

Best Practices for Writing Job Descriptions

Through decades of work in the recruiting industry, we've seen hundreds of thousands of job requisitions. Follow these best practices to write a job description that attracts top talent.

01. Job Title and Location

Use a job title that will evoke authority and pique the candidate's interest. However, keep in mind that your job title also needs to be one that potential candidates will be searching for. Do you really think anyone is searching for a position as a 'Marketing Ninja'? Do some research beforehand to identify the most appropriate job title to use. Also, be sure to include the location of the position you are hiring for, especially if you have multiple offices.

02. Quick Company Summary with a Hook

Start your job description with a summary about your company and then provide a hook to draw the audience in. Important to keep in mind here is that you don't need to be the sexiest company or have the biggest brand to attract quality candidates. Just be honest and personable in your messaging.

Concisely explain the nature of your business and tell candidates why your organization is a great place to work. Once you establish this, refine your messaging to communicate why the specific position you are hiring for is exciting within the context of your company.

03. Describe Your Ideal Candidate

Once you have the candidate's full attention, it's time to set your expectations for the role. This starts with defining your ideal candidate. One of the biggest mistakes in writing job descriptions is doing so before you have developed a well-defined candidate profile.

Prior to writing this section, take time to list the key characteristics that constitute your ideal candidate. Once you have these characteristics identified, 'call them out' in your job description. This forces your candidates to evaluate their own personality and experience to see if they are the right fit for the role. Begin this section by saying, "This is the job for you if..." then bullet out the characteristics that are essential for the role that you are hiring for.



04. List What They Will Own / Do (Duties and Responsibilities)

Okay, we have the candidate hooked and they fall into our candidate profile. Now, we need to be sure that the candidate fully understands what their roles and responsibilities will be. This is the most straightforward section of the job description. Start it off by stating, "As a [title], you'll..." and then give candidates a top-level, honest explanation of the major duties and tasks that they will be responsible for.

Use this section of the job description to paint a clear picture of what 'a day in the life' at your company would be like. Enabling candidates to visualize themselves working at your company is the key to driving them to apply. Furthermore, if you are honest when describing the duties of the position, those that apply are buying into the role that they will actually be fulfilling at your company and this will boost employee retention.

05. Requirements and Qualifications (Skills and Experience)

To set the bar and establish a baseline threshold for candidates, be clear about the required qualifications for the job. Frame this section with, "What we're looking for..." and then list the mandatory skills and experience needed.

Avoid listing every qualification that constitutes your 'perfect' candidate because this may intimidate many qualified job seekers and drive them away from applying (consider separating nice-to-haves from must-haves). Remember, the purpose of a job description is to attract qualified candidates to apply. As you move candidates through your pipeline, you can extract further qualifications not specified in the job description.

06. Wrap it All Up

Use the conclusion of your job description to make your final pitch to candidates. For our conclusion, we always start with the header, "In case you were wondering..." We have found that this ambiguity peaks the interest of most candidates and prompts them to continue reading. Following this header, use the body paragraph to summarize any final selling points.

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