Job Evaluation: Essential Tool or Outdated Relic?

As of March 2026, the Swedish government has officially paused the national implementation of the EU Pay Transparency Directive and is formally calling for a renegotiation of the Directive at the EU level. The Svenskt Näringsliv (the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise) is particularly scathing of job evaluation, pointing to it as a "clear example of an unnecessary administrative burden" Svenskt Näringsliv also added that "Job evaluation is neither a new nor a straightforward method. It is resource and time intensive to introduce and maintain and, due to its reliance on static categorisations, risks inhibiting the development of both job roles and organisations."

Frederick Taylor is no doubt turning in his grave! Svenskt Näringsliv position on job evaluation is a bold one and one that deserves a closer look. It is inevitable that employer bodies and perhaps governments in other EU member states will either overtly or covertly use the same arguments. In this blog, I summarise where the arguments against job evaluation hit the mark but ultimately miss the importance and necessity of robust job evaluation in the new pay transparency era.

Where the Swedish Critique Hits the Mark

Svenskt Näringsliv raises several points that many organisations quietly recognise.

1. **Job evaluation demands significant resources.** No argument with this one. Implementing and maintaining a robust job evaluation framework requires time, governance, and ongoing calibration. In fast-moving organisations, it can feel like a heavy lift.

2**. Rigid job structures don't reflect modern work.** Today's roles evolve quickly. Skills emerge overnight. Teams form and dissolve around projects. Traditional job families can struggle to keep pace with this level of fluidity.

3. **The idea of an "objective job value" is increasingly challenged.** The assumption that every job has a fixed, measurable value — independent of the individual or the context — feels increasingly out of step with collaborative, digital, and dynamic work environments. These are valid concerns. But they're only half the story.

Where the Swedish Argument Falls Short

The Swedish critique risks overlooking the very reason job evaluation exists in the first place.

1. Objectivity isn't a flaw — it's the foundation. Job evaluation intentionally separates the role from the person performing it. This is not a limitation. It's a safeguard. In a world moving toward mandatory pay transparency, objectivity is not optional. Job evaluation is how organisations:

- reduce bias of both the conscious and unconscious variety
- ensure internal pay equity. If organisations are not using job evaluation as the basis for pay equity, I would love to know what they are using instead!
- build defensible pay structures by linking salary bands to relative value of jobs in their organisation hierarchy
- comply with equal pay requirements. It is no coincidence that employers heartache with job evaluation got much worse when it became clear that the EU Pay Transparency Directive, shifted the burden of proof from the employee to employers in equal pay claims.

2. **Modern job evaluation is far more agile than its reputation.** The stereotype of dusty binders and rigid scoring sheets, and "black box" complexity is outdated. Job evaluation has evolved — quietly, but significantly. Leading organisations now use:

- agile job architectures
- skills-based frameworks
- digital evaluation tools
- regular refresh cycles

3.**Without job evaluation, what's the alternative?**

- Market pricing alone? This would appear to be volatile due to the lack of robust market data. My personal lived experience over 30 years looking at market data is that the quality and robustness of market data has deteriorated over time. An additional consideration is that for most hot jobs, market data does not exist.
- Manager discretion? Too risky. I can pretty much guarantee that there is no better way for an employer to lose an equal pay claim case than justifying pay differences on the basis of "manager discretion".
- Unstructured relativities? e.g. where job levels or pay differences that have evolved organically over time. These will simply not stand up from an equal pay for work of equal value perspective.

For all its imperfections, job evaluation remains the only systematic method for establishing internal pay equity. The real issue is not job evaluation itself, but how It is used. In conclusion, Svenskt Näringsliv is right to challenge legacy job evaluation systems — the ones that are rigid, outdated, and rarely updated. But the solution isn't to abandon job evaluation. It's to modernise it. Job evaluation doesn't need to be scrapped. It needs to be upgraded. A fit-for-purpose job evaluation approach today includes:

- lighter, more flexible frameworks
- integration with skills and career frameworks
- frequent updates
- digital tools that reduce administrative burden
- alignment with market data rather than replacement of it

So… Is Job Evaluation Still Fit for Purpose? Absolutely — when it evolves with the organisation. The Swedish critique highlights genuine challenges, but it underestimates the value of a well-designed, regularly refreshed, transparent job evaluation framework. In an era of increasing pay transparency and regulatory scrutiny, job evaluation isn't becoming obsolete. It's becoming indispensable.