

End of a journey or the start of another? Experiences from post-negotiation phase of an idiosyncratic deal

Swati Garg

Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, New Delhi, Delhi
110016 India

Shuchi Sinha

Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, New Delhi, Delhi
110016 India

Preferred Stream: Proactivity and job design in employment relations

End of a journey or the start of another? Experiences from post-negotiation phase of an idiosyncratic deal

Introduction

Idiosyncratic deals (or i-deals) are the customizations in jobs that employees negotiate with their employers to meet their goals, needs and desires (Rousseau, Ho & Greenberg, 2006). There exists a vast literature on the negotiation of i-deals, however, successful negotiation of i-deals have been seen as done deals so far. This outcome-oriented view of i-deals has resulted in research being concentrated largely around the motivations, intermediate processes and the outcomes of i-deals negotiation (Liao, Wayne, & Rousseau, 2016). There is scarcity of research investigating the post-negotiation phase of an i-deal. In this paper, we aim to focus on this phase of post-negotiation, specifically drawing attention to the challenges encountered and efforts made to address them.

After receiving i-deals, the i-dealers make efforts to fulfil the agreements of their deals. These agreements could be both implicit (not stated clearly by the granting authority but understood by the i-dealers) and explicit (clearly stated by the granting authority and agreed upon by the i-dealers). The i-dealers not only ensure that their i-deals help them fulfil their need in consideration, but may have to work hard towards upholding the implicit and explicit agreements of the deal. During the implementation journey, they face several challenges and utilize various resources to address them.

To understand the finer nuances of the post-negotiation phase of an i-deal, we investigate the post-negotiation experiences of employees who have successfully obtained permission from their organization to pursue an executive / part-time MBA (MBA which is pursued along with jobs). Executive MBA is a longer-duration commitment, which typically goes on for two to three years in several Indian Business Schools / Departments. Investigating the post-negotiation experience of such an i-deal provides granular insights into the processes that ensue the implementation and management of an i-deal. Our proposed contribution from this study is threefold: first, we contribute to the i-deals literature by qualitatively exploring the post-negotiation phase of an i-deal. Gascoigne and Kelliher (2018) have highlighted the need for greater qualitative research to surface the granularities of the process of i-deal negotiation. Second, we unpack the efforts that employees exert to manage and navigate the demands of their successfully negotiated longer-term developmental i-deal (executive MBA) and their ongoing job duties. Third, we highlight that pursuit of the primary and successfully

negotiated i-deal is followed by several micro-negotiations and job crafting efforts; thereby linking the literature on i-deals and job crafting.

Methodology

Our focus on exploring the experiences of employees pursuing executive MBA, merits adoption of an inductive, qualitative methodology. Data is being collected through semi-structured interviews of executive MBA students at institutes of repute within India. Choosing participants from reputed institutes, helps to ensure consistency in the rigour of the MBA programme and the resulting programme related demands faced by the participants. This strengthens the comparability of the sample taken from different institutes. Participants have either completed their MBA in the past one year of the interview or are in the final year of their MBA programme. Interviews are being taken in English, recorded with participant consent and transcribed for analysis using the thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings and Discussion

Our initial findings show promising insights into the connections between the successful negotiation of an i-deal, the emergent challenges thereafter and the ensuing efforts that the study participants exert to cope with the challenges. The participants highlight their efforts towards navigating the multiple aspects of their professional life during their executive MBA journey. These include: maintaining relationship at work (with their granting authority, other co-workers and team members), maintaining performance at work, developing and maintaining relationships at their MBA institute and maintaining academic performance.

Data shows that employees pursue micro-negotiations on a regular basis, which helps them to navigate the demands arising from their primary i-deal pursuit. These micro negotiations are pursued both at their workplace and at their MBA institute. This confirms Simosi, Rousseau, and Weingart's (2021) viewpoint that negotiation literature is helpful in understanding the processes associated with i-deals negotiation. This also provides insights into how i-dealers create i-deal bundles, where they negotiate several micro i-deals to support their primary i-deal. Further, there is a spillover of micro i-deals negotiation from workplace to MBA institute and vice-versa. For instance, a participant reported that they negotiated time off work for two hours per day during MBA examination; and similarly negotiated permission to leave their MBA classes earlier than the scheduled time to cater to their work meetings.

Findings from this study surface the job crafting efforts in the post-negotiation phase of the i-deal. The purpose and type of crafting efforts are diverse, for instance, a participant reported building relationships with his clients to be able to coordinate with them better to accommodate his MBA schedule. Pursuing job crafting in the post-negotiation phase of an i-deal surfaces the inter-linkage and potentially cyclical relationship between i-deals and job crafting behaviour.

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Gascoigne, C., & Kelliher, C. (2018). The transition to part-time: How professionals negotiate 'reduced time and workload' i-deals and craft their jobs. *Human Relations*, 71(1), 103-125.

Liao, C., Wayne, S. J., & Rousseau, D. M. (2016). Idiosyncratic deals in contemporary organizations: A qualitative and meta-analytical review. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37, S9-S29.

Rousseau, D. M., Ho, V. T., & Greenberg, J. (2006). I-deals: Idiosyncratic terms in employment relationships. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(4), 977-994.