

The Importance of Job Descriptions



QUESTION:

How much weight should be placed on job descriptions? How can you gain buy-in from senior management on the importance of job descriptions?

ANSWER:

Well-crafted, detailed job descriptions can serve as multi-purpose tools—and have a significant impact on an organization.

Unfortunately, job descriptions tend to get a bad rep because they take time to create; are mistakenly viewed as non-essential documents; and are rarely referenced. The problem is typically two-fold: Companies are not crafting good job descriptions, and they don't know how to use them.

No doubt about it, the crafting part is time consuming. Nevertheless, if you take the time to write job descriptions the right way, you'll reap the benefits.

Job descriptions that specify required education and skills *and* provide details about job tasks are essential.

Recruiting and Hiring

Perhaps the most obvious use for a job description is as a tool for recruiting and hiring. Before you advertise an open position or recruit candidates for a job you need to know what the job entails.

A detailed job description also supports the interview process. It provides essential information, ensuring that interview questions are relevant to the job.

In addition, a job description allows an interviewer to answer questions a candidate may have about tasks, managerial responsibilities, reporting structure, and so forth.

Retention

A job description serves as a retention tool as well.

By using a job description for benchmarking purposes, HR and department managers can compare salary and benefits of similar positions and determine if adjustments should be made in order to remain competitive.

Performance Management

As important, a job description provides parameters for measuring employee performance.

It also serves as a document to reference when counseling employees about poor performance—and it helps support a termination decision.

Manage a Department

Because each job description details tasks, when looked at as group, job descriptions can help department managers organize workflow and manage objectives.

Similarly, when reviewed collectively, a department's job descriptions can help a manager assign responsibilities and establish a structure – not only for the purpose of day-to-day management, but to identify career paths and promotion opportunities for staff members.

At the same time, job descriptions help align individual tasks with department and corporate goals. This ensures everybody stays focused on objectives and makes the best possible contribution to the organization.

Getting Buy-in

Clearly, job descriptions are extremely useful tools.

Finally, in answer to the second part of the question: How do you get senior management buy-in? As with so many other HR issues, it's largely about educating the organization's leaders—and now that you have the Insider scoop on job descriptions, you can let senior management know how your organization will benefit from using them.

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timthumb='on']https://hrinsider.ca/wp-content/themes/arthemisia/images/Experts/Paula-Santonocito.jpg[/author_image] [author_info]**About The Expert**

Paula Santonocito is a former corporate executive with HR experience in a variety of work environments, Paula is a business journalist specializing in employment issues and the author of more than 1,000 articles on a wide range of human resource and career topics. She is a contributing editor to HRInsider.ca.

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