

How to Write a Clear Job Description

A common misconception in Human Resource policies is that job descriptions are for lower level jobs and mission statements are for higher level positions. Higher level jobs include “C Level” positions such as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chief Operations Officer (COO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO). This perception can be very costly to employers when employees question what they are responsible for and what they are not responsible for in their positions.

All employees in your company need to understand what is expected of them and how their success will be measured from the first day of their employment. A job description fulfills this requirement like no other employment tool. It guides the hiring, ongoing evaluation and potential termination of each employee no matter what position they occupy.

There are seven main components of a job description as follows:

The “Purpose Statement” is normally two to four sentences that describe why the job is important to the success of the company.

An “Environment and Culture” section describes the physical attributes of the job location (office, outside job site or phone center) and the personality (culture) of the job and the people that work there.

Your “Function” portion is usually the most detailed. It describes what duties need to be performed and when. It should be as clear as possible about the tasks that the employee must perform each day. Will the position include interactions with the public, your customers or internal personnel? What are the priorities of the activities to be performed?

A “Requirements” area must detail what education, technical skills and prior experience is required for the job and why those requirements are important.

“Responsible Parties” section provides details on who the employee reports to in the organization and when. It should provide the employee with an organization chart when necessary and how the employee’s activities impact the company in the big picture.

A “Performance Measurement” portion must be as specific as possible. Define what is most important for the employee and the organization. Describe the type of activities and requirements that will enhance the future success of the business. Provide details on when evaluations will take place, who will give them and if any advance preparation is required.

The “Compensation and Benefits” area can include either a specific compensation amount or a range if the position is based on reaching certain performance levels or seniority. If your company uses salary grades, be clear about what needs to be done to reach each level. Are any employee

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benefits offered such as bonuses, retirement packages, vacation time, cars or special recognition? What needs to be done to receive the benefits and when are they available?

A clearly written job description can literally save thousands of dollars in potential litigation costs. A succinct example of this is presented in the Pacific Crest Group (PCG) case study “[Why You Need Well-defined Job Descriptions.](#)”

A job description is not difficult to write. Some type of job description is infinitely better than no job description at all. For a more in depth discussion of job descriptions, please go to “[Reference for Business.](#)”

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