

Think Before You Hire! Job Description Strategies

Recruiting to hire the right people to promote success is a true challenge. We have created a number of systems and strategies that we share with our clients to help them identify the right candidate for their needs, but without a proper game plan it's impossible to determine what the right candidate looks like. And as we have discussed in the past, a [bad hiring decision can be extremely costly](#).

We [recently blogged](#) about some of the steps [Accolo](#) recommends when evaluating job candidates. However, before interviewing qualified candidates, you need to have a solid plan in place to understand what types of candidates you are seeking and how they might fit into the organization.



We recommend preplanning your workforce before you start recruiting. Assess the technical skills needed for the position that needs to be filled:

- - Evaluate the organizational structure and be sure that the open position has a clear purpose that supports your company mission.
 - - Clearly define the open position and ensure that an appropriate Job Description has been developed.
 - - Determine the minimum qualifications for the position. Are there special credentials that need to be defined (CPA, MA, MD, PhD, etc.)? Are there certain experience levels that are required, or a number of years of service?
- Analyze the compensation plan. Remember you get what you pay for. Performing a

compensation analysis will tell you if you are competitive and can attract the best candidates.

When creating the job description, the mistake many recruiters and hiring managers make is writing a skills-based job description that only outlines the requirements to do the job, rather than the desire to fulfill the role. A performance-based job description provides a better measurement of how the candidate will perform since it defines the expectations for the position.

For example, consider the job description for a telephone sales position. A skills-based job description would include:

- - A college degree
- - Industry experience
- - Strong interpersonal skills
- - Two years of sales or customer service experience
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The criteria are quite broad. How many candidates would qualify or think they qualify for that type of a position? Now, if you take the same job and describe it using a performance-based job description, it might include:

- - Make 150 outbound calls per day
- - Achieve sales quota within 90 days
- - Achieve 20 percent customer renewal rate
- - Handle inbound customer calls and handle routine customer issues
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The performance-based job description sets the expectations for the candidate so he or she can determine if this job is really right for him or her. More importantly, it provides a benchmark that allows management to objectively assess the candidate's performance.

Research also shows that an effective job description should cover:

- - Day-to-day responsibilities so the candidate can determine if his or her interests align with those responsibilities. Daily schedules and a "day in the life" scenario will automatically weed out candidates who lack the drive to do the tasks required.
- - Company fit, including alignment with the company culture and any potential career path.
- - Employee expectations, including key performance indicators, required tasks, and job expectations.
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With proper preplanning and laying a solid foundation before you start recruiting, it will be easier to narrow the field to a small number of suitable candidates. The right evaluation tools and criteria will

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make it easier to identify the top performers who can help the company achieve its goals.