

How To Write An Effective Job Description

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It is thought that 25% of employers don't use job descriptions within their business, perhaps considered a tedious HR task or maybe businesses feel a verbal instruction during the recruitment process is enough guidance to new recruits. However, a job description is an essential document for every business. For a start, a job description helps to set out the role so that both the employer and employee know exactly what is expected.

Why Job Descriptions Are Essential

Job descriptions can;

- Set out the employer expectations of the employee
- Help to measure job performance
- Ensure pay and grading systems are fair.
- Be used as reference in a dispute
- Be used to structure interview questions
- Give clear accountability and helps employees understand their commitment.

Using Job Descriptions to Attract The Right Candidates

An effective and compelling job specification is the key to finding great candidates. Having a mundane and one-size-fits-all document will not catch the reader's eye and will not sell your business as a great place to work. On the other hand, there is no point glamorising the job to the point of excess, recruiting can be a costly task, and you don't want candidates to leave because they have been lied to about the role.

Another issue for attracting the right candidates is the level of information. Too detailed and candidates may be deterred from applying, not enough information and the job will not grasp their attention and their imagination. You want candidates to believe that your role has been made especially for them.

Should I Use a Person Specification Or Job Description?

It is vital for businesses to employ the right people, and this is why it is important to take the time to evaluate what it is you are looking for in a candidate. Many businesses will either want someone who is qualified to perform specific duties; other businesses will be looking for a person who is the true fit for the brand.

When choosing a personality type to fit your business, you may decide a person specification is most appropriate. A person specification will identify the type of person you are looking for such as personality traits, experience and behaviour. A job description outlines the duties of the candidate, showing the roles and responsibilities of the job, so the employee knows exactly what the job entails.

It makes sense to consider both elements when drafting a description, that way you can show the type of brand you are (by showing the personalities that will complement your team) and the type of exciting work they can be involved in (through the roles and responsibilities).

If you want to find out more about the difference between person and job specifications, then click here: <http://www.aaronwallis.co.uk/job-spec-vs-person-spec.aspx>

Key Steps to Create An Effective Job Description

Job Title

You want your job title to be searchable and conform to industry standards, but this doesn't mean it can't be interesting. Use relevant keys words but don't be afraid to put some of your company's personality in there too: e.g. Recruiting in Marketing? *Ambassador of Buzz*. Hiring in Sales and Business Development? *Creator of Opportunities*.

Showcase Your Business and Explain What You Need

Here you need to talk about the role and why you need an excellent candidate who fits the bill. For this section, highlight all the essential elements. Is it full-time? Is it a permanent contract? What are the hours? What does the role involve? This section should not be lengthy; a fact-file is more than sufficient. Don't be afraid to sell your business here too: e.g. *Due to an exciting new project with one of our most esteemed customers, we are looking for...*

Core Skills and Competencies

Who are you looking for? In this section consider your job description and person specification, you might find it easier to write this part in two sections: The Job and The Person. At this stage,

it is wise to think about the growth of the role, what other skills might your business need in the future?

Be Realistic

Remember to be realistic with your expectations and ask for skills in line with the salary and benefits that you are offering. If you're after an A class candidate, you need to be offering an A class salary or at least substantial rewards and benefits.

This section, although detailed, must not include a vast amount of requirements that will scare off any potential candidates. Don't ask for too much; this gives candidates a chance to show their other skills during the interview.

Ask For Help

When you have drafted what your ideal candidate would be, ask supporting teams to review. After all, they will be working closely with your recruit and will also have an idea of what they would need. When you have listed the skills and experience, rank each under the three following categories.

Mandatory = what candidate must have to be considered for an interview.

Essential = what a candidate must show during an interview.

Preferred = what you'd like, but isn't imperative.

If a term doesn't fit into one of these three categories, remove it from the job description completely.

Save Yourself a Headache

In this section remember to add; "And Other Duties As Assigned." This way, you don't limit your job description and allow your employees to learn new skills in different areas. There is nothing more frustrating for employers than employees who refuse to do a task with the phrase; "it's not in my job description."

For more information on how to plan for your target candidate, click here:

<http://www.aaronwallis.co.uk/Recruitment-Plan-Template.aspx>

Be Proud of Your Company

You need to show candidates why they should be excited about the prospect of working with you. In this section, you need to explain your company culture and what it is really like to work at your business. Again, don't paint a false picture, but don't be afraid to give your business an ego boost.

Be human, in this section you can really highlight what is great about your business. What are the people like? What is the customer relationship like? Use the voice of your business, so candidates can get a real understanding of what it is like to work for you and the culture of your organisation.

Package

What do employees receive when working for you? How does commission work? Is there a company car? What training could they receive?

Here is the main selling point for your company, so don't be afraid to add other benefits that aren't necessarily financial if you need to; e.g. working with an award-winning team, mentoring by the Sales Director. People favour work enjoyment, so if your salary can't compete with a global corporation, offer different benefits that will entice the reader.

Points to Remember

By following these five simple steps, you have created a compelling job description, just remember to:

- Keep it short, to maintain the reader's interest
- Be flexible, only state they must have five years' experience if it is really necessary
- Don't oversell the job, in recruiting it's best to get it right first time
- Think about the salary, don't ask for skills from a candidate if your salary doesn't reflect it.

If you need any further help, there are really useful job specification sample questions found here: <http://www.aaronwallis.co.uk/Sample%20Job%20Specification%20Questions.pdf> and an informative guide to devising a job specification here: <http://www.aaronwallis.co.uk/devising-a-sales-job-specification.aspx>.

Job Descriptions Can Save You Money

By crafting an effective job description, it will be much easier for recruiters to find you the perfect candidate. You will have shown the candidate exactly what is expected of them and the kind of organisation they will be involved in. Aaron Wallis estimates that hiring the wrong candidate can cost your business 3.75 times their basic salary. So, stating your requirements in the first place can really help to make sure that you get it right, the first time.