



## **The Value of Effective Job Descriptions**

An effectively written job description is more than just an outline of expectations and responsibilities. Job descriptions, when utilized and written properly, are a communication tool that are significant in the success of your organization.

Effective job descriptions are an essential part of every business, but not all companies take the time to develop, implement or maintain them because many do not understand the underlying factors. A job description helps set the framework for an organization and creates value for the company, employees and ultimately the customers by setting transparent expectations. Simple paragraphs or bullet points within a job description can yield greater results and power.

Employee job descriptions provide a method to plainly communicate company direction and inform employees where and how they fit into the organization. They help align each team member with the company's goals, vision and mission to achieve success. Without effective job descriptions, companies may experience workplace confusion, miscommunication, turnover and indistinct job expectations.

It is important for each job description to be well-written and set clear expectations for the employee. Job descriptions should include the duties, responsibilities, required qualifications, skills, environment and working conditions, tools and equipment used and relationships with other positions.

The information in job descriptions should be based on objective information gained through an on-site job analysis conducted by a supervisor, to give an understanding of the competencies and skills required to perform the job tasks for that position. It is important to remember that a job description describes the job, not the person who holds that job position. Also, it is imperative that job descriptions have enough flexibility so employees can "work outside of the box." Employees should feel comfortable taking reasonable chances and stretching their limits- an effective job description should discourage thoughts of "that's not my job". The description should be flexible enough to empower employees to make appropriate decisions to serve the customer, help other team members to accomplish a task and be comfortable cross-training.

Although job descriptions are commonly used for advertising open positions, a job description holds a greater role and should be used for a multitude of business functions, such as:

**Recruiting New Employees** - Well-written job descriptions can assist you in making good hiring decisions. They are also a great communication tool for screening potential external and internal candidates because they provide a clear picture about the job, required knowledge and skills, education needed and potential training required. Hiring the right team is critical for future success of the company and effective job descriptions can help you select preferred candidates.

**Onboarding** -The importance of properly onboarding a new employee and enabling the adjustment to a new position cannot be exaggerated. Part of a valuable introduction to a company is for new hires to receive an accurate, well-written job description. New hires will then be able to understand company and supervisor expectations. The job description enables a new hire to feel confident about the responsibilities and accountabilities of their position. New hires will also understand how the job fits into the company and they will be able to visualize their place in the company. The people you employ should align with your goals, vision and mission of the company.

**Performance** - Job descriptions are a fundamental part of performance management and job evaluation. They can serve as a job benchmark for how an employee spends their time at work and can provide a measurable focus for energy and attention. The first step to empower employees to perform their job is to ensure they know your expectations. An adequate job description allows the employee to take ownership over their position. The job description should be your starting point in evaluating an employee's readiness for pay increases, promotions, succession opportunities, etc.

**Succession Planning** - Understanding the requirements of positions in relation to education, skills and knowledge helps guide management to prepare for future role changes. They can determine the gap between what an employee currently does, what is required to be able to complete their present job more competently and if the employee is able to move to another position within the same or different job scope. Precise job descriptions provide a basis for job evaluation, wage surveys and a salary structure for your organization and your team members.

**Business Structure** - Job descriptions are the building blocks of an organization's structure. Routine analysis of job descriptions can reveal whether all responsibilities are sufficiently covered and where reallocations might be necessary to achieve a better balance.

Job descriptions that sit unused in a drawer or filing cabinet do not obtain their full value. Maintaining job descriptions is vital. It is recommended that the supervisor/ hiring manager and human resources officer review each job description in a joint effort annually and make necessary adjustments. To perform well, employees must know the expectations of supervisors. This begins with an up-to-date, effective job description that describes the essential functions, task and responsibility of each job. An effective job description will outline the knowledge and skills required of the employee to be valuable in their position, which in turn leads to more success for the company.

*There are a variety of online services that will help develop job descriptions for your company. Job descriptions and the processes and procedures used to develop them should conform to all employment legal requirements. If you are unsure of your local laws, you should contact a Human Resource Associate within your state or province.*

