

Preparing the right job descriptions

Author: Lindah Mavengere . November 2019

As an employer, have you ever wondered why the job vacancies you field out do not gain as much traction as you would want them to? Have you ever considered that the first thing a prospective employee views in a job vacancy, is the job description so as to consider whether the particular skills set they possess are in line with adequately doing the job? A good job description is not only important in shedding light to the candidate on what they are supposed to do, but goes a long way in making sure that the right talent is attracted to carry out the job functions.

Evolution of Job Descriptions

The term job description was coined out of *Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management Theory*. Taylor believed that job processes should be clear so that performance could be measured, and as such the job description grew out of this. *Traditional job descriptions* were mostly focused on the tasks an individual is to perform, with neglect for competencies one must possess, and aspects of the organisation one must be aware of in order to successfully do the job.

Types of Job Descriptions

Initial job descriptions, known as first generation job description, have generally put much emphasis on the tasks to be performed, without much emphasis on the individual's ability. The advanced version of these, known as 2nd generation job descriptions, make use of the tasks, as well as incorporating the competencies needed to do the job effectively. The results by duty formula of writing a job description, which brings about the 3rd generation job description, focuses on the tasks to be performed, the results to be accomplished, and the duties to be carried out in accomplishing them. These are helpful in that they factor in the knowledge, skills and attitude required in an incumbent, to effectively do their job.

Writing Good Job Descriptions

According to *Justin Cerilli*, "The best job descriptions combine a little bit of marketing, the reality of the role, the necessary skills and competencies and the organization's culture. All those things put together, are key to how to present an open role to the market." Every organisation wants to attract the best talent, and *hiring the right talent* begins with attracting the right talent. In order to attract the best talent, a good job description is key.

Use the appropriate title

Employers like to think out of the box, and use titles that are different from the traditional well known titles. This is good for creativity purposes, however in the process, one may fail to attract the best talent

as people normally search for the titles they are used to. In writing job descriptions, it is important to use simple titles that will attract more suitable candidates.

Avoid discriminative language

Sometimes, employers unconsciously limit the scope of applications for a job due to some of the language that may be used in writing the job description. Avoid making use of language such as “salesmen”, or “male environment” as this may discourage other equally qualified female candidates from applying as they may perceive a gender bias. Job descriptions should be gender neutral and not implicative of any sort of biases.

Making Use of the results by duty formula

1. Start with a verb

In outlining the duties an incumbent is supposed to carry out, start the duty with a verb, always. This is a simple and straightforward way of informing the candidate of what they are supposed to do, without going around in circles. The verb allows the candidate to be aware of what they are expected to do, without necessarily going through entire paragraphs of less important information.

2. Make use of a connective word

After indicating the task to be performed by the incumbent, the next stage is to use a connective word to show how the task is to be performed. If for example, the task is, “*to assess organisational function,*” the next stage would be to use a connective word to show how the task is to be carried out. Instead therefore of adding another bullet for a task in the job description, one can use the conjunctive “*by*” to show how the task is to be carried out. The task will then read “*to assess organisational function by conducting research on existing organisational structures.*” This ensures encompassing of both the task, and the function to be performed in one sentence reducing an overload of unnecessary information.

3. Indicate the results to be accomplished

When all is said and done, the prospective employee wants to know what is expected of them in the role. This is where the expected result should be indicated in the role. This informs the incumbent as to what they should do, and the due processes involved in achieving the result. Therefore, when a candidate views the job, they not only get insight into to the tasks and function, but also the results that are expected of them.

Lindah Mavengere is a Business Consultant at Industrial Psychology Consultants (Pvt) Ltd, a business management and human resources consulting firm.

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/lindah-mavengere-552b32b2/>

Phone: +263 242 481946-48/481950

Mobile: +263 717 988 319

Email: lindah@ipccconsultants.com

Main Website: www.ipccconsultants.com.

<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/Preparing-The-Right-Job-Descriptions>