

Making sense of the twin transformation: a process model of integrative job crafting and employee agency

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to explore how employees navigate the intertwined challenges of sustainability and digitalization – referred to as the twin transformation – through integrative job crafting. Specifically, it examines how employees interpret competing transformation logics through perception-based sensemaking and translate these interpretations into proactive role redesign.

Design/methodology/approach – We conducted a qualitative study in a global Big Four professional services firm and analyzed 32 semi-structured interviews using Gioia-inspired coding to develop a process model of integrative job crafting under the twin transformation.

Findings – The findings reveal a dynamic and iterative process in which employees interpret competing transformation logics through perception-based sensemaking (e.g. interpretive ambiguity, legitimacy uncertainty, perceived coherence, and perceived scope for action), which in turn enables integrative job crafting practices, including integrative task crafting, digital resource enactment, peer-supported relational crafting, and coherence-building cognitive crafting. Over time, these practices generate reinforcing learning loops and culminate in hybrid role identities and employee-driven innovation.

Practical implications – Organizations pursuing the twin transformation should recognize employees as active sensemakers and support employees' integrative job crafting through consistent leadership, enabling digital tools, and cross-team learning, thereby fostering bottom-up innovation aligned with sustainability and digitalization goals.

Originality/value – This study provides one of the first process-based models of job crafting under the twin transformation. It extends job crafting theory by conceptualizing competing transformation logics as a distinct contextual condition and by explaining how perception-based sensemaking connects organizational conditions with integrative job crafting. The study also demonstrates how these processes contribute to hybridization and employee-driven innovation.

Keywords Twin transformation, Job crafting, Sensemaking, Employee agency, Sustainability, Digital transformation

Paper type Research article

Introduction

The ongoing shift toward sustainability and digitalization—referred to in European policy and organizational discourse as the twin transformation (Gao, 2025)—is redefining the priorities

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and operating logics of contemporary work (Salimova *et al.*, 2022; Trevisan *et al.*, 2024). These intertwined transformations demand that organizations pursue environmental and technological goals simultaneously, while also developing the internal capacities to sustain this change over time (Myshko *et al.*, 2024; Rehman *et al.*, 2023). At the strategic level, firms invest in green technologies, digital tools, and regulatory compliance; at the individual level, however, the alignment between transformation goals and daily work practices remains fragmented and poorly understood (Chen *et al.*, 2025; Rehman *et al.*, 2023).

Scholars have explored how employees contribute to sustainability (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012) or engage with digital innovation (Mirbabaie and Marx, 2024), yet these areas of research have often evolved in parallel. Few studies have examined how individuals make sense of the twin transformation when both priorities converge in their roles (Bogner *et al.*, 2024; Mansour and Mohanna, 2024). This intersection is particularly relevant because employees interpret, enact, and sometimes resist strategic transformations through their own agency (Chen *et al.*, 2025; Trevisan *et al.*, 2024; Zhang *et al.*, 2025). As a result, there is growing interest in understanding the micro-level mechanisms through which employees engage with the twin transformation (Nevi *et al.*, 2026).

One unresolved issue concerns how employees translate simultaneous sustainability and digitalization expectations into everyday work practices (Kühner *et al.*, 2026). In many organizational contexts, employees face transformation demands characterized by different time horizons and performance criteria, often accompanied by unclear role expectations and fragmented guidance. These conditions create role ambiguity and interpretive complexity, requiring employees to construct workable forms of integration between environmental and digital priorities (Colapinto and Masé, 2026). Importantly, we argue that these contextual tensions become consequential through employees' interpretations of competing transformation logics. Sustainability and digitalization provide partially different cues regarding priorities, success criteria, and appropriate courses of action (Prashar and Chaudhuri, 2025). Employees therefore engage in perception-based sensemaking to evaluate the legitimacy of alternative responses, the scope for personal initiative, and the feasibility of integrating these competing expectations into their everyday work (e.g. Diard *et al.*, 2026). We propose that these interpretive processes constitute the immediate micro-level mechanisms through which competing transformation logics are translated into proactive job crafting behaviors.

Job crafting refers to the self-initiated adjustments employees make to tasks, interactions, and meaning at work (Singh *et al.*, 2021; Tims and Bakker, 2010; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Prior research has examined job crafting in sustainability contexts, highlighting actions such as waste reduction or green advocacy (Bissing-Olson *et al.*, 2013; Rózsa *et al.*, 2023; Zhang *et al.*, 2025), and in digital transformation settings, focusing on skill adaptation or process redesign (Chen and Chen, 2024; Wang *et al.*, 2025). However, there is still limited theorization of how job crafting unfolds when employees face both transitions simultaneously, especially under conditions of limited guidance or organizational support (Cárdenas-Muñoz *et al.*, 2024; Zhang *et al.*, 2025). Moreover, there is limited exploration of how employees navigate sustainability and digitalization together through job crafting (Kohli and Priyadarshi, 2025; Rózsa *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, the synergies and tensions that arise when employees attempt to craft their roles around these priorities remain largely unexplored (Chen *et al.*, 2025; Zhang *et al.*, 2025).

Building on this gap, this study explores how employees mobilize job crafting to navigate the twin transformation. Specifically, it investigates two research questions: (RQ1) How do employees perceive and make sense of competing sustainability and digitalization logics, and how do these interpretations shape their agency and initial engagement in job crafting? (RQ2) How do employees enact integrative job crafting over time to align sustainability and digitalization priorities in their everyday work practices? Through this lens, we position employees as active participants in shaping sustainable and digital futures, whose daily efforts can support organizational adaptation.

To explore these questions, we conducted a qualitative study in a large professional services firm recognized for its dual emphasis on environmental and digital goals. Drawing on semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, we developed a process model of job crafting under the twin transformation, illustrating how employees navigate complexity, activate agency, and contribute to innovation outcomes. The model includes contextual factors, crafting strategies, and iterative feedback mechanisms, offering insight into the role of employee agency in transformative change.

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it conceptualizes job crafting under the twin transformation as an integrative process through which employees actively reconcile competing sustainability and digitalization logics within everyday work, including divergent time horizons and evaluation criteria. Second, it advances a processual understanding of employee agency by theorizing perception-based sensemaking as the micro-level mechanism through which competing sustainability and digitalization logics are interpreted, rendered actionable, and translated into integrative job crafting practices. Third, it responds to calls for more theoretically grounded and empirically rich research linking macro-level transitions to micro-level work behaviors and lived experiences (Camacho *et al.*, 2024; Mirbabaie and Marx, 2024; Mukherjee and Dhar, 2023).

Theoretical background

Organizations today face growing pressure to align with two concurrent and deeply transformative forces: the shift toward sustainability and the acceleration of digitalization (Marrocu *et al.*, 2026). The term *twin transformation* has gained prominence to describe this convergence, underlining the need to pursue environmental and technological objectives in parallel (Montresor and Vezzani, 2023).

While scholars have examined each transition separately, we still know little about how employees experience and respond to both simultaneously within their daily roles (Minciui *et al.*, 2025; Trevisan *et al.*, 2024). The theoretical literature lacks an integrated understanding of how these dual imperatives are internalized and operationalized by individuals in the workplace (Kühner *et al.*, 2026).

Job crafting as a lens for employee agency

Job crafting offers a powerful lens to explore these dynamics. Defined as the self-initiated changes employees make to adjust the boundaries of their jobs (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), job crafting includes task, relational, and cognitive modifications that reflect individual preferences, values, and capabilities.

Building on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti and Bakker, 2011), crafting has been conceptualized as a strategy for achieving a better balance between job demands and available resources, enhancing well-being, performance, and engagement (Petrou *et al.*, 2012; Tims and Bakker, 2010; Bakker and Demerouti, 2024). This perspective highlights employee agency as an important micro-level mechanism in contexts of organizational change, where individuals actively reshape their work in response to evolving expectations and constraints (Andolšek *et al.*, 2026; Buonocore *et al.*, 2022).

Although job crafting has typically been conceptualized as a response to demands and resources within relatively coherent work environments (Bakker and Demerouti, 2024), contemporary organizational transformations suggest that employees increasingly craft their jobs under conditions where multiple strategic logics coexist (Lazazzara *et al.*, 2020). Under these conditions, job crafting becomes an integrative process through which employees interpret, reconcile, and operationalize competing organizational expectations (Melo *et al.*, 2021). Studying job crafting in the context of the twin transformation contributes to a more integrative and process-oriented understanding of employee agency.

Job crafting in sustainability contexts

In sustainability research, job crafting has been associated with behaviors that reduce environmental impact, foster eco-innovation, and strengthen alignment between employee values and organizational priorities (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Bissing-Olson *et al.*, 2013; Buonocore *et al.*, 2024; Rózsa *et al.*, 2023). Employees who feel empowered to act on environmental concerns tend to craft their roles to incorporate green practices, particularly when organizational values and individual attitudes are perceived as congruent (Saini *et al.*, 2025).

This stream of research also suggests that motivational mechanisms play a central role, since sustainability-related crafting often involves meaning-oriented interpretations of work (Kim and Kim, 2026). The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2020) further explains how perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and personal attitudes shape the likelihood of proactive sustainability behaviors at work (see Bakker and Slemp, 2026).

Importantly, sustainability initiatives often involve long-term objectives, collective responsibility, and value-based evaluations of success (Epstein and Roy, 2001). Consequently, employees engaging in sustainability-related job crafting may encounter tensions when these objectives coexist with organizational pressures for short-term efficiency or performance. These tensions suggest that understanding sustainability-oriented job crafting requires considering how environmental goals interact with other organizational priorities.

Job crafting in digital transformation contexts

In digital transformation research, job crafting has been linked to employees' efforts to learn new technologies, automate routine tasks, and redesign work processes to enhance adaptability and performance (Wang *et al.*, 2025). Digitalization often increases task complexity and role ambiguity, while also providing new resources that can be mobilized through proactive behavior (Mantzaris and Myloni, 2023).

These resources may include digital tools, flexible work arrangements, and peer learning opportunities that support experimentation and competence development (Buonocore *et al.*, 2025; Mansour and Mohanna, 2024; Ruiner *et al.*, 2023). This literature therefore emphasizes how crafting can help employees respond to technological disruption by expanding skills, reshaping workflows, and building new forms of role effectiveness (Zhao *et al.*, 2026).

At the same time, digital transformation provides new resources while introducing new performance expectations centred on speed, automation, standardization, and measurable outputs (Cosa and Torelli, 2024). While these characteristics can facilitate sustainability initiatives through improved information processing and resource efficiency, they may also create competing priorities when immediate productivity gains conflict with longer-term environmental objectives.

The twin transformation as an integrated role context

Despite these valuable contributions, the literature lacks a coherent framework for understanding how employees craft their roles when sustainability and digitalization are pursued simultaneously (Cárdenas-Muñoz *et al.*, 2024; Kohli and Priyadarshi, 2025; Rózsa *et al.*, 2023; Zhang *et al.*, 2025). Considering sustainability and digitalization separately provides only a partial understanding of employee experiences because the two transformations increasingly converge within everyday work. Their coexistence creates hybrid role contexts in which employees are expected to pursue multiple organizational objectives simultaneously.

These transformation agendas are associated with partially distinct organizational logics. Sustainability is generally oriented toward long-term responsibility, stakeholder value, and environmental stewardship, whereas digitalization is often associated with speed, efficiency, standardization, and continuous innovation. Although these logics frequently reinforce one another—for example, when digital technologies improve environmental performance or

enable more sustainable decision making—they may also generate competing priorities, particularly when immediate productivity pressures constrain investments in longer-term sustainability initiatives.

As a result, employees are required to reconcile different temporal orientations, evaluation criteria, and expectations regarding appropriate work practices. These conditions create a distinct form of role complexity in which uncertainty extends beyond task execution to include questions about which objectives should take priority, how apparently competing demands can be integrated, and which actions are perceived as legitimate within specific organizational contexts. These competing transformation logics shape employees' interpretations of their work environment, giving rise to perceptions of ambiguity, opportunity, legitimacy, and constraint.

This perspective makes job crafting particularly relevant as an integrative mechanism through which employees actively interpret organizational signals and translate multiple transformation priorities into coherent work practices. Through task redesign, relational coordination, cognitive reframing, and the appropriation of digital resources, employees construct workable forms of integration that allow sustainability and digitalization to become mutually reinforcing elements of their everyday work (e.g. [Yang et al., 2026](#)).

Theoretical gap and study positioning

Existing research has generated important insights into job crafting under sustainability agendas and under digital transformation agendas, yet limited attention has been devoted to the interdependencies that emerge when both logics converge in the same role context ([Montresor and Vezzani, 2023](#); [Minciu et al., 2025](#); [Trevisan et al., 2024](#)). In particular, there is still limited theorization of how employees manage role ambiguity and negotiate trade-offs when sustainability and digitalization generate partially overlapping expectations ([Cárdenas-Muñoz et al., 2024](#); [Kohli and Priyadarshi, 2025](#); [Rózsa et al., 2023](#); [Zhang et al., 2025](#)).

Addressing this gap requires moving beyond viewing job crafting solely as a response to demands and resources. We argue that under the twin transformation, employees construct coherence across competing organizational logics through ongoing sensemaking and role redesign. This perspective advances understanding of the twin transformation and extends job crafting theory by emphasizing its integrative, interpretive, and processual nature.

Theoretical sensitizing expectations

In line with this framing, we propose the following theoretical insights:

Insight 1. When sustainability and digitalization are pursued simultaneously, employees engage in perception-based sensemaking to construct coherence across competing transformation logics, activating context-sensitive forms of job crafting aimed at restoring clarity and coherence.

Insight 2. Employees who perceive alignment between their values and the organization's twin transformation goals are more likely to engage in meaningful crafting strategies that integrate environmental and digital priorities.

Insight 3. The availability of digital tools, social support, and leadership encouragement shapes the forms and intensity of crafting behaviors enacted in the face of competing transformation demands.

Insight 4. Job crafting under the twin transformation generates iterative learning effects, in which small-scale innovations and positive feedback strengthen employees' sense of agency and promote further proactive behavior.

These insights frame the analytical orientation of this study. They guide the exploration of how employees experience and make sense of the twin transformation, how they respond through

self-initiated role adjustments, and how these practices evolve within specific organizational environments. In doing so, the study aims to extend the theoretical conversation on job crafting, positioning it as a flexible and evolving mechanism for navigating the hybrid and uncertain realities of contemporary organizational change.

Methodology

Context

This study was conducted within a global Big Four accounting and professional services firm. Prior research shows that international professional service firms operate in highly dynamic environments where innovation capabilities and strategic adaptation are continuously required, often involving the management of trade-offs across competing organizational priorities and time horizons (Kvålshaugen *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, the global structure and strategy of professional service firms increasingly expose them to complex institutional pressures and evolving client expectations, reinforcing the need to align multiple transformation agendas simultaneously (Sako and Peo, 2025). In this context, innovation, digitalization, and ESG-related priorities tend to converge within everyday service delivery and project work, making professional service firms a particularly suitable setting for investigating how employees navigate the tensions and synergies between digital and sustainability imperatives.

The firm chosen was actively promoting both digital innovation and sustainability as core pillars of its strategy. It had formalized frameworks for green transformation and internal communication campaigns supporting digital upskilling and environmental awareness. These conditions provided both structural enablers and constraints that made it possible to observe how individuals interpret, appropriate, and sometimes reconfigure transformation agendas from the bottom up. The study was conducted with full approval from the institutional ethics committee and complied with GDPR regulations for data handling and participant consent.

Sampling strategy

The study focuses on individual employees as primary units of analysis. A purposeful and snowball sampling strategy was adopted (Suri, 2011), aligned with qualitative research standards aimed at theoretical generalization. The first participants were selected based on their active involvement in either sustainability or digital-related initiatives within the firm. These initial interviewees were then asked to identify colleagues with relevant exposure or insights, allowing access to a broader, more diverse group.

The final sample consisted of 32 employees (see Table 1) across departments such as consulting, auditing, and digital services. Roles ranged from junior consultants to senior managers, ensuring variation in hierarchical level, function, and exposure to change processes. The sample also included non-linear career paths and late-career entrants, which is common in professional services due to lateral hires and reskilling trajectories. Criteria for inclusion included employee tenure (minimum 12 months), direct involvement in projects touching on either digitalization or sustainability, and voluntary consent to participate.

Data collection

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, each lasting between 60 and 90 min. Interviews were conducted in secure and confidential settings (in-person or video call, depending on preference) over a three-month period. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and fully transcribed.

Data saturation was reached with the 32nd interview. During the final stage of data collection, new interviews primarily reinforced previously identified themes, with no substantively new first-order concepts or second-order categories emerging. In particular, later interviews confirmed the stability of the identified contextual conditions (e.g. ambiguity and

Table 1. Participant characteristics

Participant ID	Department	Role	Gender (Self-Reported)	Age (Years)	Tenure (Years)
P1	Consulting	Senior Manager	Female	32	7
P2	Consulting	Manager	Male	38	18
P3	Consulting	Manager	Male	47	4
P4	Digital Services	Senior Consultant	Female	52	14
P5	Consulting	Senior Consultant	Female	49	18
P6	Digital Services	Manager	Female	54	9
P7	Digital Services	Junior Consultant	Female	32	2
P8	Digital Services	Mid-Level Consultant	Male	45	18
P9	Consulting	Senior Manager	Male	40	15
P10	Digital Services	Junior Consultant	Male	37	7
P11	Auditing	Manager	Female	42	12
P12	Consulting	Manager	Male	39	8
P13	Consulting	Manager	Male	45	15
P14	Consulting	Junior Consultant	Female	48	3
P15	Consulting	Senior Manager	Female	50	14
P16	Consulting	Junior Consultant	Female	49	17
P17	Digital Services	Senior Manager	Female	52	4
P18	Digital Services	Junior Consultant	Female	52	18
P19	Consulting	Manager	Female	52	8
P20	Digital Services	Manager	Female	37	4
P21	Consulting	Senior Consultant	Male	33	2
P22	Digital Services	Mid-Level Consultant	Female	53	6
P23	Digital Services	Junior Consultant	Female	39	10
P24	Digital Services	Senior Consultant	Female	37	4
P25	Digital Services	Manager	Female	55	18
P26	Auditing	Junior Consultant	Male	49	12
P27	Consulting	Senior Consultant	Female	31	2
P28	Auditing	Mid-Level Consultant	Female	33	10
P29	Digital Services	Senior Manager	Female	48	4
P30	Auditing	Manager	Female	25	4
P31	Consulting	Senior Manager	Male	36	16
P32	Consulting	Manager	Female	32	2

Source(s): Authors' own creation

time pressure) and the recurring crafting practices (e.g. experimentation with digital tools, micro-initiatives, and relational coordination). At that point, additional interviews were deemed unlikely to increase conceptual depth or extend the emerging process model, and data collection was therefore concluded.

The interview guide was structured around three main areas: (1) perceptions of role flexibility and agency in relation to change; (2) concrete experiences of integrating sustainability and digital objectives into everyday work practices; and (3) perceived barriers and enabling conditions shaping this integration process. Across these areas, questions encouraged participants to reflect on specific episodes and examples, including situations in which they actively modified tasks, relationships, or work routines in response to the twin transformation. Particular attention was devoted to how participants interpreted competing organizational signals and how they translated sustainability and digitalization priorities into actionable work practices under conditions of uncertainty and time pressure. Interview questions encouraged rich descriptions and were adjusted as data collection progressed, in line with emergent themes. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequences.

Coding and analysis

The analytical process followed the qualitative inductive approach outlined by Gioia *et al.* (2013), which is particularly well-suited for exploring under-theorized organizational phenomena such as employee job crafting under the twin transformation. To strengthen analytical clarity and theoretical transformation, we explicitly distinguished between (1) *contextual conditions* that shaped employees' experience of the twin transformation and (2) *job crafting behaviors* through which employees proactively modified their tasks, relationships, and interpretations of work.

Our analysis unfolded through a multi-step iterative process. All interview transcripts were imported into NVivo to facilitate systematic coding, constant comparison, and memo-writing. The process was conducted collaboratively by both authors and unfolded in four phases.

Immersion and familiarization. Both researchers independently read all 32 interviews multiple times and produced analytic memos to document emerging patterns and process dynamics.

First-order coding. We generated first-order codes closely reflecting informants' language and concrete experiences. These codes included both descriptions of contextual pressures (e.g. perceived ambiguity, workload constraints, competing expectations) and descriptions of self-initiated responses (e.g. adjusting tasks, experimenting with tools, seeking peer support). Throughout this phase, we intentionally retained participants' phrasing and coded incidents at the level of observable experience and action.

Second-order coding. We then engaged in iterative discussions to develop second-order themes through conceptual abstraction. In this phase, we explicitly classified emergent themes into two analytical categories: (1) contextual conditions shaping the crafting process (e.g. organizational ambiguity, time pressure, conflicting transformation demands), and (2) job crafting practices through which employees enacted agency (e.g. micro-initiatives, digital tool appropriation, relational coordination). This distinction ensured that themes describing the work environment were theorized as antecedent conditions triggering and shaping the form of crafting.

Aggregation and process modeling. Second-order themes were subsequently organized into three aggregate dimensions: *Navigating Organizational Complexity* (contextual conditions), *Empowered Agency through Job Crafting* (core crafting practices), and *Employee-Driven Innovation* (emergent outcomes and reinforcing feedback). This structure enabled us to develop a process model that distinguishes clearly between the organizational context of the twin transformation, the crafting behaviors enacted by employees, and the innovation-related consequences of these behaviors. The resulting data structure (Table 2) and process model (Figure 1) provide transparency regarding the analytical progression from informant terms to theoretical dimensions.

To enhance reliability, both authors coded independently and compared interpretations throughout the process. Inter-rater agreement was assessed through Cohen's Kappa (0.82), indicating strong consistency. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and systematic reference to the original data.

We also adopted methodological triangulation by integrating organizational documents (e.g. sustainability reports, training materials, internal strategy presentations) to contextualize interview accounts. Finally, we conducted two validation interviews after model development to assess interpretive resonance and ensure that the emergent process model reflected participants' lived experience.

Findings

The findings illustrate how employees engaged in job crafting to navigate the twin transformation of sustainability and digitalization. Consistent with our research questions, the analysis shows that employee perceptions operated as a core mechanism shaping how job crafting unfolded. Participants' perceived ambiguity, perceived value alignment, and

Table 2. Data structure

Aggregate dimension	Second-order theme	First-order concepts (informant terms)	Illustrative quote
Navigating Organizational Complexity (Perception-Based Contextual Mechanisms)	Perceived competing transformation logics	“Digital is about speed, sustainability is about responsibility”; “Two agendas running in parallel”; “Short-term client pressure vs long-term ESG accountability”; “Efficiency KPIs vs sustainability targets”; “Automation first, impact later”; “Deliver fast, but also be green”; “Sustainability is framed as future-oriented, digitalization as immediate”	“In meetings, they would emphasize speed and automation. Then the next week, it was about green targets. It felt like two different priorities operating with different time horizons.”
	Interpretive ambiguity	“I wasn’t sure what was expected”; “No clear integration roadmap”; “Many slogans, little guidance”; “We had to translate strategy into tasks”; “Unclear priorities at the individual level”; “Confusion about what matters most”; “Ambiguity about who owns sustainability and digitalization”; “I had to figure it out myself”	“There were a lot of slogans floating around—digitize, decarbonize—but no clear order or integration. I had to figure it out myself.”
	Perceived feasibility constraints	“I have no time for sustainability”; “It feels like two full-time jobs”; “Client deadlines always come first”; “Sustainability is added on top”; “Digital tools save time but require time to learn”; “Too many priorities at once”; “Not enough slack resources”; “I can’t invest effort unless it fits project work”	“I am expected to contribute to sustainability initiatives, but I already have tight deadlines on client projects. It’s like I’m juggling two full-time jobs.”
	Legitimacy uncertainty	“You don’t know what will be rewarded”; “Different managers push different priorities”; “Sometimes innovation is encouraged, sometimes punished”; “Digital is rewarded, sustainability is symbolic”; “Fear of being seen as unrealistic”; “It depends on who you report to”; “Mixed messages from leadership”; “No clear performance evaluation criteria”	“One manager pushes for digital innovation, the other tells us to play safe. You don’t know what will be rewarded.”

(continued)

Table 2. Continued

Aggregate dimension	Second-order theme	First-order concepts (informant terms)	Illustrative quote
Empowered Agency through Job Crafting and Enabling Support	Perceived social resistance	“Some colleagues are hesitant”; “Resistance slows progress”; “People stick to old routines”; “Digital fatigue”; “Sustainability seen as ‘extra work’”; “Colleagues don’t want to change processes”; “I felt alone pushing new ideas”; “Hard to convince others”	“Some colleagues are hesitant to adopt new tools, even when they know it could make their work easier. It’s frustrating because the resistance slows down progress.”
	Task integration across transformation logics	“I tweaked deliverables to include both”; “I redesigned routines to connect ESG and digital”; “I added sustainability elements into digital projects”; “I reframed client work to include impact”; “I introduced ESG metrics into reporting”; “I modified workflows to reduce waste”; “I aligned project milestones with sustainability targets”; “I adapted tasks without formal mandate”	“I reworked the timeline and deliverables to incorporate a sustainability report section. It wasn’t required, but I thought it mattered.”
	Digital resource enactment	“Automating reports to save time”; “Using dashboards to track ESG KPIs”; “Digital tools created space for sustainability”; “I used Power BI instead of Excel”; “I repurposed tools beyond what they were meant for”; “Using automation to reduce manual work”; “Digital monitoring made sustainability measurable”; “Tools enabled experimentation”	“Instead of using Excel, I built a Power BI dashboard that tracks our digital and environmental metrics in one place.”
	Peer-supported relational crafting	“I teamed up with colleagues”; “I found informal champions”; “Learning by asking others”; “Creating small communities of practice”; “Sharing sustainability tips”; “Collaborating across teams”; “Finding allies who understand both agendas”	“I teamed up with colleagues who were already experimenting with sustainability. They showed me practical tools and ideas that I wouldn’t have come across on my own.”

(continued)

Table 2. Continued

Aggregate dimension	Second-order theme	First-order concepts (informant terms)	Illustrative quote
Employee-Driven Innovation (Outcomes and Feedback Effects)	Coherence-building sensemaking	“Connecting digitalization to sustainability meaning”; “Trying to create coherence”; “I reframed my job”; “I started to see the bigger picture”; “Making sense of contradictions”; “Aligning my values with transformation”; “Giving purpose to digital change”; “Interpreting twin transformation as one integrated challenge”	“It’s not just about hitting targets anymore. I’ve started to see my job as part of something bigger—helping the firm evolve while doing something I believe in.”
	Adaptive experimentation	“Testing small solutions”; “Trying it out without permission”; “Running pilot ideas”; “Experimenting with alternative workflows”; “Incremental changes instead of radical ones”; “Starting with small wins”; “Improving processes step by step”; “Trying, failing, adjusting”	“When I pitched this new workflow, my team lead said ‘go for it’. That made a big difference.”
	Leadership-enabled agency	“My manager gave me space”; “Permission to experiment”; “Feeling trusted”; “Leaders legitimized risk-taking”; “Support reduced fear of failure”; “Encouragement mattered more than resources”; “Consistency of leadership messages”; “Managers as buffers of ambiguity”	“Our manager often says, ‘Try it out—if it doesn’t work, we’ll adjust.’ That kind of trust motivates me to experiment without fear of failure.”
	Perceived role coherence	“I finally had direction”; “I understood my role better”; “More motivated”; “Increased sense of contribution”; “Feeling useful”; “Less confusion”; “More ownership”; “I felt energized once I aligned priorities”	“Once I adjusted my tasks to integrate sustainability goals, I finally felt like my work had a direction. I could see how I was contributing to something bigger.”
	Reinforcing learning loops	“After seeing results, I adjusted”; “Feedback improved adoption”; “Small wins created momentum”; “Confidence increased over time”; “Iteration strengthened agency”; “Learning by doing”; “Trial-and-error became normal”; “Experimentation built capability”	“After we launched the tool, I saw some hiccups. I revised it based on feedback, and it actually improved adoption.”

(continued)

Table 2. Continued

Aggregate dimension	Second-order theme	First-order concepts (informant terms)	Illustrative quote
	Hybrid role identity formation	“Now my job is merging tech and impact”; “I became a bridge between agendas”; “I connect ESG and digital”; “I see myself as an integrator”; “A new professional identity”; “Being recognized for integration work”; “I became a translator”; “I feel like a change agent”	“I see myself as someone who connects the dots between tech and ESG now. It’s not just a project—it’s part of my identity.”
	Employee-driven innovation	“New dashboards improved decision-making”; “Reduced energy use”; “Improved reporting accuracy”; “More efficient workflows”; “Sustainability became measurable”; “Bottom-up innovations”; “New solutions emerged from friction”; “Digital tools supported eco-efficiency”	“We implemented a digital energy tracking system that reduced our monthly energy consumption by 12%. It was rewarding to see such tangible results from our efforts.”
	Innovation through productive tension	“The friction pushed us to rethink”; “Contradictions forced creativity”; “Trade-offs triggered innovation”; “We had to find a compromise”; “Integration required improvisation”; “Competing demands generated new ideas”; “Innovation came from constraints”; “Pressure led to creative problem-solving”	“We hit some walls when trying to align priorities, but that’s when the team got creative. It forced us to rethink our approach.”

Source(s): Authors’ own creation

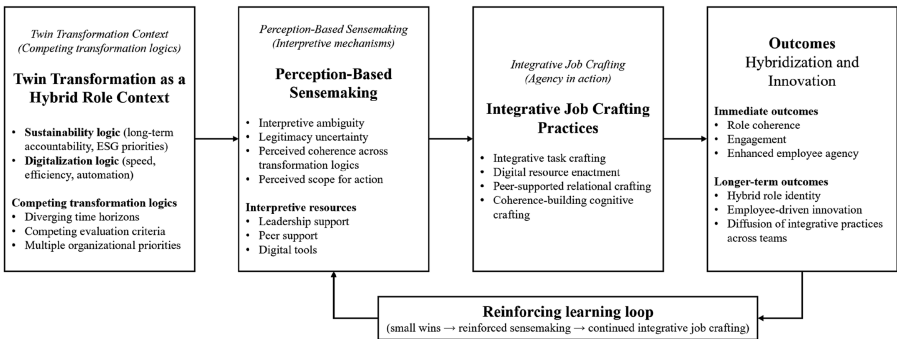


Figure 1. A process model of integrative job crafting under the twin transformation. Source(s): Authors’ own creation

perceived legitimacy of action influenced whether and how they initiated job crafting behaviors. Building on these perception patterns, we developed a process model (Figure 1) that captures how employees moved from interpretive complexity to proactive role redesign and innovation outcomes over time.

Phase 1. Navigating Organizational Complexity (Perception-Based Contextual Mechanisms)

Participants described the twin transformation as a work context characterized by uncertainty and competing demands. Importantly, this complexity was experienced and enacted through employees' perceptions of what sustainability and digitalization meant for their role. Many respondents reported difficulty translating organizational narratives into concrete expectations, particularly when they perceived sustainability and digitalization as distinct organizational agendas.

A senior consultant expressed this perceived overload clearly: "I am expected to contribute to sustainability initiatives, but I already have tight deadlines on client projects. It's like I'm juggling two full-time jobs" [P4]. This quote reflects a recurring perception that sustainability responsibilities were added to existing performance requirements without being structurally integrated into work design.

Several employees described perceived ambiguity about priorities and evaluation criteria. A mid-level consultant explained: "We hear a lot about sustainability and digitalization in company presentations, but there's no clear roadmap on what's expected of us at the individual level" [P8]. This lack of perceived clarity generated uncertainty about which actions were legitimate and how competing goals should be balanced.

Employees also perceived tensions between digital efficiency pressures and sustainability-related responsibilities. Some participants described digitalization as associated with speed, standardization, and delivery expectations, while sustainability was perceived as requiring longer-term thinking and additional coordination. This created perceived trade-offs regarding where to invest effort and attention. Peer dynamics further reinforced these perceptions. As one senior manager noted: "Some colleagues are hesitant to adopt new tools, even when they know it could make their work easier. It's frustrating because the resistance slows down progress" [P15]. This quote illustrates how perceived cultural resistance and uneven adoption created additional interpretive barriers.

Overall, this phase shows that the crafting process was triggered by perceptions of competing transformation logics, unclear priorities, and uncertainty regarding the legitimacy of acting on both agendas simultaneously. Employees first engaged in interpretive work to understand what the twin transformation demanded from them and how these demands could be operationalized within time-constrained project environments before engaging in job redesign.

Leadership and peer support as enabling conditions

Across interviews, participants consistently emphasized that leadership encouragement and peer support influenced whether they felt able to experiment with new ways of integrating sustainability and digitalization.

One senior manager explained: "When the company invests in the right tools and promotes a culture of experimentation, it's easier to take initiative" [P17]. This statement highlights how employees interpreted organizational investment as a signal that experimentation was legitimate.

At the same time, perceived inconsistency in leadership signals created hesitation. A mid-level consultant observed: "One manager pushes for digital innovation, the other tells us to play safe. You don't know what will be rewarded" [P22]. This quote illustrates that employees' perceptions of reward structures and managerial expectations influenced whether they engaged in crafting behaviors or remained cautious.

Once employees developed a workable interpretation of the twin transformation and perceived sufficient legitimacy to act, they engaged in job crafting behaviors aimed at integrating sustainability and digitalization within their roles. These behaviors were described as proactive adjustments intended to reconcile competing demands while improving efficiency and managing workload.

A recurring pattern involved task crafting through the appropriation of digital tools. One junior consultant stated: “I started automating some routine tasks, like data entry, which freed up a few hours a week. Now, I use that time to explore energy-efficient solutions for our department” [P7]. This quote illustrates an integrative crafting logic. Digitalization was enacted as a resource to create time and capacity for sustainability-related initiatives. Employees described digital tools as performance enablers that created the conditions for sustainability engagement under workload pressure.

Relational crafting also played a central role. Participants frequently described peer collaboration as necessary to acquire both technical and sustainability-related knowledge and to build legitimacy around experimentation. A senior consultant explained: “I teamed up with colleagues who were already experimenting with sustainability. They showed me some practical tools and ideas that I wouldn’t have come across on my own” [P27]. This indicates that crafting behaviors were embedded in informal learning networks, where employees actively sought support to bridge gaps between digital competencies and sustainability understanding. Leadership support consistently emerged as an enabling condition for experimentation. A junior consultant noted: “Our manager often says, ‘Try it out—if it doesn’t work, we’ll adjust.’ That kind of trust motivates me to experiment without fear of failure” [P18].

Employees also engaged in cognitive crafting, reframing the meaning of their work in ways that integrated digitalization and sustainability into a coherent role identity. A mid-level consultant described: “It’s not just about hitting targets anymore. I’ve started to see my job as part of something bigger—helping the firm evolve while doing something I believe in” [P28]. This reframing was particularly relevant under the twin transformation, where employees needed to justify the time and effort invested in sustainability initiatives while remaining aligned with digital performance expectations.

Overall, the findings show that job crafting under the twin transformation took the form of integrative role redesign, where employees crafted hybrid roles that enabled them to pursue both digital and sustainability objectives simultaneously. This integrative crafting involved aligning digital tools with sustainability outcomes, mobilizing peer networks to access expertise, and reframing role meaning to maintain motivation under competing performance criteria.

Immediate effects: perceived clarity and engagement as stabilizing outcomes

Participants reported that integrative job crafting generated immediate psychological outcomes, particularly perceived role clarity and engagement. As employees experimented with task and relational adjustments, they described a stronger sense of direction in an otherwise ambiguous environment.

A senior consultant reflected: “Once I adjusted my tasks to integrate sustainability goals, I finally felt like my work had a direction. I could see how I was contributing to something bigger” [P24]. This quote indicates that crafting was associated with increased perceived coherence between strategic narratives and daily tasks.

Another manager added: “Making small changes in my tasks and seeing progress gave me a renewed sense of purpose. I started approaching my work with much more enthusiasm” [P11]. Similarly, one participant explained: “Once we started seeing that these initiatives were appreciated by both managers and clients, I felt much more confident investing time in them. It became clear that sustainability was not something extra, but part of doing my job well” [P26].

These accounts suggest that clarity and engagement functioned as stabilizing effects that reinforced continued proactive behavior. Employees described these immediate outcomes as particularly important because they reduced uncertainty about whether sustainability-related efforts were considered legitimate and valuable within performance-driven environments.

Phase 3. Employee-Driven Innovation (Outcomes and Feedback Effects)

Over time, participants described tangible innovation outcomes resulting from integrative job crafting. These outcomes included process improvements, new digital tools supporting sustainability goals, and broader organizational learning effects.

One senior manager described a concrete innovation: “We implemented a digital energy tracking system that reduced our monthly energy consumption by 12%. It was rewarding to see such tangible results from our efforts” [P9]. This illustrates how employees used digital infrastructures to produce measurable sustainability outcomes, generating innovations that aligned with both transformation agendas.

Beyond technical outcomes, employees also described changes in how they perceived their professional identity. One senior consultant explained: “For the first time in my career, I feel like the work I do aligns with my values. It’s no longer just a job; it’s a way to make an impact” [P21]. These accounts indicate that the twin transformation provided a context in which employees could construct hybrid role identities, combining efficiency-driven digital competence with purpose-driven sustainability engagement.

Collaboration and innovation were also reinforced at the team level. As one junior consultant stated: “When we worked together on a digital sustainability project, it felt like we were building something meaningful. It strengthened our collaboration and pushed us to think outside the box” [P14]. This highlights that crafting outcomes extended beyond individual work redesign and contributed to collective innovation dynamics.

Iterative improvement: feedback loops as confidence-building mechanisms

A final pattern concerned the iterative nature of the crafting process. Participants described a feedback loop in which early experimentation produced visible outcomes, which then increased confidence and encouraged further crafting behaviors.

One manager summarized this dynamic: “When you see your efforts paying off, it’s easier to push for more change. It builds momentum for both personal growth and organizational improvement” [P20]. This quote illustrates how feedback effects reinforced employees’ perceived agency and sustained engagement over time.

This iterative improvement mechanism is particularly relevant in the twin transformation context, where employees described initial uncertainty regarding the feasibility and legitimacy of integrating sustainability and digitalization. Small wins and visible outcomes reduced perceived risk and strengthened the belief that integrative crafting could produce both performance and purpose-related benefits.

Discussion

This study examined how employees navigate the twin transformation through job crafting and developed a process model explaining how competing sustainability and digitalization logics are translated into everyday work practices. Participants described the twin transformation as a hybrid role context characterized by competing priorities, divergent temporal orientations, and partially different evaluation criteria. Within this context, job crafting emerged as an integrative process through which employees constructed coherence across multiple organizational expectations while progressively aligning sustainability and digitalization within their daily work.

A central insight concerns the role of perception-based sensemaking in shaping employee agency. Employees interpreted competing organizational expectations, evaluated the

legitimacy and feasibility of alternative courses of action, and gradually developed integrative crafting strategies in response to the twin transformation. Perceptions of ambiguity, value alignment, legitimacy, and scope for action therefore functioned as interpretive mechanisms that connected organizational conditions with proactive role redesign. This perspective clarifies the relationship between our perception-oriented research questions and the resulting process model, positioning sensemaking as the micro-level mechanism through which competing transformation logics are translated into integrative job crafting.

The process model further illustrates that job crafting under the twin transformation unfolds through an iterative sequence. Employees first interpreted competing organizational demands, then experimented with integrative task, relational, and cognitive crafting strategies, and subsequently refined these practices through reinforcing learning loops generated by visible outcomes and organizational feedback. This sequence explains how employee-driven innovation emerged progressively from repeated cycles of interpretation, experimentation, and adaptation.

These findings contribute to the growing literature on job crafting and organizational transformation by demonstrating that the twin transformation represents more than a new empirical setting in which job crafting can be observed. Instead, the coexistence of sustainability and digitalization reveals organizational conditions that require employees to integrate competing transformation logics, thereby extending current understanding of how job crafting develops under conditions characterized by strategic complexity, interpretive ambiguity, and multiple performance expectations.

Theoretical implications

This study extends the job crafting literature by explaining how proactive role redesign unfolds when employees operate under competing transformation logics within hybrid organizational change contexts. Existing job crafting research has predominantly examined situations in which employees craft their work in response to job demands, available resources, or organizational change initiatives (Demerouti and Bakker, 2011; Tims and Bakker, 2010; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Our findings indicate that the twin transformation introduces a qualitatively different context in which employees simultaneously confront sustainability and digitalization priorities that differ in temporal orientation, performance criteria, and underlying assumptions. In these circumstances, job crafting involves constructing coherence across competing transformation logics before employees redesign tasks, relationships, and work meaning. This perspective extends existing conceptualizations by suggesting that future job crafting research should explicitly consider the coexistence of multiple organizational logics as an important contextual condition shaping proactive work redesign. Future studies could investigate how different combinations of competing transformation logics influence the emergence, intensity, and effectiveness of job crafting across organizational contexts.

A second contribution concerns the mechanisms through which organizational conditions influence job crafting. Previous studies have consistently shown that organizational resources, leadership, and social relationships facilitate proactive behavior (Chen *et al.*, 2025; Mansour and Mohanna, 2024; Petrou *et al.*, 2012). Our findings suggest that leadership support, peer support, and access to digital tools contribute to job crafting because they function as interpretive resources that help employees understand organizational expectations and evaluate the legitimacy of proactive action. In the proposed model, these organizational conditions influence how employees interpret competing transformation demands and whether they perceive sufficient scope to experiment with new ways of working. This perspective expands current theorizing by positioning organizational support as a mechanism that shapes employees' interpretations of competing demands and the meaning they assign to available resources. Future research could further examine how different forms of organizational and supervisory support influence employees' sensemaking processes and how these interpretive mechanisms interact with more traditional job demands and resources.

A third contribution concerns the temporal dynamics of employee agency. Existing job crafting research has increasingly recognized the dynamic nature of proactive work redesign (Bakker and Demerouti, 2024; Petrou *et al.*, 2012), yet relatively limited attention has been devoted to explaining how employee agency develops throughout transformation processes. Our findings suggest that agency emerges progressively through repeated cycles of interpretation, experimentation, feedback, and adjustment. Early crafting attempts generated visible outcomes that strengthened employees' confidence, reinforced perceptions of legitimacy, and encouraged subsequent proactive behavior. The model therefore conceptualizes employee agency as an evolving process that develops through continuous interaction between employees and their organizational environment. This perspective encourages future longitudinal research examining how agency develops over time, the conditions under which reinforcing learning cycles are interrupted, and the organizational interventions that sustain proactive adaptation during complex transformation processes.

Finally, the proposed process model contributes by integrating several elements that have previously been examined largely in isolation within the job crafting literature. Organizational ambiguity, proactive role redesign, learning cycles, and innovation have each received considerable scholarly attention. Our findings explain how these elements become connected through a coherent process initiated by competing transformation logics and mediated by perception-based sensemaking. The model conceptualizes job crafting as the integrative process through which employees translate strategic transformation agendas into coherent work practices in contexts characterized by ambiguity. The resulting sequence—from competing transformation logics, through interpretive sensemaking and integrative job crafting, to reinforcing learning loops and employee-driven innovation—extends current process-oriented perspectives by explaining how organizational transformation is enacted through everyday employee agency. In this respect, the model contributes by theorizing new relationships among established concepts within the distinctive context of the twin transformation.

Practical implications

The findings offer several practical implications for organizations pursuing the twin transformation. A first implication concerns the management of competing transformation priorities. Organizations often communicate sustainability and digitalization through separate initiatives, performance indicators, or organizational units, leaving employees responsible for integrating these agendas within their everyday work. Our findings suggest that employees benefit from clearer guidance regarding how environmental and digital objectives relate to one another and how potential trade-offs should be managed. Organizations should articulate integrated transformation narratives that translate strategic priorities into coherent role expectations, project objectives, and performance criteria.

A second implication concerns leadership. The findings indicate that leadership support contributes to job crafting by helping employees interpret organizational expectations and develop confidence in experimenting with new ways of working. Managers therefore play an important role in reducing interpretive ambiguity through consistent communication, constructive feedback, and visible endorsement of integrative initiatives. Leadership development programmes should prepare managers to facilitate employee sensemaking, encourage experimentation, and support the reconciliation of competing transformation priorities within everyday work.

Third, organizations should recognise peer support as a strategic resource for organizational transformation. Participants frequently described informal collaboration, knowledge sharing, and peer learning as mechanisms that enabled them to integrate digital and sustainability objectives. Creating cross-functional communities of practice, opportunities for collaborative experimentation, and structured knowledge-sharing initiatives can therefore

strengthen employees' capacity to develop integrative solutions while reducing uncertainty associated with complex transformation processes.

A further implication concerns the role of digital technologies. Employees described digital tools as resources that enabled them to create time, improve coordination, and develop sustainability-oriented solutions. Organizations should therefore frame digital technologies as infrastructures that support broader sustainability objectives while improving operational efficiency. Aligning investments in digitalization with environmental goals may encourage employees to identify synergies between the two transformation agendas and stimulate employee-driven innovation.

Finally, the findings suggest that organizations should explicitly recognize integrative job crafting within their human resource management systems. Performance management, training, career development, and recognition practices can reinforce employee agency by valuing initiatives that successfully combine digital and sustainability objectives. Recognizing these hybrid contributions may encourage employees to continue experimenting with new work practices and support the emergence of innovation through continuous cycles of learning and adaptation.

Limitations and future research

This study has several limitations that also open promising avenues for future research. First, the research was conducted within a single global professional services firm. Although this setting provided a theoretically relevant context because sustainability and digitalization are deeply embedded in everyday project work, the institutional and project-based characteristics of professional service firms may shape job crafting differently from manufacturing, healthcare, or public sector organizations. Future research should examine the transferability of the proposed process model across different organizational settings and institutional environments, particularly where competing transformation logics vary in intensity and configuration.

Second, the study relied on retrospective interview accounts, which may be affected by recall bias and post-hoc rationalization. Longitudinal qualitative designs, diary studies, and ethnographic approaches could provide richer evidence of how perception-based sensemaking, integrative job crafting, and reinforcing learning loops develop over time. Such approaches would also allow researchers to examine how employees' interpretations evolve throughout different stages of organizational transformation.

Third, our findings identify competing transformation logics as a central contextual condition shaping integrative job crafting. Future research could build on this insight by conceptualizing and operationalizing competing demand logics more explicitly within job crafting theory. Comparative studies could examine how different combinations of organizational logics—for example sustainability and digitalization, efficiency and innovation, or standardization and customization—influence employees' sensemaking processes, crafting strategies, and work outcomes. This line of inquiry would help clarify the boundary conditions under which integrative job crafting is most likely to emerge.

Fourth, the proposed model highlights the importance of leadership support, peer support, and access to digital tools as interpretive resources that shape how employees understand and respond to competing organizational expectations. Future studies could investigate how different forms of organizational and supervisory support influence employees' interpretations of transformation priorities and how these mechanisms interact with more traditional job demands and resources. Quantitative and mixed-method designs could further examine the relative importance of these interpretive resources across different organizational contexts.

Finally, our findings conceptualize employee agency as an evolving process that develops through repeated cycles of interpretation, experimentation, and feedback. Future research could investigate how these learning cycles develop over longer periods, the conditions under

which they are reinforced or interrupted, and their longer-term consequences for employee well-being, innovation, and organizational adaptation. Additional research could also examine whether sustained integrative job crafting generates unintended consequences, such as overload, role conflict, or burnout, particularly when organizations provide insufficient support for employees navigating multiple transformation demands.

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