

The Importance of Job Descriptions

All employees like to know what is expected of them and how they will be evaluated. Job descriptions can also be a great value to employers. Creating a job description often results in a thought process that helps determine how critical the job is, how this particular job relates to others and identify the characteristics needed by a new employee filling the role.

A job description typically outlines the necessary skills, training and education needed by a potential employee. It will spell out duties and responsibilities of the job. Once a job description is prepared, it can serve as a basis for interviewing candidates, orienting a new employee and finally in the evaluation of job performance. Using job descriptions is part of good management.

Components of a Job Description

1. A summary statement. These one or two sentences include a general statement of duties and mentions who the employee would report to.
2. Functions of the position. Usually this section is the most lengthy. It details what the job actually entails and can be quite specific. It should detail any supervisory functions in addition to being as specific as possible in describing tasks the employee will face every day. This is also the best place to indicate whether the person will deal with customers, the public or only internal employees. You can also use this section to place priorities on the activities.
3. Attributes needed for the position. If the position involves the use of machinery (or computers), spell out what type of machines or software the employee will use. Also detail any technical or educational requirements that may be critical or desired. This is also the place to provide some insights into the type of work environment you are attempting to maintain. Is it pure business, or must the person be able to contribute to an overall spirit of the organization?
4. Reporting. Provide details on the reporting and organizational structure. This will help the employee better understand how their activities fit into the total organization.
5. Evaluation criteria. The more specific you can get the better. Writing this section will probably enable you to define what is most important for the organization as well as the employee. Try to make sure the evaluation criteria of the position will promote the type of activities to enhance the success of the business. Also provide details on when evaluations will take place.

6. Compensation. Including a range instead of a specific figure will give you more flexibility, but most people will feel they should be at the top of the range. It is usually better to have a specific dollar amount, especially if you are giving the job description to the employee. If your organization uses salary grades, use that.

7. Physical location and surroundings.

Summary

Using job descriptions will help an organization better understand the experience and skill base needed to enhance the success of the company. They help in the hiring, evaluation and potentially terminating of employees. All too often, there is a misunderstanding of what a position entails and a well-prepared job description can help both sides share a common understanding.