (2)	21 (20)
	No	1 (1)	4 (2-4)	2 (2)	2 (3)	1 (2)	4 (4)	
Jobs with high expected communication need	Yes		2 (1)		1 (1)		3 (2)	16 (16)
	No	1 (1)	3 (2-4)	0 (1)	2 (2)	3 (2)	3 (4)	
IT	Yes		3 (1)				0 (1)	8 (8)
	No	1 (1)	1 (2)			1 (1)	2 (2)	
TOTAL		17 (15)		9 (10)		21 (20)		47 (45)