

Crafting your Career: How Career Competencies Relate to Career Success via Job Crafting

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This study aimed to investigate whether career competencies could enhance an employee's subjective career success in terms of perceived employability and work-home balance via job crafting behaviors. Based on Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, we examined a potential motivational process in which career competencies, as a personal resource, would enhance career success through expansive job crafting. The results showed that job crafting mediated the positive relationship between career competencies and both internal and external perceived employability. In addition, job crafting mediated the positive relationship between career competencies and work-home enrichment. We expected a negative association between job crafting and work-home interference, yet our results indicated that career competencies are indirectly and positively related to work-home interference via job crafting. With our findings, we add to JD-R Theory by (1) showing that career competencies may be considered a personal resource, (2) empirically examining the role of job crafting in motivational processes, and (3) showing that enhanced subjective career success can be an outcome of motivational processes. Organisations may use these findings to implement developmental HR practices aimed at increasing career competencies and job crafting.

INTRODUCTION

During recent years, changes on the labor market with regard to increasing flexibility and self-management have spurred scholars to examine the competencies that employees need to successfully navigate their careers. Furthermore, an increasing emphasis on meaningfulness of work and person-job fit have resulted in an ever more central role of subjective career success as an indicator of successful career development (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). Two particularly relevant indicators of subjective career success—as also emphasised by Wille, De Fruyt, & Feys (2013)—in today's career landscape are

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employability (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006) and work–home interaction (Kinnunen, Rantanen, Mauno, & Peeters, 2014).

Employability represents contemporary career success well as it has become an important focus of scientific discussions given the need for employees to be more proactive in managing their work and career (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). Recently, researchers have started to show that individuals with high levels of perceived employability, that is, who perceive good chances of being able to find alternative employment, are better able to cope with today's increasingly complex labor market (De Cuyper, Sulea, Philippaers, Fischmann, Iliescu, & De Witte, 2014; Vanhercke, De Cuyper, Peeters, & De Witte, 2014). However, although recent evidence shows that perceived employability is related to performance (De Cuyper et al., 2014) and well-being (De Cuyper, Raeder, Van der Heijden, & Wittekind, 2012b), empirical evidence about antecedents of perceived employability is still lacking (Forrier, Verbruggen, & De Cuyper, 2015).

In similar fashion, work–home interaction is also a crucial indicator of subjective career success. There is a clear trend of employees working longer and experiencing higher workloads because of the increasing pressure on self-management and because of competition between organisations (Wille et al., 2013). This has major implications for the way in which individuals manage the boundaries between their work and their private life (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006). Although much is known about antecedents and consequences of a healthy work–home interface (e.g. Geurts, Taris, Kompier, Dikkers, Van Hooff, & Kinnunen, 2005; Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011), it is not quite clear yet how workers can safeguard their work–home balance while simultaneously managing their employability. This is an important gap because these two indicators of career success may conflict with each other: it would seem that investing more time and effort in employability may cause an imbalance in work–home interaction, and vice versa. However, because both are important indicators of long-term success (Wille et al., 2013), we need to understand what individuals can do to enhance both employability and work–home balance simultaneously. Therefore, the central aim of this paper is to examine whether career competencies and job crafting behaviors may be key antecedents of career success in terms of being employable and finding a healthy work–home balance.

Career Competencies and Job Crafting as Predictors of Career Success

Given the increasing need for employees to proactively self-manage, or *craft*, their careers, it is becoming ever more important for them to possess the necessary competencies that enable them to thrive. That is, because individuals

themselves are nowadays primarily responsible for achieving career success, it is crucial that they master career-related competencies that can help them navigate their career. Accordingly, recent research has shown that career competencies, which can be characterised as knowledge, skills, and abilities that affect career opportunities (Forrier, Sels, & Stynen, 2009), are important predictors of career success (De Vos, De Clippeleer, & Dewilde, 2009). For example, Kuijpers, Schyns, and Scheerens (2006) demonstrated a positive association between career competencies and objective career success (e.g. salary), and Eby et al. (2003) showed that career competencies are positively related to career satisfaction. However, the associations between career competencies and perceived employability and work-home interaction—as indicators of career success—are still unclear. Specifically, there is a gap in scientific knowledge on *whether* career competencies are related to these indicators of career success in the first place, and *how* they would be related in the second place.

A likely mediator in the career competencies-career success relationship is proactive behavior at work. Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014) states that personal resources can initiate a motivational process that leads to enhanced individual outcomes. Recently, JD-R theory has incorporated job crafting, a form of proactive work behavior, and has argued that it may be a means of mobilising personal resources to give favorable outcomes. *Job crafting* refers to employees proactively modifying aspects of their job to create a better person-job fit (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and recent studies show that it can enhance employee performance and well-being (Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2014). Akkermans, Schaufeli, Brenninkmeijer, and Blonk (2013b) recently showed that career competencies may act similarly to a personal resource, and that they are related to job resources and work engagement. Therefore, following JD-R theory, it would seem likely that employees' job crafting behaviors could explain *how* career competencies are related to career success. In sum, we argue that possessing and developing career competencies may need to be transformed into actual behaviors in order to optimise desired outcomes. Specifically, we argue that proactive behaviors at work in terms of job crafting may be the key to translating career-related competencies into enhanced employability and a better work-home balance.

Contributions of This Study

In this study, we contribute to filling three theoretical gaps. First, we contribute to Job Demands-Resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014) by framing the associations between career competencies, job crafting, and the outcomes in terms of a motivational process. Second, we contribute to discovering appropriate dimensions of contemporary career success (Heslin, 2005) by examining the antecedents of perceived

employability and work–home interface in tandem, thereby shedding light on whether these two outcomes may both be enhanced via career competencies and job crafting. Finally, we contribute to a better understanding of the consequences of job crafting behaviors (e.g. Petrou et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2012) by examining its links with indicators of subjective career success.

Perceived Employability and Work–Home Interaction as Indicators of Career Success

Wille and colleagues (2013) argue that subjective outcome measures may be more appropriate to measure career success in the contemporary labor market than traditional measures such as promotions and salary. More specifically, they argue, based on Heslin (2005), that subjective indicators of career success are becoming ever more important and that new conceptualisations of subjective career success are needed. Accordingly, Wille et al. state that two core indicators of career success are workers' employability and their work–home interaction because these represent two of the most desired career outcomes by employees: secure feelings of finding and maintaining employment, and balancing work and personal goals, respectively. Building on their research, these two indicators of career success form the central outcomes in our study.

Perceived Employability. Different conceptualisations of employability exist, yet the common denominator in these definitions is an employee's ability to find and/or maintain employment (Berntson, Näswall, & Sverke, 2008). Recently, scholars have focused on perceived employability, which can be defined as “the individual's perception of his or her possibilities of obtaining and maintaining employment” (Vanhercke et al., 2014, p. 594). Given the increasing amount of temporary work and reduced job security on the labor market, perceived employability is becoming more important as a means of realising career success. Indeed, the concept of perceived employability is gaining momentum as individuals are considered to be responsible for their own career success nowadays, and organisations need to offer “employability security” to individuals rather than lifetime employment (Dries, Forrier, De Vos, & Pepermans, 2014). An important element of perceived employability is that it concerns employment opportunities both with the current employer (i.e. internal) and with other employers (i.e. external). Research has shown that perceptions of employability are negatively related to job insecurity (De Cuyper, Mäkikangas, Kinnunen, Mauno, & De Witte, 2012a), and positively related to self-efficacy (Berntson et al., 2008) and career satisfaction and marketability (De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011).

Work–Home Interaction. Besides becoming employable as a key indicator of contemporary career success, individuals aim to find a healthy balance

between their work and home domains. This is a highly relevant challenge today as individuals are confronted with trends such as “new ways of working” and flexible work practices (Kossek et al., 2006). During recent years this topic has received renewed scholarly interest because the boundaries between the domains of work and private life are increasingly blurred. In other words, the level of integration between work and home has generally been increasing, whereas the level of segmentation has been decreasing (Kinnunen et al., 2014). Several different terms have been used in the literature (e.g. “work–family”, “work–private”), yet we use the term *work–home* interaction because it is a term often used by scholars in the field of career development and employee well-being (e.g. Demerouti, Taris, & Bakker, 2007; Geurts et al., 2005).

Research so far has mainly been divided into negative and positive work–home interaction. To illustrate, negative work–home interaction, or work–home interference (WHI), refers to “a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Most research on WHI follows the Role Stress Theory (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964), which assumes that individuals experience problems managing multiple roles because they draw on the same scarce resources (e.g. time, energy). An abundance of empirical research has shown that WHI can be caused by role conflict and role overload, and by a lack of organisational support (Michel et al., 2011). To clarify positive work–home interaction, scholars have recently started examining work–home enrichment (WHE), characterised as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in another role” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 73). This concept follows the Expansionist Theory of Multiple Roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001) in stating that multiple roles do not have to be in conflict (i.e. the role scarcity view) and can actually have beneficial effects, for instance acting as a buffer between roles (e.g. success in one role buffers failure in another one) and creating resources (e.g. skill acquisition). Research on WHE is more scarce than that on WHI. Nevertheless, findings so far have shown that work-related resources—such as autonomy and social support—can have a positive effect on experienced WHE because they allow workers to create a better fit between both domains (Kinnunen et al., 2014).

Career Competencies and Career Success

Enhancing one’s employability while also safeguarding a healthy work–home balance is challenging as investing time and effort in one domain may impair the goals in the other domain. Because both are crucial indicators of subjective career success (Wille et al., 2013), it is important that we find ways to enhance both of them simultaneously.

One way of achieving this could be through the development of career competencies, defined as “knowledge, skills, and abilities central to career

development, which can be influenced by the individual” (Akkermans, Brenninkmeijer, Huibers, & Blonk, 2013a). In a recent study, Akkermans et al. (2013a) reviewed the available literature on career competencies, thereby integrating the boundaryless career perspective (“three ways of knowing”; Eby et al., 2003), the protean career perspective (“career metacompetencies”; Briscoe & Hall, 2006), the career self-management perspective (De Vos et al., 2009; King, 2004), and the human capital perspective (Kuijpers et al., 2006). Based on this integration of career perspectives, Akkermans et al. (2013a) developed a career competency framework consisting of three dimensions: reflective career competencies, communicative career competencies, and behavioral career competencies. Reflective career competencies include “reflection on motivation”, that is, reflection on values, passions, and motivations with regard to the personal career, and “reflection on qualities”, which entails reflection on strengths, shortcomings, and skills with regard to one’s career. Communicative career competencies encompass “networking”, which pertains to the awareness of the presence and professional value of one’s network, and the ability to expand this network for career-related purposes, and “self-profiling”, which refers to presenting and communicating one’s personal knowledge, abilities, and skills to the internal and external labor market. Finally, behavioral career competencies include “work exploration”, that is, actively exploring and searching for work-related and career-related opportunities on the internal and external labor market, and “career control”, which refers to actively influencing learning and work processes related to one’s career by setting goals and planning how to reach them.

Research has shown that career competencies can contribute to several career-related outcomes. For example, career competencies can enhance career success (Kuijpers et al., 2006), career satisfaction (Eby et al., 2003), vocational adjustment (King, 2004), and career planning (De Vos et al., 2009). In addition, recent research has demonstrated a positive association between career competencies and perceived employability (Akkermans, Brenninkmeijer, Schaufeli, & Blonk, 2015), arguing that individuals who know what they want, who they can approach to receive advice, and how they can search for developmental opportunities are the ones who will subsequently become more employable both externally and internally. In line with these findings, and with previous research showing that career competencies can contribute to career success, we expect that career competencies will be positively related to perceived employability as an indicator of subjective career success.

Hypothesis 1: Career competencies will be positively related to (a) internal perceived employability and (b) external perceived employability.

Besides their expected positive association with perceived employability, career competencies may be key to attaining a healthy work–home balance.

This is likely because those individuals who have a clear idea about their preferences and wishes, and who are able to set goals and act upon those goals, are the ones who are most likely to deliberately maintain a certain degree of integration and segmentation between the work and home domains. Accordingly, there is some empirical evidence linking career competencies to creating a better balance between the work and home domains by building significant relationships (Eby et al., 2003) and performing effective boundary management (Kossek, Noe, & DeMarr, 1999). This makes sense, as individuals who know their boundaries by reflecting upon them and being able to communicate and set goals for this purpose, should be able to obtain a more balanced work–home situation. Consequently, we expect that those who have developed their career competencies will be better able to prevent interference between their work and home domains and, at the same time, will be able to generate more enrichment between those domains.

Hypothesis 2: Career competencies will be (a) negatively related to WHI and (b) positively related to WHE.

Career Competencies and Job Crafting

Besides our expectation that possessing career competencies directly contributes to one's employability and work–home balance, we suggest that the positive effects of career competencies could be enhanced when they are first mobilised in terms of actual behavior at work. That is, in order to fully capitalise on one's reflective, communicative, and behavioral career competencies, it would be necessary to translate this knowledge and skills into behavior that can help individuals to become employable and create a healthy work–home interaction. For these reasons, we propose that job crafting may be a key behavior that can translate career competencies into subjective career success.

Job crafting refers to employees proactively modifying aspects of their job to create a better fit between their job and their personal characteristics. Through job crafting, workers proactively redesign their own job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Based on Job Demands-Resources theory (JD-R; Bakker & Demerouti, 2014), Tims et al. (2012, p. 174) define job crafting as “the changes that employees make to balance their job demands and job resources with their personal abilities and needs”. They argue that it entails four dimensions: “increasing structural job resources” (e.g. increasing autonomy and opportunities for development), “increasing social job resources” (e.g. increasing social support and feedback), “increasing challenging job demands” (e.g. starting new projects), and “decreasing hindering job demands” (e.g. decreasing cognitive and emotional strain). In this paper, we will focus on “expansive job crafting” (Petrou & Demerouti, 2015), which comprises the first three

dimensions. According to JD-R theory, job resources (i.e. aspects of the job that are either functional in achieving work goals, reducing job demands, or stimulating personal growth, learning, and development)—for instance autonomy, social support, and opportunities for development—can enhance employee well-being as part of a motivational process (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2014). In similar fashion, job demands (i.e. characteristics that require sustained effort from workers and are, therefore, associated with certain costs), such as high work pressure and emotionally demanding interactions, can diminish employee well-being and lead to exhaustion and burnout via a health impairment process (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2014). Recently, Crawford, LePine, and Rich (2010) and Bakker and Sanz-Vergel (2013) made a further distinction between challenging job demands and hindering job demands. They argued that challenging job demands—for instance, high levels of responsibility—have the potential to promote mastery and personal growth, whereas hindering job demands—for example, role ambiguity—are appraised as stressors that can hinder learning and goal attainment. Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2013) demonstrated that employees who crafted their jobs indeed experienced an increase in available job resources over time. In conclusion, job crafting is a proactive behavior that can influence the job characteristics that individuals perceive and generate in their job.

We posit that job crafting behaviors may be informed by career competencies, such that possessing these career competencies may enable individuals to craft their jobs more deliberately and specifically. For example, possessing reflective, communicative, and behavioral career competencies may serve as the basis for crafting one's job because individuals who are aware of what they want and what they are capable of can subsequently adapt their work-related behaviors to match those competencies. Indeed, Akkermans et al. (2013b) used JD-R theory to frame career competencies as a personal resource (i.e. a positive self-evaluation linked to resiliency and a sense of control upon one's environment), and showed that they enable employees to better recognise and/or generate available resources in their job. Given that career competencies are related to available resources in one's work, it makes sense that they would be related to *changes* that are made in those resources, that is, to job crafting behavior. For example, employees who are able to profile their personal knowledge and skills should be better able to increase their challenging job demands because they can show that they are suited to take on this extra challenge. Similarly, workers who are adept at exploring their career options may be better at identifying which work characteristics they need to adapt for taking the next step and could increase their structural job resources and challenging job demands to accomplish their career goals. To summarise, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 3: Career competencies will be positively related to job crafting.

Job Crafting as a Mediating Mechanism between Career Competencies and Career Success

We argue that job crafting is a mediating mechanism between career competencies and career success, thereby empirically testing a recent addition to JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014), which puts forward job crafting as part of a motivational process. To illustrate, JD-R theory states that personal resources have the potential to boost job characteristics; for example, highly optimistic and efficacious individuals will perceive/generate more job resources and challenging job demands. This boosting effect of personal resources can subsequently start a motivational process leading to enhanced individual outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Following JD-R theory, it could be argued that career competencies—as a personal resource—could boost changes in one's available job characteristics—job crafting behavior—and then start a motivational process. Most researchers have focused on work engagement as an employee well-being outcome of motivational processes, yet some studies have posited perceived employability and work-home interaction as central outcomes of this process.

Job Crafting as a Mediator in the Career Competencies-Perceived Employability Relationship. Van Emmerik, Schreurs, De Cuyper, Jawahar, and Peeters (2012) examined motivational processes, specifically whether the availability of job resources could enhance perceived employability. Their argument was that job resources have motivational potential and offer employees certain opportunities—such as autonomy and task variety—that can enable them to learn and become more employable. Hence, because job resources contribute to an individual's adaptability and development, they should play a key role in enhancing employees' perceptions of their employability. Van Emmerik et al. (2012) found support for their expectations and showed that job resources have a direct positive association with perceived employability. Consequently, if *having* these resources in one's job is beneficial for employability, then *creating* these resources should enhance perceptions of employability as well. This is especially the case because perceived employability implies that workers are capable of coping with change (De Cuyper et al., 2012b). Specifically, expansive job crafting in terms of increasing job resources and challenging job demands should stimulate personal growth and adaptability (Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, & Jackson, 2003; Tims et al., 2012), thereby leading to higher levels of employability in terms of feeling more able to be flexible and grow within the current organisation (i.e. internal employability) and feeling more attractive to the external labor market (i.e. external employability). Argued from a JD-R perspective, then, it would be likely that crafting one's job can act as a mediating mechanism that turns career competencies (i.e. a personal resource) into employability perceptions (i.e. outcome of motivational process) via an increase in job resources

and challenging job demands. Hence, career competencies could initiate a motivational process via expansive job crafting that can eventually enhance one's perceived employability. In sum, we hypothesise the following:

Hypothesis 4: Job crafting will mediate the positive relationship between career competencies and (a) internal perceived employability and (b) external perceived employability.

Job Crafting as a Mediator in the Career Competencies–Work–Home Interaction Relationship. In similar fashion to perceived employability, work–home interaction has also been positioned as an outcome of motivational processes in JD-R theory. To illustrate, Bakker and Geurts (2004) argued that work can influence one's private life in both a positive and a negative way, and that this work–home interaction is an important consequence of one's job characteristics. In line with their expectations, they showed that job resources have a positive direct relationship with work–home enrichment. Furthermore, Hakanen, Peeters, and Perhoniemi (2011) found that job resources can have a positive impact on WHE over time. The underlying assumption is that job characteristics carry over to the home domain: when experiencing too many demands and/or too few resources, individuals will not have sufficient resources left to deal with demands in their home situation (Bakker, Demerouti, & Dollard, 2008). In sum, these findings suggest that experiencing sufficient job resources could help in minimising WHI while enhancing WHE as part of a motivational process. Accordingly, if employees actively craft their job resources and challenging job demands, thereby making sure they have sufficient resources and challenge in their work, it is likely that their work–home balance will increase. To summarise, in terms of JD-R theory, we expect that career competencies, as a personal resource, can initiate a motivational process via expansive job crafting that is associated with diminished work–home interference and enhanced work–home enrichment.

Hypothesis 5: Job crafting will mediate (a) the negative relationship between career competencies and WHI and (b) the positive relationship between career competencies and WHE.

METHOD

Procedure and Participants

Participants were recruited via the researchers' networks, e.g. LinkedIn, and were encouraged to ask their colleagues to also participate using a

standardised invitation about the project and a link to the survey. Because this study is part of a research project that is primarily focused on young individuals, only employees in the age category 16–30 years were included in our sample. This group is relevant for our study as young workers face challenging circumstances on the labor market (Eurostat, 2013) and go through many major changes in a relatively brief period of time, such as finding a professional identity (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). Moreover, employability and work–home interactions are highly relevant concepts to study among young workers because (1) a successful start to their career in terms of being highly employable is a predictor of later career success (Pinquart, Juang, & Silbereisen, 2003), and (2) although most of our participants (93%) did not have children, the first years of one's working life feature many work–home-related challenges that have to be faced for the first time, such as balancing work time and leisure time, and going through a socialisation process in which they need to develop their work-related identity (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2007). Indeed, in presenting her theoretical framework about crafting a balance between work and home domains, Sturges (2012) specifically used young professionals as her focal group because they are under high pressure to establish themselves in their careers and because they have a strong interest in achieving a good work–life balance, yet often perceive little support in doing so.

Our study consisted of two measurement points: we measured career competencies and job crafting at T1 and measured the dependent variables at T2 (one month later) to reduce potential common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). At Time 1, a total of 688 employees filled out the questionnaire. At Time 2, a total of 380 employees participated. After matching the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys, the data of 183 employees could be used for the analyses (response rate of 26.60%). We ran dropout analyses by comparing (1) participants that dropped out during T1, (2) participants that dropped out between T1 and T2, and (3) participants who completed both T1 and T2. These three groups did not significantly differ in terms of age ($F = .91, p = .40$), gender ($F = .05, p = .95$), educational level ($F = .70, p = .50$), working hours per week ($F = 1.97, p = .14$), organisational tenure ($F = 1.99, p = .14$), and contract type ($F = .22, p = .81$). Dropout at Time 2 also did not differ on our outcome variables measured at Time 1: external perceived employability ($F = .33, p = .72$), internal perceived employability ($F = .07, p = .93$), work–home interference ($F = .04, p = .85$), and work–home enrichment ($F = .14, p = .71$).

The sample consisted of 109 females (59.6%) and 74 males (40.4%), with an average age of 24.81 years ($SD = 3.03$, range 16–30). Most of the respondents had intermediate vocational training (40.4%) or university training (39.3%). Participants worked on average 35.47 hours a week ($SD = 13.38$) and had worked for 1.81 years ($SD = 1.81$) in their current organisation. The total work experience was 4.82 years ($SD = 7.03$). Finally, participants mainly worked in

business services (21.9%), financial services (16.9%), the government (13.1%), cultural services (11.5%), and in production jobs (10.4%).

Measurement Instruments

Career competencies were measured with the 21-item Career Competencies Questionnaire (CCQ; Akkermans et al., 2013a) consisting of reflection on motivation (three items, e.g. “I can clearly see what my passions are in my work”, $\alpha = .68$), reflection on qualities (four items, e.g. “I am aware of my talents in my work”, $\alpha = .80$), networking (four items, e.g. “I am able to approach the right persons to help me with my career”, $\alpha = .78$), self-profiling (three items, e.g. “I can clearly show others what my strengths are in my work”, $\alpha = .72$), work exploration (three items, e.g. “I am able to explore my possibilities on the labor market”, $\alpha = .76$), and career control (four items, e.g. “I can make clear career plans”, $\alpha = .87$). Response categories ranged from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*).

Job crafting was measured with the Job Crafting Scale (Tims et al., 2012). The items encompass increasing structural job resources (five items, e.g. “I try to develop my capabilities”, $\alpha = .76$), increasing social job resources (five items, e.g. “I ask whether my supervisor is satisfied with my work”, $\alpha = .77$), increasing challenging job demands (five items, e.g. “I regularly take on extra tasks even though I do not receive extra salary for them”, $\alpha = .79$), and decreasing hindering demands (six items, e.g. “I make sure that my work is mentally less intense”, $\alpha = .76$). Response categories ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*often*).

Perceived employability was measured with eight items that reflect internal and external employability (Akkermans et al., 2013a), which is based on De Cuyper and De Witte (2008). External employability was measured with four items, e.g. “I would find another job rather quickly if I searched for it” ($\alpha = .83$). Internal employability was also measured with four items, e.g. “In my current job, I am able to perform different types of tasks” ($\alpha = .88$). Response categories ranged from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*).

Work-home interaction was measured with eight items (Geurts et al., 2005). Five items refer to WHI (e.g. “How often does it happen that your work schedule makes it difficult for you to fulfil your domestic obligations?”, $\alpha = .86$) and three items refer to WHE (e.g. “How often does it happen that you manage your time at home more efficiently as a result of the way you do your job?”, $\alpha = .86$). Response categories ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*often*).

Strategy of Analysis

To test the hypothesised model, we first examined the measurement model of all variables using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS version 21. Variables were modeled as latent variables with their items or scale means as

indicators of the latent construct. For example, career competencies was modeled as one latent factor with the six scale means as indicators of the latent factor career competencies, and WHI was modeled as one latent factor with the five items as indicators. Next, we examined the hypothesised model using structural equation modeling (SEM). The mediating role of job crafting was tested using the bootstrap option (1,000 bootstrap samples) in AMOS.

RESULTS

The descriptive statistics of the study variables can be found in Table 1. Generally speaking, all correlations were in the expected direction. For example, career competencies and job crafting are moderately correlated ($r = .64$, $p < .01$), and job crafting is correlated with internal and external employability (both $r_s = .42$, $p < .01$), and with work-home enrichment ($r = .41$, $p < .01$), yet only marginally with work-home interference ($r = .10$, $p = .08$). Of the demographics, gender was significantly and negatively related to most study variables, meaning that women generally scored lower on career competencies, job crafting, and perceived employability. The number of working hours per week related significantly and positively to job crafting behaviors ($r = .16$, $p < .05$). We therefore control for gender and working hours in our analyses.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses and Measurement Model

We conducted CFAs for each measurement instrument. Fit indices showed adequate fit for all the study variables (see Table 2). Both job crafting and work-home enrichment were modeled using three indicators which means that fit indices are not provided for these scales in separate CFAs because the fit would be perfect irrespective of the pattern of factor loadings (Malhotra & Sharma, 2008). Factor loadings for all the study variables ranged between .51 and .95, all $p_s < .001$. We correlated two indicators of career competencies (reflection on qualities and career control); two indicators of WHI (items 1 and 4); and two indicators of external employability (items 3 and 4) to improve the measurement model. Inspection of the WHI and external employability items revealed that they are highly similar. There was one low factor loading of .25 for an item of internal employability; however, it still reached significance at $p < .001$.

Based on the outcomes of the separate CFAs, we tested the measurement model, which included all study variables. The fit of this model was adequate: $\chi^2 = 398.31$, $df = 258$, CFI = .94, TLI = .94, IFI = .95, RMSEA = .06. Next, we compared this with the fit of two alternative models. First, we tested a three-factor model in which career competencies and job crafting loaded on one factor, internal and external perceived employability loaded on one factor, and WHI and WHE loaded on one factor. This model showed a significantly worse fit compared with the hypothesised measurement model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 939.08$,

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Study Variables ($N = 183$)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	1.60	.49	—									
2. Age	24.81	3.03	-.15*	—								
3. Work experience (years)	4.82	7.03	-.23**	.25**	—							
4. Working hours per week	35.47	13.38	-.23**	.09	.07	—						
5. Career competencies	3.71	.47	-.22**	.08	-.13	.09	—					
6. Job crafting	3.17	.62	-.15*	.05	-.15	.16*	.53**	—				
7. Internal employability	3.38	1.10	-.16*	-.05	.11	.13	.27**	.39**	—			
8. External employability	3.44	.71	-.25**	-.03	-.13	.16*	.40**	.36**	.17*	—		
9. Work-home interference	2.17	.80	.03	-.06	.14	.10	-.11	.10	-.03	.10	—	
10. Work-home enrichment	2.31	.97	-.11	-.11	.07	.17*	.21**	.36**	.23**	.13	.12	—

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2
Results of Testing the Measurement Models and CFA Marker Technique Analyses

	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2/df$
Measurement model career competencies	13.63	8	.98	.97	.98	.06	
Measurement model internal employability	0.50	2	1.00	1.00	1.00	.00	
Measurement model external employability	1.34	1	1.00	1.00	1.00	.04	
Measurement model work-home interference	4.23	4	1.00	1.00	1.00	.02	
Total measurement model	398.31	258	.94	.94	.95	.06	
Structural model	390.99	263	.95	.94	.95	.05	
Baseline	515.14	333	.93	.92	.93	.06	
Method-C	514.57	332	.93	.92	.93	.06	0.57/1 ^{ns}
Method-U	481.73	308	.93	.92	.94	.06	33.40/25 ^{ns}

Note: As job crafting and WHE were measured by three indicators, fit indices are not provided.

$\Delta df = 12$, $p < .01$). Second, we examined a five-factor model in which career competencies and job crafting were modeled to load on one factor and internal perceived employability, external perceived employability, WHI and WHE loaded on separate factors. Again, this model showed a significantly worse fit compared to the measurement model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 99.84$, $\Delta df = 5$, $p < .01$), indicating that all variables (i.e. career competencies, job crafting, internal and external employability, and WHE and WHE) could be distinguished from each other.

Common Method Variance Checks

Because we used self-report measures, we took several precautions to ascertain whether common method variance (CMV) may have been an issue in our study following the suggestions of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003). First, we measured our dependent variables on a separate measurement time about one month later. Second, we used the Comprehensive CFA marker technique (Williams, Hartman, & Cavazotte, 2010) to determine whether common method variance might have affected the observed relationships. A marker variable is a variable that is unrelated theoretically with the study variables, which is, however, a condition that is complex to attain in practice (Williams & O'Boyle, 2015). The latter authors note that a nonideal marker (i.e. a small correlation with study variables) is still better to examine potential bias than not testing for it. In our study, the variable limited future time perspective (FTP) (Lang & Carstensen, 2002; $\alpha = .67$, example item "I have the feeling that time is running out") referring to the individual's perceptions of his or her remaining time to live and/or the opportunities and goals available within that time represents the marker variable. FTP might be related to the study variables—for example, a limited time perspective could be associated

with putting more emphasis on W–H balance—however, the correlations were non-significant ($r = -.14, p = .06$ between FTP and career competencies, and $r = -.03, p = .71$ between FTP and job crafting).

Common method variance is present when there is shared variance between the marker variable and the study variables. This procedure consists of testing nested SEM models: The CFA model, Baseline model, Method-C model, and Method-U. In the CFA model, all latent variables are included and the model is freely estimated. The Baseline model is represented by fixed item loadings and error variance for the marker variable. These are fixed to the unstandardised values obtained in the CFA model. In addition, the correlations between the marker variable and the study variables are set to zero. Method-C model is identical to the baseline model with the addition of factor loadings from the marker variable to each indicator of the other variables. These loadings are constrained to be equal. In the Method-U model, the constraints on the additional factor loadings in Method-C are removed. If the baseline model does not have a different fit from Model-U or C, CMV is not likely to exist. A comparison of Method-C with Baseline and Method-U with Baseline revealed no significant differences ($p = .45$ and $p = .12$, respectively; see Table 2). To summarise, it is unlikely that CMV was a concern in subsequent analyses.

Testing the Hypothesised Model

In testing the hypotheses, we used the full model in which relationships that are not part of the hypothesis were constrained to zero. In the full model, dependent variables were allowed to correlate. However, none of the outcome variables were significantly correlated in the final model. For Hypothesis 4, we removed all path constraints in order to test the mediating role of job crafting.

In Hypothesis 1a and 1b, we expected a positive association between career competencies and perceived internal employability and external employability. The relationships between career competencies and perceived employability were indeed statistically significant ($\beta = .25, p < .001$ and $\beta = .39, p < .001$, respectively). Hypothesis 2a and 2b stated that career competencies would relate negatively to WHI and positively to WHE. The results showed that career competencies related negatively yet insignificantly to WHI ($\beta = -.15, p = .09$); however, the relationship with WHE was significant ($\beta = .19, p = .02$). In line with Hypothesis 3, we found a positive relationship between career competencies and job crafting ($\beta = .66, p < .001$).

In Hypothesis 4, we expected that job crafting mediates the relationship between career competencies and (a) perceived internal employability and (b) perceived external employability. We found that job crafting was related to both types of employability (internal employability: $\beta = .41, p < .001$; external employability: $\beta = .25, p = .02$) (see Table 3). The standardised indirect effect from career competencies to internal employability was significant: $.26, p < .01$

TABLE 3
Results of Testing the Indirect Association of Career Competencies with Outcomes

	<i>Bootstrap estimate</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Lower boundary BCC</i>	<i>Upper boundary BCC</i>
Career competencies to Internal employability via Job crafting	.26	.003	.120	.429
Career competencies to External employability via Job crafting	.16	.029	.043	.298
Career competencies to WHI via Job crafting	.22	.014	.082	.402
Career competencies to WHE via Job crafting	.33	.003	.191	.492

(BCC: .120–.429), and this was also the case for external employability: .16, $p = .03$ (BCC: .043–.298). These results provide support for H4a and H4b.

Finally, Hypothesis 5 stated that job crafting mediates the relationship between career competencies and (a) WHI and (b) WHE. Job crafting related significantly to WHI ($\beta = .35, p = .007$) and to WHE ($\beta = .52, p < .001$). The standardised indirect effect from career competencies to WHI was significant (bootstrap estimate: .22, $p = .01$, BCC: .082–.402), and the standardised indirect effect from career competencies to WHE was significant (bootstrap estimate: .33, $p = .003$, BCC: .191–.492), thus supporting H5b but not H5a as we expected a negative association between job crafting and WHI. Figure 1 shows the final model. Fit of the hypothesised model was good: $\chi^2 = 444.37, df = 305, CFI = .95, TLI = .94, IFI = .95, RMSEA = .05$.

To further examine whether our hypothesised model is indeed the best one, we performed two additional analyses. First, we tested an alternative model in which career competencies and job crafting were reversed in the model. The fit of the alternative model was not statistically different from the hypothesised model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 24.73/\Delta df = 21, p = .026$) and the association between job crafting and career competencies was almost identical to the hypothesised model ($\beta = .63, p < .001$). However, in this alternative model, only the indirect association between job crafting and WHI through career competencies was significant (bootstrap estimate: $-.23, p = .01$, BCC: $-.430$ – $-.099$). Job crafting did relate directly to external perceived employability ($\beta = .26, p = .017$), internal perceived employability ($\beta = .42, p < .01$), WHI ($\beta = .36, p = .006$), and WHE ($\beta = .53, p < .01$). Taken together, although this model also fitted the data well, it confirms that career competencies are a more distal antecedent of career success, whereas job crafting is a more proximal antecedent, thereby providing support for our hypothesised model.

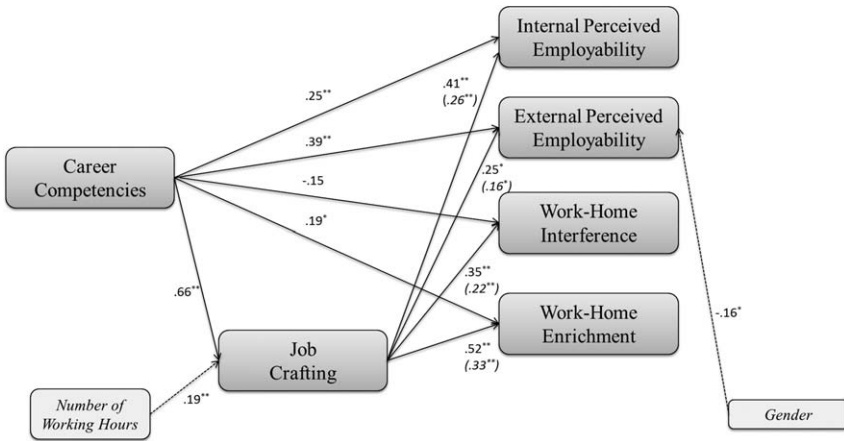


FIGURE 1. Results of structural equation modeling analyses in which job crafting mediates the relationship between career competencies and perceived employability and work-home interaction. Values in parentheses represent indirect associations between career competencies and outcomes via job crafting. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Second, we initially tested a full cross-lagged model with all study variables measured at T1 and T2. However, due to the short time lag of one month, the stability of our study variables prevented any longitudinal effects of being statistically significant. In order to still use our two-wave data for an additional test of our model, we performed a two-step test of our model in which we tested (1) the relationship between career competencies T1 and job crafting T2, and (2) job crafting T1 and the outcome variables T2, based on the suggestions from Cole and Maxwell (2003) and as previously carried out by De Cuyper et al. (2012b). The fit of the first model was good: $\chi^2 = 62.54$, $df = 39$, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, IFI = .96, RMSEA = .06. Both career competencies T1 and the number of working hours per week T1 were related to job crafting T2 ($\beta = .53$, $p < .01$ and $\beta = .24$, $p < .01$, respectively). The fit of the second model was also good: $\chi^2 = 237.61$, $df = 160$, CFI = .96, TLI = .96, IFI = .96, RMSEA = .05. Job crafting T1 was significantly related to external perceived employability T2 ($\beta = .39$, $p < .01$), internal perceived employability T2 ($\beta = .42$, $p < .01$), and WHE T2 ($\beta = .43$, $p < .01$). However, job crafting T1 was unrelated to WHI T2 ($\beta = .11$, $p = .22$). In this model, gender was significantly related to external perceived employability ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .03$). Although the relationship between job crafting T1 and WHI T2 did not reach significance, the relationship is positive which is contrary to our expectations. These results provide further support for our hypothesised model.

DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined key antecedents of contemporary subjective career success in terms of perceived employability and work-home interaction. Specifically, we tested whether career competencies may be a crucial basis for becoming more employable and establishing a healthy work-home balance. Using Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014) as our theoretical framework, we tested whether career competencies (Akkermans et al., 2013a) may initiate a motivational process associated with higher career success via job crafting behaviors (Tims et al., 2012). Our findings mostly support our hypotheses: job crafting partially mediated the positive relationship between career competencies and both internal and external perceived employability. Furthermore, job crafting partially mediated the positive relationship between career competencies and work-home enrichment. Contrary to our findings, though, job crafting fully mediated the association between career competencies and work-home interference such that interference increased (rather than decreased, as we had expected). In sum, our findings contribute to JD-R theory by showing that career competencies may act as a personal resource that can trigger a motivational process associated with subjective career success via expansive job crafting.

Our findings contribute to answering the call of Heslin (2005) to examine appropriate indicators of subjective career success in the contemporary labor market. Following Wille et al. (2013), we considered perceived employability and work-home interaction as two core indicators of subjective career success because they meet some of the most desired outcomes of employees today. We show that perceived employability (Vanhercke et al., 2014) and work-home interaction (Michel et al., 2011) do not have to be in competition for resources—for example, that investing in employability may leave insufficient resources for attaining a healthy work-home balance—when individuals possess sufficient career competencies. To illustrate, these competencies may enable individuals to have a clear picture about who they are, what they want, and how they would like to get there. Consequently, this would enable them to balance their efforts in becoming more employable while maintaining a positive work-home interaction.

To the best of our knowledge this is the first study to examine the associations between career competencies and job crafting. We show that individuals who possess career competencies are more likely to craft their jobs in terms of increasing job resources and challenging job demands. Career competencies could therefore be an important antecedent of job crafting in the sense that those who are well aware of their passions and strengths, can communicate well, and can set goals and know how to search for opportunities, are better equipped to craft their jobs and improve their person-job fit (cf. Tims, Derks, & Bakker, 2016).

Theoretical Implications

Our study tests and expands Job Demands-Resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014) in several ways. JD-R theory states that personal resources, job resources, and challenging job demands are part of a motivational process that can lead to improved employee well-being (e.g. work engagement) and other outcomes (e.g. performance). First, following Akkermans et al. (2013b), we found that career competencies may act as a personal resource that can help employees to build resilience and feel in control. Consequently, these career competencies can initiate a motivational process by enabling employees to proactively craft their jobs, which can subsequently be associated with enhanced subjective career success. Hence, our findings expand JD-R theory by showing that a career-related concept such as career competencies can act as a personal resource. At the same time, we should note that JD-R theory expects reciprocal effects between personal and job resources, which would imply that career competencies and job crafting could be reciprocally related. Our results seem to confirm this as an alternative model in which job crafting was the antecedent and career competencies was the mediator also fitted the data quite well. Indeed, it would make sense that actively crafting one's job by asking for feedback and support could increase one's communicative career competencies because such acts may help to expand the professional network, or that crafting one's opportunities for development could contribute to improved reflection on motivation and qualities. In sum, for the purpose of this study, we expected that employees would first obtain personal resources in terms of career competencies, and then translate those competencies (i.e. what you *can* do) into behavior (i.e. what you *actually* do), yet future research should examine the association between job crafting and career competencies in more detail and over longer time periods.

Our second contribution to JD-R theory is that we empirically examined the role of job crafting in a motivational process. Bakker and Demerouti (2014) and Bakker et al. (2014) place job crafting in JD-R theory as a mechanism that may influence future job characteristics, and thereby indirectly influence desired outcomes. Our study adds to the role of job crafting in JD-R theory by showing that it can be directly related to outcomes of a motivational process, in our case career success. To illustrate, Bakker and Demerouti (2014) positioned job crafting as a mechanism that is influenced by employee well-being and which can subsequently influence available job characteristics and personal resources, yet our results indicate that job crafting may also work the other way around. That is, job crafting behavior may be guided by personal resources and then lead to enhanced employee well-being. Accordingly, job crafting in terms of increasing job resources and challenging job demands may be a core mechanism of motivational processes as described by JD-R theory.

A third contribution to JD-R theory relates to the use of our outcome measures. Following Van Emmerik et al. (2012) and Hakanen et al. (2011), we used perceived employability and work-home interaction as outcomes of a motivational process. In line with Wille et al. (2013), these two outcomes can be conceptualised as indicators of subjective career success. In showing that a motivational process via personal resources (i.e. career competencies) and proactive behaviors to influence job characteristics (i.e. job crafting) is positively associated with career success, we add to JD-R theory by demonstrating that career success can be a valid outcome of motivational processes in addition to outcome variables that have been used before, such as work engagement and task performance.

Another implication for theory is that our study shows that job-level and career-level concepts seem to be closely related and should be integrated more in scientific research (Hall & Las Heras, 2010). To clarify, Hall and Las Heras note that jobs and careers have many common elements but that, during recent decades, most scientific studies in these two domains have been isolated from each other. Indeed, many job-level scholars have examined issues such as employee well-being and performance, whereas career-level scholars typically incorporate concepts such as career success and employability in their studies. However, jobs and careers are becoming more integrated in today's labor market as jobs are becoming more dynamic, whereas careers are increasingly characterised by multiple shorter career phases (Vuori, Toppinen-Tanner, & Mutanen, 2012). Consequently, Hall and Las Heras (2010) argued that those who are more self-directed in their *career* will be more likely to craft their *job*. We provide empirical support for this statement by showing a strong positive association between career competencies and job crafting, and between job crafting and subjective career success.

Finally, this study adds to our understanding of the consequences of job crafting behaviors. Most studies have thus far focused on positive outcomes such as increased work engagement (Petrou et al., 2012) and improved job performance (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2015). Our study adds to this body of knowledge by showing that job crafting is positively related to perceptions of internal and external employability, and to increased work-home enrichment. At the same time, our study shows that expansive job crafting behaviors can increase the amount of work-home interference. Consequently, by creating additional structural job resources (e.g. opportunities for development), social job resources (e.g. feedback), and challenging job demands (e.g. extra projects), individuals may cause a negative spillover effect to their home domain. In sum, our results show that job crafting seems to be mostly beneficial for employees. Nevertheless, it can have unwanted effects such as increased interference between the work and home domains. Specifically, in terms of work-home balance, job crafting may have a double-edged sword effect: it can enhance the enrichment one experiences at home yet at the same time cause more

interference. We should note, though, that in our additional analyses in which we separated job crafting and WHI over time, the relationship was still positive; however, it was no longer significant. We should therefore interpret this result cautiously. It would be interesting to examine the interplay between enrichment and interference as a consequence of job crafting in more detail in future research.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Our study has several key strengths, including a theoretical expansion of JD-R theory, two measurement waves, a thorough check on CMV, and bootstrap SEM analyses with latent variables. However, we also note the limitations of our study. The first limitation concerns our sample, which was relatively small (i.e. 183 employees who could be matched to T2 outcome measures) and consisted of individuals between 16 and 30 years of age. This is an important group to study because these young adults go through important work (e.g. professional identity forming; McKee Ryan et al., 2005) and private (e.g. finding a balance between work and home for the first time; Kossek et al., 2006) transitions. Nonetheless, these employees may craft their jobs and develop their career competencies in a unique way. For example, research has shown that external mobility can differ between early-career, mid-career, and late-career employees and that differences in work-home interaction may occur between different career stages (Lam, Ng, & Feldman, 2012). Therefore, to further validate our results, future research could replicate this study among different age cohorts. One direction would be to examine whether career competencies could enhance employability among aging workers. A classic concern in the literature on the aging workforce is how to keep older workers motivated and sustainably employable. Accordingly, Kooij, Tims, and Kanfer (2015) recently presented a framework of job crafting specifically for older workers, arguing that crafting can help them to stay motivated and healthy. It would be worthwhile to examine whether career competencies may trigger these job crafting behaviors, thereby safeguarding their motivation and sustainable employability.

A second limitation concerns the nature of our data. Due to the use of self-report measures, common method variance may have been an issue. However, we performed thorough checks following Podsakoff et al. (2012) and Williams et al. (2010) and showed that CMV is not likely to have influenced our results. In addition, constructs such as competencies and perceptions of employability are nearly impossible to measure other than through self-reports (Mäkikangas, Kinnunen, & Feldt, 2004). It would, however, be important to enhance our understanding of these concepts by assessing them with multi-source data, such as supervisor ratings, and by including constructs of organisational context, such as HRM practices. Another issue with our design is that we could not fully test longitudinal effects, and therefore cannot be sure about the

direction of effects in our model. In addition, the time lag of one month that we used turned out to be too short to test longitudinal effects. To clarify, the stability of our study variables was very high, therefore not allowing any other variables to explain variance in them. This is a limitation of our study, yet at the same time it is a worthwhile finding as it demonstrates that a time lag of one month is too short to reliably measure change over time in terms of our study variables. This should be taken into account for future studies using longitudinal designs.

A third issue we would like to mention is our exclusive focus on expansive job crafting. In making the choice to focus on increasing structural and social job resources, and increasing challenging job demands, we could not examine the potential role of reducing hindering demands in our proposed model. Recent research (Demerouti, 2014; Tims et al., 2015) showed that reducing hindering job demands has a negative impact on work engagement. Consequently, this could indicate that reducing hindering demands would not be part of a motivational process but rather of a health impairment process. Even though Akkermans et al. (2013b) did not find support for such a process between career competencies, job demands, and emotional exhaustion, it could be possible that reducing hindering job demands may be a way of buffering or preventing strain, rather than actively causing positive well-being. In conclusion, future research needs to re-examine our model with a specific focus on health impairment processes by including mechanisms that may elucidate how and when employees use reducing hindering job demands and what the consequences are of this type of job crafting behavior.

Practical Implications

A first practical implication of our study is that organisations could stimulate employees' job crafting behaviors through the development of career competencies. One way to do this would be to implement developmental HR practices (Kuvaas, 2008). For example, career competency development could be part of the appraisal procedure or integrated in interventions as part of an organisation's career development policies. These kinds of HR practices have been shown to increase employee commitment and performance (Kuvaas, 2008), and could also enhance job crafting behaviors and, eventually, career success.

For individual employees, our findings suggest that they should be proactive in developing their career competencies and crafting their jobs, as this will enhance their perceptions of internal and external employability. Because of the increasing amount of flexible and temporary contracts on the labor market, it is crucial that employees find ways to take responsibility for managing their career and successfully navigate both within and between organisations. Both career competencies and job crafting contribute to employee well-being and

job performance (Akkermans et al., 2013b; Tims et al., 2015), and career success (De Vos et al., 2011; Tims et al., 2012). Our study indicates that these factors will also help employees experience career success in terms of feeling employable and establishing a healthy work–home balance.

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