



CREATING EFFECTIVE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

An effective job description (JD) is a critical tool in recruiting the best talent in the market. Some of the benefits are:

- an effective JD allows you to provide a comprehensive and consistent brief to recruitment agencies and internal recruiters without having to 'reinvent the wheel' at each meeting;
- an effective JD provides agreed parameters for what you are looking for and ensures there can be no 'shifting of the goal posts' between the various stakeholders: line managers, HR, and recruitment agencies;
- reviewing existing JDs as vacancies occur provides a good opportunity to re-examine your needs and fine tune the JD to a 'correct fit' for your current requirements; and
- a well-written JD acts as a sales tool to high-calibre applicants, adding to your value proposition and increasing your attraction rates.

CHECKLIST FOR THE CREATION OF AN EFFECTIVE JOB DESCRIPTION

- Start by defining the key purpose of the role. What outputs do you expect from this role, how will you measure the effectiveness of the incumbent, and do you have a framework in place to support the achievement of these outcomes?
- A common occurrence is when a long-standing incumbent leaves a position, and you write the JD for their replacement at that same level.
It's important to remember that, whilst Jane might have been the best Business Analyst in the company when she moved on, when she began in the role seven years ago when she was a graduate with 1-2 year's experience and a lot of potential.
Do you really need another highly experienced, 'top end' candidate, or can you take on another, slightly less experienced (and certainly cheaper) candidate with the same amount of great attitude and determination?
If you do want someone senior, have you checked current market rates to ensure that you can afford them?

- Avoid writing a 'laundry list' for the position's required skills and experience. It's easy to close our eyes and dream of the perfect incumbent, and write a long list of all the skills and experience they will have. Unless you have the luxury of being able to wait until that 'perfect ten' applicant is sourced (and you are able to pay them what they are asking), reality often requires some level of compromise.

Ask yourself if everything in the 'Essential Skills' column really is essential, or can you move it to the 'Desirable Skills' column instead? If they've only got three years' experience instead of five, but have a fantastic attitude and cultural match do you really want to exclude them from your shortlist?

A good exercise here is to imagine that you are limited to the top 5 things that this person must be/do/have. What does that list look like?

- Be transparent with information. Include things such as who the position reports to, where that fits within the organisational structure, whether there are any direct reports, and if so which job functions and how many, external and internal liaison points. Also include a high-level statement about the key purpose of the role. Again, this creates a fuller portrayal of the role, and increases the interest from high calibre applicants, as they will be able to truly picture themselves in the role.
- List the Key Performance Indicators for each duty or responsibility, ie 'Duty: debtor management' = 'KPI: average debtor days less than 40'. This provides a clear method for the incoming incumbent to self-measure their success in the role, and removes any room for doubt or misunderstanding between yourself and the incumbent when it comes to review time.

- Be mindful of the differences between Skills, Qualifications, and Attributes. A high calibre employee can be highly skilled without formal qualifications. Similarly, a low calibre employee can have qualifications but little skill. Attributes are difficult to measure quantifiably, so work with your HR or Organisation Development team to ensure you have appropriate interview questions as part of your selection process.

- Whilst it's rare for salaries to appear on JDs outside the public sector, it's essential that the skills and experience required on your JD match the salary which is on offer. There are many factors to consider, including:
 - internal salary banding data resultant from formal job grading systems;
 - parity/equity with similar internal roles;
 - budgets;
 - current market salaries and any variances which may exist for your industry. Does your company participate in benchmarking surveys to gain access to relevant benchmarking data? You may set targets about where you want your salaries to sit, for example you may aim to pay in the 65th percentile of the benchmark for that role;
 - recognition of skills the incoming incumbent will bring; and
 - salary review periods. For example, if the role has no regular review period this may impact the amount on offer.