

Case for Teaching

# Rafael and the Sorela Vehicles Case: The Pandemic as an Enhancer of Job Crafting



## Rafael e o Caso da Sorela Veículos: A Pandemia como Potencializador de Job Crafting

**Discipline:** Organizational Behavior  
**Subject:** Job Crafting  
**Industry:** Automotive  
**Geography:** Rio de Janeiro/Brazil

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### INTRODUCTION

Rafael was telling a story to his daughters, that he knew by heart, without realizing what he was actually reading. Every night he and his wife would switch turns in this evening ritual that gave them so much pleasure and strengthened their family ties. It had already passed the kids' usual bedtime, but the context did not seem usual at all. The world was facing a pandemic without precedents, which would affect individuals, organizations, and countries, regardless of the social and economic context. An extreme necessity and urgency for social isolation caused schools and companies to close their doors. Contradicting optimistic perspectives of a brief return, the uncertainty from the governments and a constant update of the number of infected in all media showed signs of longevity for the maintaining isolation. In particular, Rafael's job as a manager at Sorela, a car dealer, seemed even more distant from returning to 'normal' activities. Rafael was looking for ways to avoid or

minimize the impacts of the pandemic on himself and on those around him.

Just isolating himself at home seemed insufficient. He believed he could turn the tables and transform a serious problem into new opportunities. Immersed in his thoughts of uncertainties and turbulent scenery, Rafael hears his youngest daughter ask: "Dad, what is the meaning of metamorphosis?" Rafael questioned himself about his daughter's ability to read his thoughts about all the changes that were necessary. The transformation process of the caterpillar to a butterfly was easy to answer. Very different from the questions that were boiling in his head: How not to disappoint the people who were counting on him? How to ensure the financial and emotional security for his family and company? Was it time to look for new challenges where there would be more space to fulfill his potential and live his personal values more intensely? He could barely sleep craving for answers.

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## ANTECEDENTS

### Rafael before Sorela

Rafael was a youngster in love with life when he met his wife-to-be at a 'beer festival' thrown by the Economy Course. In that traditional fraternization of federal universities in Rio between freshmen and veterans of different courses, he met Siena, who was almost graduating in Production Engineering. The passion was so intense that it made Rafael surrender to the hitherto unimaginable 'pledges of eternal love.' Right after Rafael's graduation, at the age of 24, the couple married, and it did not take long for the family to grow with Sofia's arrival. Against that unique and disconcerting experience of being a father, Rafael felt for the first time the need for some stability, because he felt the weight of the responsibility of another life entirely dependent on him. After Sofia's second birthday, Rafael enrolled himself in an executive MBA at the best business school in Rio, decision that was supported by Siena. A world of possibilities opened up, Rafael felt pleasure in learning with the most experienced (professors) and in sharing doubts and experiences with his peers. He was a dreamer so he imagined himself leading the most diverse initiatives, from CEO of a large transnational company, traveling weakly to headquarters around the world, to a manager of a small town micro-business living in a simple house at an almost deserted beach.

Siena listened to Rafael's dreams with a mixture of enchantment and distress, as she felt the weight of the reality. With the arrival of their second daughter, Layla, Rafael opted for a path that would assure more stability and security for the family, calming Siena's anxieties. He accepted a job proposal made by an investment bank on the closure event of his MBA. But something was telling him that he would not last long in this job. Said and done, about three years later, Rafael had lost the enthusiasm for work, which was a big characteristic of his personality. Siena realized what was happening to Rafael, so one day she encouraged him to leave his job. She also wanted her husband to be happy and the bonuses accumulated over the three years working for the financial market would be enough to assure financial security for the family until Rafael could find a job that would make him feel accomplished.

On a sunny Sunday, one of his friends, Bernardo, invited him over for a barbecue at his parents' house to celebrate his 35<sup>o</sup> birthday, 'only for close friends.' Rafael and Bernardo were friends since kindergarten and they grew up together practically living in each other's houses, to a point that Rafael's daughters called Bernardo's father grandpa Ronaldo, who is also the owner of Sorela, and they both shared a passion for cars. Rafael was amused to say

that when he was a little boy and they asked what team he rooted for, he would reply with a smile on his face: "Ferrari." Ronaldo knew that Rafael had abandoned his job at the bank and even though he had graduated in Economics, Rafael was fascinated with construction.

In an ordinary conversation at that barbecue about moving Sorela to a bigger and better-located space, Ronaldo raised the possibility of Rafael helping him in this process of construction and moving. Despite his discomfort with the fact that the automotive industry generates many environmental impacts, Rafael (identified himself with and) admired Ronaldo's dedication to his agency. Getting carried away by the curiosity and the good feeling of a new challenge, he accepted the proposal, without even having clarity of what exactly his role would be.

### Sorela: history and structure

Founded in 1990 by Ronaldo and José Antônio, both graduated in Pharmacy, Sorela was founded when the two friends put five cars for sale at Ronaldo's garage. As time passes, the company started to formalize itself and grow. The partners opened and closed Sorela themselves, even on Saturdays, accumulating a workload of at least 60 hours a week for decades. They were born in the early 1950s, a generation that believed in hard work and long-term gratification. Coming from a humble origin, they were proud of the growth of the business and dedicated their lives to the company in the expectation of a safe and comfortable retirement. Thirty years after the first car they sold together, while Ronaldo and José Antônio approached their 70s, Sorela Vehicles occupied a relevant position in the new and semi-new car market in Niterói, thanks to the honesty and dedication of its owners. But the company was facing a lack of efficiency and an inadequate structure to grow more. The high turnover of employees, who frequently switched agencies taking the customers with them, reinforced the partners' preference for centralization of decision-making, lowering the level of engagement among employees. Additionally, there was low level of standardization of processes, with records made in notebooks, at most.

### The entrance of Rafael into the company

On a Monday that followed the conversation about the construction project of the new Sorela, Rafael went to the company to confirm the validity and details of the proposal. Ronaldo and his partner, José Antônio, were discussing about the contractor for the new store. Upon seeing Rafael, Ronaldo invited him to the conversation and informed the partner that, from that moment on, Rafael would take care of 'those problems.' Rafael promptly 'rolled up his sleeves' and began to dive into the project

and the problems. The following months were intense for Rafael, but he felt fulfilled with the job. He took advantage of the *'carte blanche'* given by Ronaldo and his partner, both tired of dealing with the problems and surprises of a construction project. Rafael decided to study sustainable buildings. He talked to professionals from his network and assembled a new building that no environmental activist could criticize (except for the fact that it was a car agency). The project included a reuse system of rainwater for washing cars, photovoltaic panels to generate solar energy, glass architecture to take advantage of natural lighting, among other environmentally sustainable initiatives. The result drew the attention of other car agencies and partners, who began to contact Rafael for advice on similar projects. Rafael then saw the possibility of expanding his operations to other markets and started investing in social media to build his image and expand the business.

A few months after the work was completed, Ronaldo offered Rafael a formal job at Sorela to address the challenges related to the growth of the company, a suggestion that came from Bernardo. A job based on traditional lines did not seem so attractive to him, especially after the negative experience working for the bank and the so-far positive experience of launching himself as self-employed. But Sorela was located two blocks away from his home, which would allow him some flexibility to participate in his family's daily routine. There was also an aspect of financial security as Rafael had already spent a large part of his savings and Siena was planning her *'sabbatical'* period to dedicate more time to their daughters and redefine new professional paths. Besides, his experience in the project to build the new agency had been so positive that even without having a defined position, Rafael accepted the proposal to *'help'* the partners in the challenges of management and growth. At the same time, his social media construction entrepreneurship was growing, but it was not yet clear if it would be enough to support the family.

Upon entering Sorela, maybe because of the direct connection to the core business, the partners did not give Rafael as much freedom as they did in the construction project. Even though he officially assumed the position of manager, he saw his opinions face significant resistance, sometimes being ignored, mainly by José Antônio, but Rafael persisted. He once proposed to the partners to host the Nictheroy Club of Antique Vehicles. The club met weekly to organize vintage car gatherings and to socialize. Since the meetings were held at night, it would not interfere with the company's routine. José Antônio did not approve the idea, arguing that he did not see how they could make money out of it. Rafael tried to explain that the goal was not to increase revenue or profit but to strengthen relations with customers and connect the brand with a passion, building loyalty, and expanding the customer base. Rafael did not

stand a chance to get this and other proposals accepted. The partners were proud to have built Sorela on their own, with almost no knowledge on management and on the business itself. Extremely frustrated, Rafael considered quitting several times. But he was not sure if quitting was the right decision. He did not want to disappoint his great friend, who had placed high expectations on Rafael's ability to leverage his father's business. He also enjoyed the informal atmosphere of the company, the daily contact with different people (customers), and dealing with cars, his old passion. Above all, Rafael felt he could make a difference there and decided to insist.

With a lot of effort, long meetings, and patience that was not peculiar to him, Rafael managed to put some of the knowledge acquired during the MBA into practice. He started by formalizing some processes and defining clearer roles for each position. Then he implemented a management system, which he still considered basic, but guaranteed the unification and minimum transparency of information on the purchasing and sales of the cars. He needed to put a lot of energy into training as well as into engaging employees and partners with the new tool. Rafael also conducted internal training himself, such as in sales techniques, thus promoting the exchange of knowledge between his team. He also invested on strengthening relationships with suppliers and other stakeholders, such as banks and finance companies, which generated benefits for a large part of their customers who bought financed cars, in addition to obtaining financial compensation for Sorela. He contacted other car dealers and managed to get cars below the market price to achieve their monthly sales goals. That way he built win-win relationships, just the way he liked.

The sales growth was expressive and Sorela's results improved every month. But Rafael still felt a bit disappointed, believing that he could generate value and even better results for the company. He recorded all the insights he had on his cell phone and gradually detailed each new idea.

Considering his technological bias, Rafael was searching for possible ways to transform Sorela into a sustainable business also from a socio-environmental perspective. This was essential in his understanding if Sorela wanted to sustain itself in the long run. He dedicated himself to research on such opportunities after putting his daughters to sleep, and he studied initiatives that were still incipient in Brazil, such as the electric car. He discovered a national manufacturer with an affordable price proposal, Hitech Electric (<https://www.hitech-e.com.br/> retrieved on December 6, 2020). He went to Curitiba to visit the factory and to work on a partnership, but even before he started introducing this idea to Ronaldo and José Antônio, they ruled out the possibility "due to the high risk of not knowing this company and due to the lack of structure for electric

cars in the city.” Rafael also raised the idea of entering the car rental business. The Brazilian government had stipulated tax benefits for rental companies. It would be possible to buy cars at lower prices by reduced taxes, providing a mobility service instead of the ‘car’ product, in line with the idea of asset/resource sharing, already disseminated in other sectors such as in the hotel business (Airbnb), and in the transport sector itself with Uber. It would still be possible to sell the car after a period of use. Once again reticent, the partners refused to study this possibility further. Rafael felt each of these negative feedbacks burying his possibility of flying.

The most recent episode was when he found NanoFlowcell (<https://www.nanoflowcell.com/> retrieved on December 6, 2020), the brand of the Quantino car prototype, which had completed more than 150 thousand kilometers on the road using saltwater as fuel. In the same proportion of his enthusiasm when reading about the subject, there was the disbelief and resistance of the partners: “Doesn’t this boy have anything else to invent? Where on earth have you seen a car powered by saltwater! If it were actually good, everyone would be talking about it!” shouted José Antônio. Rafael wondered if he had reached the limit of his possibilities in that context and if it was time to embrace new challenges.

## BUSINESS CONTEXT

In 2016, Brazil occupied the position of the tenth largest car producer and the eighth domestic market in the world. The sales in the vehicle industry in 2019 grew 8.6% in comparison to the year before. At the beginning of the year 2020, before the pandemic reached Brazil, the National Federation of Motor Vehicle Distribution (Fenabrave) expected a growth of 9% for car sales in that year. The deficiencies of public transportation in Brazilian cities contribute to the magnitude of this industry. Research conducted by Anfavea shows that interviewees from all four generations claimed that the car is their main means of transportation. An important cultural element is that Brazilians see cars as more than just a means of transportation, representing a national passion. Conversely to international trends of reduction, this research shows that about half of the population owns a car. Among those who do not own a vehicle, 69% of respondents from generations X and Y intended to buy one in the next five years.

Regardless of the current Brazilian reality, there are indications that the automotive industry will undergo new and important global changes. Several studies highlight the effects to the climate change, the efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the search for energy security as the major drivers of change. Alternative technologies can be decisive if (or when) energy resources are depleted. The automotive

industry is moving toward vehicle electrification, while cities are working on solutions to solve problems arising from traffic and pollution caused by demographic concentration. There are signs of behavioral change, although slow. On the one hand, the expansion of car rental and car sharing increases the availability and occupation rate of vehicles within cities. On the other hand, there is the car-bike transition. Niterói stands out among Brazilian cities regarding the extension of existing and under-construction bicycle lanes and cycle tracks.

In addition to competing with disruptive competitors such as bicycles and car sharing, Sorela faced the competition with better-structured dealerships and larger car dealers in neighboring cities such as Rio, with greater working capital and bargaining power. Another aggravating factor in this market was the low level of consumer confidence, due to high closing rates of companies, restricting the possibility of post-sales and medium-term guarantees.

## RAFAEL AND COVID-19

Amid his personal challenges and at Sorela, the coronavirus appeared, bringing with it a world pandemic that promised to revolutionize the status quo, without leaving anyone out. Rafael followed the growing number of infected people, saddened by the suffering of people and concerned about the potential impacts the pandemic would cause in his personal and professional life. Rafael approached Ronaldo with some proposals of actions to prepare themselves and especially the company, because he knew it was a matter of time for the pandemic to arrive. But Ronaldo did not listen as he still doubted whether it would actually reach Niterói and their business. Rafael felt powerless, but he continued to structure an action plan for the COVID-19 context.

On Friday 13, the governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro enacted measures to reduce the circulation and agglomeration of people. Schools were suspended, stores closed, and people were strongly advised to stay home. Ronaldo and José Antônio were part of the risk group due to their advanced age, in addition to one being a smoker and the other diabetic. They were paralyzed, and Rafael took the initiative to seek them out to align guidelines and the following steps that should be taken.

Back with the family to recharge his energy, Layla asked Rafael to watch the movie *Inside Out*. During the movie, Rafael connected the ‘basic emotions’ addressed in the story with his own feelings. The fear of the uncertainty and responsibility for his family, as the fashion industry in which Siena worked was one of the most affected by the pandemic. Sadness for his team at Sorela, because he knew that many had no financial savings. Anger for having been

prevented from acting before, minimizing the impacts. And even joy for not having to stick to fixed schedules, being able to organize his priorities freely, and having once again a *'carte blanche'* in his hands. This time, however, not by choice of the partners. Allowing himself to feel that happiness motivated him to immediately write down his ideas and start making some phone calls.

The first decision involved the employees. He made a deal with all of them to take a vacation for a period of two weeks, explaining that the measure was necessary to guarantee everyone's job. After the two weeks, Rafael joined the government benefit of paying the wages of the employees who would have their employment contract suspended for a period of two months. Even though the employees were receiving a minimum wage and guaranteed employment, for the salespeople this represented a drastic reduction in their income. So Rafael offered jobs on his digital platform for those who demonstrated affinity with sustainability. The platform had grown a lot due to the surprising warming market of Real Estate in Niterói during the pandemic. His exposure to social media and a contact network with important construction companies in the city stimulated the demand for Rafael to include a perspective of smart buildings in many construction projects. The beneficial impacts of the pandemic on the environment raised the awareness and relevance of sustainable initiatives. The employees of Sorela recognized the opportunity and the relationship between Rafael and they became closer through regular virtual meetings.

Facing the restrictions to reopen the physical store and to follow regular procedures, the goal became to innovate in how to reach clients. Rafael surveyed among current clients which ones had changed their car at least two years ago to contact them suggesting a new exchange and offering options. A significant change in the traditional passive stance for a proactive approach of selling. Even with the decrease of relevance of automobiles to consumer, Rafael believed that crisis drives the market. Clients could seek liquidation of assets, selling or trading a car for a cheaper one. Additionally, that sharp sensation of finitude caused by the pandemic could generate a movement toward wish fulfillment (like buying the car of your dreams) 'while still possible.' To connect the brand with the desire, pleasure, and passion for cars, Rafael articulated a partnership with a friend that promotes events in Niterói and the president of Nitheroy Club of Antique Vehicles. They inaugurated the Niterói Cine Drive-in on Caminho Niemeyer. A big success for all the parties involved, leaving Rafael radiant with the result.

Even without the support of the partners, Rafael had been trying for some time to sew Sorela's entrance into the digital environment. He invested time and energy in this

online marketing project to access clients and integrate Sorela's system with e-commerce platforms, like Webmotors, icarros, Mercado Livre, and OLX. Finally, it was time to put the project into practice. Excited with the digital universe, he decided to invest in social media as selling channels and brand strengthening. He developed the webpages and the digital content on his own, which was a pleasant challenge for him. His previous experience and the followers accumulated in his sustainability profile were essential in leveraging Sorela's virtual reach. Davi, a handpicked employee, was vital in updating all the necessary media and the inventory information, as well as being someone with whom Rafael could discuss problems and solutions. They took turns going to Sorela, washing and photographing the cars so that they could add them on the website. Rafael directed the calls from Sorela's landlines to his cell phone and established an automatic weekly mailing to customers via WhatsApp. He would schedule each customer individually to see the cars at Sorela, following all hygiene and protection recommendations.

So many initiatives resulted in a good harvest. Gradually, the clients started to come back and Sorela ended the first month of isolation with similar results to pre-pandemic months. To be able to implement his ideas and see their positive impacts was gratifying for Rafael. With each sale made, he felt as he was transforming the reality, keeping the business going, protecting employees and their families. If he were not there, the partners would not have the mechanisms to keep the company active and productive.

All of this happened without a close monitoring by the partners. Eventually, Rafael shared some results to Ronaldo, without providing much detail regarding the changes implemented. He missed the conversations with Ronaldo. Despite the usual resistance, those talks used to bring him interesting insights to improve his projects, envisioning ways to solve different problems. He felt the need to receive some feedback about how the partners viewed his initiatives. He was genuinely committed to doing his best, but he acted based on his own criteria, which was not a guarantee of alignment with the expectations of Ronaldo and José Antônio.

## THE DILEMMA

Rafael was dribbling countless tasks with satisfaction. Professionally, he needed to run the operations at Sorela with the changes implemented and ensure that its digital bases remained useful and updated. In the family context, he shared with Siena the household chores and the support to the homeschooling of the kids. There were only a few hours left to sleep, but Rafael did not seem to miss moments

of rest. He was happy to face the challenges and knew that his effort would be rewarded.

He was talking to Siena about this when his cell phone rang. It was Tamy Lin, his MBA colleague. They were close during the course but had not spoken since. Tammy proposed a partnership at her car-sharing startup, moObie. Her idea of developing a mobile application for car sharing had come true: any vehicle owner could register his car on the platform and decide how much to charge for the daily rental. Tamy commented that there are more than 150 million private cars in Brazil, 90% of the time underused. She reinforced that the user-to-user model made a lot more sense to her. Rafael could not disagree. MoObie was growing and Tamy was very excited about the possibilities of expanding the business in Brazil and in neighboring countries. She needed someone like Rafael on board. Rafael asked Tamy for a few days to think about the proposal.

## NEXT STEPS

Rafael hangs up the phone and Siena eagerly awaits for details about the conversation, as she only heard Rafael's words. While explaining the proposal, Rafael weighs the pros and cons of each choice. He was facing a 'sweet problem,' as his father would say. But he vents to Siena: "Just now that I was so satisfied with the work and with the direction toward which Sorela was moving to?!" Conversely, the pandemic showed signs of being under control, isolation restrictions were reduced. Soon Ronaldo and José Antônio would return to normal activities. Rafael wondered how it would be like after they returned to their routine activities. Was it worthwhile to stay at Sorela hoping for the continuity of the implemented changes? Or was it time to take new challenges? Tamy did not give him much time. He needed to decide.

## Teaching Notes

### ■ ABSTRACT

The current teaching case describes a story about how a manager of a car dealer company finds in job crafting practices the mechanisms to face the challenges imposed by a severe socio-economic crisis such as the one created by COVID-19. With the pandemic, the manager gains autonomy on his job, which allows him to implement changes of different dimensions: structural changes (in tasks and processes), relational changes (concerning work relationships), and cognitive changes (regarding perception of one's work/role). Moreover, the case addresses generation Y as an antecedent of job crafting, as well as the consequences of such practices. At individual level, the case allows students to discuss engagement with the job and the positive impact to in-role performance. At the organizational level, the case discusses the bottom-up approach as an alternative to traditional job design approach. As so, the case was originally developed for disciplines such as Organizational Behavior or Human Resources as part of Business Management graduate courses.

**Keywords:** job crafting; generation Y; work engagement; job design; teaching case.

### ■ RESUMO

O presente caso de ensino conta a história de como o gerente de uma agência de carros encontra na prática de *job crafting* o caminho para enfrentar os desafios impostos por uma grave crise socioeconômica, como a provocada pela COVID-19. Com a pandemia, o gerente ganha autonomia na sua atuação profissional, a qual o permite implementar mudanças de natureza estrutural – nas atividades e processos da empresa, social – nos relacionamentos, e cognitiva – em relação à percepção sobre o trabalho. O caso traz as características da geração Y como antecedente do *job crafting*, além de abordar os desdobramentos decorrentes de tais práticas. No nível individual, o caso permite explorar os elementos do engajamento profissional e sua conexão com o atendimento das necessidades individuais, bem como a melhoria no desempenho profissional. No nível organizacional, o caso discute a abordagem *bottom-up* como alternativa para o desenho da função, apresentando os impactos de tal abordagem no desempenho organizacional. Assim, o caso foi originalmente pensado para disciplinas de Comportamento Organizacional ou Gestão de Pessoas em cursos de pós-graduação em Administração e Psicologia.

**Palavras-chave:** *job crafting*; geração Y; engajamento; desenho da função; caso de ensino.

### PURPOSE OF THE CASE

The present case allows the student to represent reality with concrete possibilities of action within the pandemic scenario through the concept of job crafting, discussing different elements that influence such practice, such as autonomy and generational profile. Within a safe environment, exploring the specific dilemma experienced by the protagonist (Alberton & Silva, 2018) about different options to pursue his career, the case invites students to understand not only the antecedents of job crafting but also the relationship between job crafting, work engagement, and organizational design. At the end of the session, students are expected to have reached, inductively, the following concepts and theories: (a) Generation Y (millennials) and its main characteristics; (b) Job crafting as an alternative to

traditional job design models and its elements, enriching job possibilities even in challenging scenarios; and (c) Work engagement and other consequences of job crafting.

Set in the serious pandemic of 2020, the reflections of the case can be applied to any crisis context, as well as to the relationship between job crafting, generational profiles, and work choices.

The target audience of the case are MBA and graduate students (*lato sensu*) or last-year undergraduates in Business Administration and Psychology courses. The case was designed to be used in disciplines of Organizational Behavior or Human Resources, in sessions related to the role of individuals (diversity, personality, and motivation) or to the organizational system (job design and career management).

## SOURCE OF INFORMATION

The present teaching case is based on a real company. The primary data was collected through interviews with owners and employees, in addition to the personal proximity of one of the authors to the professionals who inspire the main characters. The characters' names are fictitious.

The information presented about the automotive sector in the business context section is available online (Federação das Indústrias do Estado do Paraná, 2019; Olmos, 2020).

## SUGGESTED TEACHING PLAN

This teaching plan requires previous individual reading and preparation by students, based on the following questions: (a) What is the dilemma of the case? Analyze and identify the causes/elements of the dilemma. (b) What behavioral characteristics do you identify in Rafael? (c) What are Rafael's alternatives? (d) What would be your posture in his situation?

- Start of session and division of students into small groups of four to five students (5 minutes)
- Discussion of individual preparation questions in small groups (30 minutes)
- Introduction of the case (15 minutes)
- Plenary discussion (about 50 minutes)
- Closure of the case (about 20 minutes)

## CASE ANALYSIS

### Opening

We suggest that the instructor briefly revisit the case when starting the class and then direct the students into small groups to discuss the preparation questions.

When they return, the class warm-up for the plenary discussion can be done with broad questions that are closely related to the reality of most students, for example: "Does anyone know people who experienced a change in their professional career during quarantine or any other crisis?" This warm-up should establish a connection between the responses and Rafael's case. Thus, the instructor can now facilitate the path toward the transition questions to the first block: Who is Rafael? What does he value? What characteristics set him apart from his partners? To engage the students, ask whether there is a relationship between

these characteristics and those of the students themselves, initiating the discussion on generational characteristics.

### Discussion questions

a) What are the characteristics of generation Y (millennials)?

The purpose of this discussion block is to raise the characteristics of generation Y in contrast to previous generations. Even though the students still lack a clear concept of generational characteristics, they will highlight the aspects described in the case, considering the personality and attitude of Rafael. Those aspects should be written on the board (see Figure 1). In general, the literature converges to characteristics such as the value of the balance between personal life and work, the constant search for challenges, and self-development. Millennials have a strong sense of responsibility, optimism, and achievement, based on the development of partnerships and social interaction. And they use strong technical aptitude to seek high impact initiatives in the three pillars of sustainability — economic, social, and environmental.

Although the literature agrees that there are generational differences regarding personalities, attitudes, and behaviors in the organizational environment (Lyons & Kuron, 2014), it is important to point out that there is heterogeneity within each generation, due to factors such as national culture, gender, race, educational level, among others (Parry & Urwin, 2011). In addition, members of a generation were not only born in the same time period but also had similar socio-political-cultural experiences, which make them share 'collective memories' in order to align their 'identity response' (Mannheim, 1952). Such experiences influence beliefs, values, and attitudes, distinguishing one group from the others (Noble & Schewe, 2003). Thus, there is no consensus on the exact birthday range of each generation, as this is not the only criterion for its definition. For operational and educational purposes, studies indicate that generation Y includes those born from 1980-1983 until the 2000s (Parry & Urwin, 2011).

Then, resuming the main elements that characterize individuals of generation Y, the instructor must lead students to the second discussion block involving the concept of job crafting and its dimensions. The following transition questions may guide the students to the next block: How do these characteristics affect Rafael's work? What kind of changes has he implemented in his work and in his professional performance considering the new context?



Figure 1. Characterization of millennials.

## b) What is job crafting and what are its dimensions?

In this block, the instructor must elucidate the connection between the characteristics of generation Y and the physical and cognitive changes applied by an individual to his/her task or relationships at work, i.e., job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). In response to the transition questions, students will raise examples of changes adopted by Rafael originated by his own reflection and choice. The main goal of this block is to highlight the range of possibilities added to the reality of work with the use of the potential of an employee to implement changes. Proactivity is a resource for dealing with challenges/

restrictions faced within the professional context, whose objective is to improve one's work from an individual perspective (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010; Bruning & Campion, 2018).

The instructor must register the examples of changes adopted by Rafael in his work according to the three different dimensions of job crafting: (a) structural, related to the task or processes, such as increasing or decreasing the number of tasks; (b) social, involving relationships at work, such as changes in the nature or amount of interaction, or even with whom to relate; and (c) cognitive, related to the perception

and the meaning attributed by the individual to his work or function (Berg et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Figure 2 details examples of changes in each dimension. In addition to those adopted by Rafael, ask students for suggestions for other initiatives to deal with the context of crisis and uncertainties, reinforcing the idea of them being protagonists of the case.

Once the job crafting suggestions are fully explored, the instructor should bring up transition questions, such as “What were the results of the changes for Rafael? How

does Rafael feel in the face of all the changes? And, for the company, what were the consequences?” Those questions will lead the students to the final stage of the discussion, as follows (Figure 2).

c) What are the consequences of job crafting at the individual and organizational levels?

The students’ responses about the consequences of job crafting should then be listed on the board, registering the impacts for Rafael and for the company separately (Figure 3).

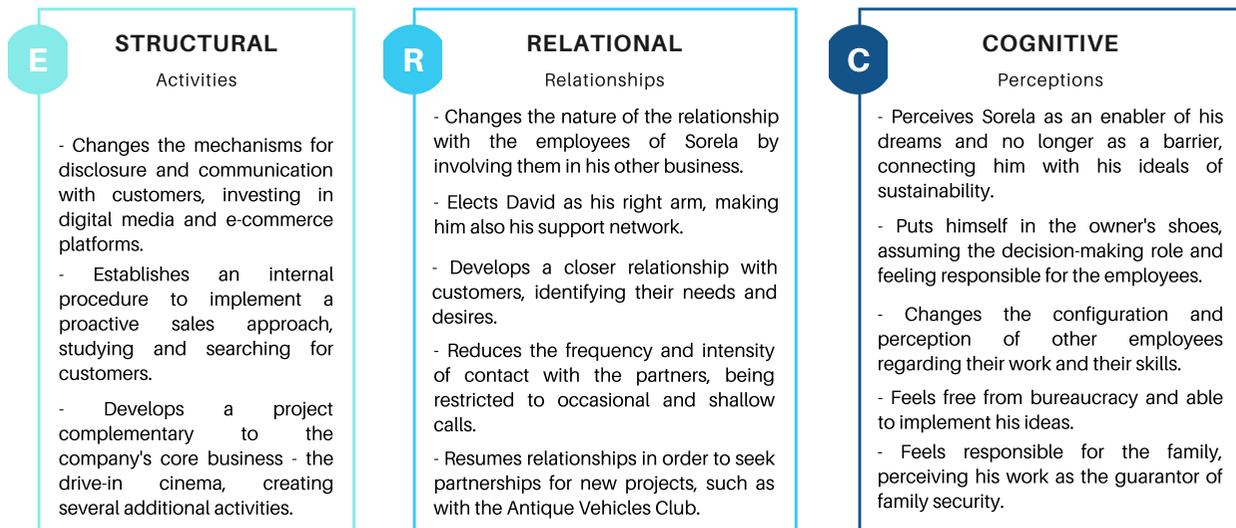


Figure 2. Job crafting practices adopted by Rafael.

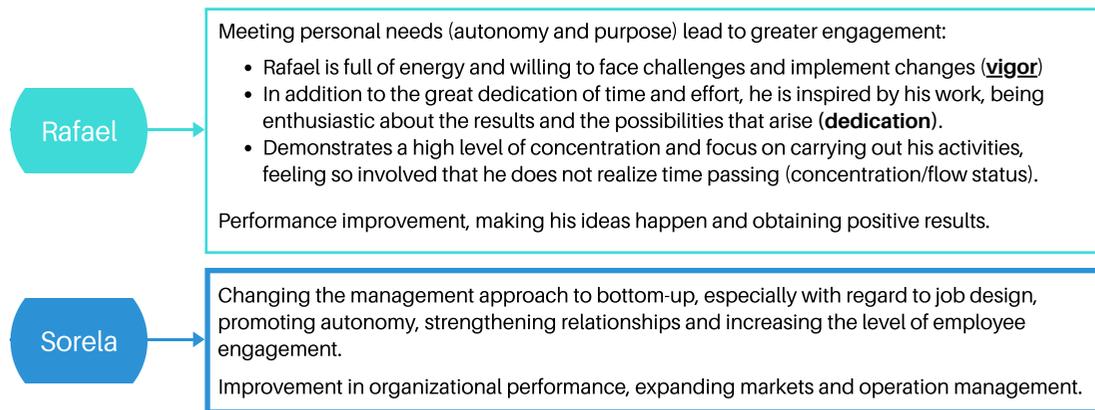


Figure 3. The unfolding of job crafting.

The consequences for Rafael should be explored and associated with his routine, feelings, and emotions, leading the class to identify the elements that configure engagement at work, such as vigor, dedication, and concentration (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The instructor

can add that challenging situations, such as those imposed by COVID-19 or major crises, can increase the performance of employees, as long as there is abundant supply of resources (Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010). Sorela failed to provide the necessary resources so that Rafael could face such

challenges. When organizational structures and leaders are unable to provide resources like feedback, socio-emotional support, and complementary skills, it is up to the employee to modify his work to suit his needs and skills, promoting satisfaction, engagement, and, consequently, performance improvement (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012). Studies support that ‘Y employees,’ because of their characteristics shown in the previous step, must be empowered (Kim, Knight, & Crutsinger, 2009) and motivated to contribute to the elaboration of policies, procedures, and initiatives at work (Frye, Kang, HuH, & Lee, 2020) in order to reinforce a positive work experience.

Once the impacts of job crafting on work engagement and performance are discussed, emphasizing the importance of autonomy, it is suggested that the instructor highlights the difference between job crafting and a traditional management approach, known as the top-down approach (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2012; Cagliano, Canterino, Longoni, & Bartezzaghi, 2019). In the top-down approach, decisions about the design of organizational functions and structures are made by the managers, taking into account the organizational strategy and their hierarchical position (Slack, Chambers, & Johnston, 1995). Conversely, job crafting reflects a bottom-up approach, based on choices/decisions on how to conduct and make sense of the job based on individual needs. If, on the one hand, job crafting results are not necessarily aligned with the organizational objectives, on the other hand, job crafting promotes an increase of employee performance as a result of greater motivation and engagement (Bakker et al., 2012; Bruning & Campion, 2018). After decades of predominance of the top-down approach, researchers point to the need for alternative approaches that consider a proactive perspective for the

design of activities against the uncertainty and dynamism resulting from globalization, technology advances, and changes in the nature of relationships (Grant & Parker, 2009; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Companies that still denied such factors were forced to finally face them with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

After this discussion, the class is then invited to list the impacts (actual and potential) for the organization. The case indicates the maintenance of organizational performance despite the pandemic, indicating that the initiatives implemented by Rafael have the potential to increase sales in the medium term and to reposition the brand in a new social-economic context. Studies indicate that job crafting and work engagement are important antecedents of performance increase (Bakker et al., 2012), despite the fact that some researchers reinforce that job crafting is not always aligned with organizational objectives, as discussed previously (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The positive results of the company indicate a potential impact on work relationships and the management approach adopted by the partners, especially concerning autonomy and job design. However, the case does not clarify if the changes will be sustained and institutionalized with the return of the partners and the end of the pandemic.

### Closure

To consolidate the concepts covered, we suggest resuming the frameworks developed throughout the three previous blocks, building a final framework as exemplified in Figure 4 in order to reinforce the concepts and connections between each stage of the analysis.

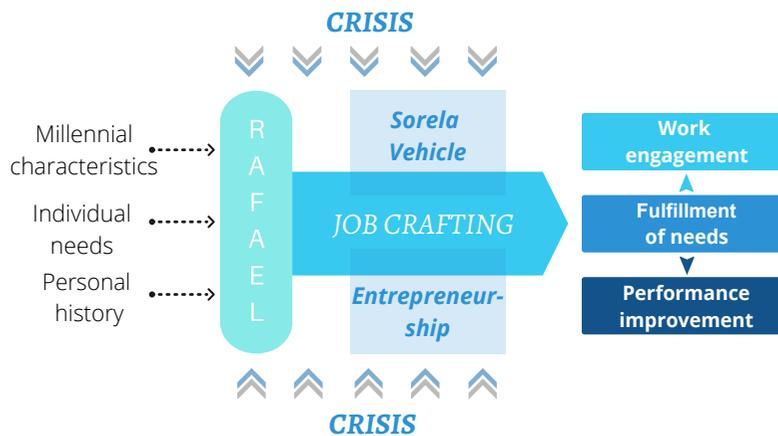


Figure 4. Closure framework.

The instructor must return to the case dilemma. On the one hand, the proposal for a partnership at the startup company is aligned with Rafael's characteristics and necessities. On the other hand, job crafting allowed structural, social, and cognitive changes to his current job, providing an alignment with his personal objectives and increasing his engagement with the company. Because there is no right answer for the solution of the case, as both alternatives can meet Rafael's individual needs, the instructor can relate the groups' preferences to the characteristics of the necessities raised at the beginning of the discussion.

A desirable proposal would be for Rafael to elaborate his process of leaving Sorela, developing the necessary skills in an internal successor, and institutionalizing physical and procedural changes. Considering that there is an existing option whose core business and activities are closely connected to the necessities and values of

Rafael, the choice seems adequate in the medium term, not only benefiting Rafael, but also another professional, maintaining the positive results of Sorela. The instructor can conclude by emphasizing the relevance of the theme, in view of the individual and organizational losses resulting from low levels of satisfaction and engagement at work identified in studies at different countries, like Brazil and the United States of America (Stolf & Anton, 2015). In the 1970s, Terkel (1972) stated that "most of us have jobs that are too small for our spirits. Jobs are not big enough for people" (Terkel, 1972, p. 29). Times have changed and most people seek for a new work perspective, challenging Terkel's idea. But the struggle to achieve an occupation that balances physical, emotional, and spiritual needs remains. We suggested closing the section with a reproduction of the video *All work and all play* (Box1824, 2012) with the intention of inspiring students in the search for their own job satisfaction.

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