

The Pros and Cons of Unconventional Job Titles



In an attempt to be like Google, who has famously let employees create their own job titles, what happens when a new Director comes along and asks you to create interesting and catchy job titles for positions in your organization? Should new job titles be literal or just made up?

Sometimes Creativity is Fun and Other Times Confusing

Interested in being the chief cook and bottle washer, what about the lead butterfly catcher? If you saw these job titles and nothing but these job titles you could be forgiven for not understanding if either job was for you. However, placed in context they could be an interesting way to attract a candidate and communicate your company culture.

Generally speaking one who is a Chief Cook and Bottle Washer is a leader who also has to take care of, or at least ensure, that menial tasks are taken care of. If your director is a chief cook and bottle washer then that may mean he is signalling his willingness to be a leader who also wants to step in and do the work that needs to be done.

Advantages to creating catchy job titles

- ***They can garner attention in a competitive hiring market:***

If you are trying to attract the attention of a passive job seeker, a recent graduate or a creative higher flyer you may find that a catchy job title is just that, an eye catcher. If you post a creative job title on a job board, on LinkedIn or in your network you may find the 'shares' are increased because of the uniqueness and curiosity factor. How many job titles do you see for Manager of Operations compared to Ring Master?

- ***They can display company culture:***

Catchy job titles do say something about the company culture (current or the one you hope to build). The title Ring Master may very well communicate the impression of a three ring circus but if your organization is balancing many plates in the air that might be an appropriate way to communicate the type of candidate and the type of organization you are.

- ***They can be flexible and allow for creativity in the evolution of the job:***

If your organization or the position is truly a work under construction, growing and expected to change imminently then a creative title can communicate and

enable change without needing to re-write the job title as the position shifts. The job title software engineer is pretty basic and can certainly clearly communicate the role but the title engineering ninja does communicate just a slightly different message.

Disadvantages to creating catchy job titles

- ***They can be confusing internally and may cause dissension:***

Creative job titles may be fun but your sales maestro and your engineering ninja may be pretty confused over what information they can obtain from one another. It can also be difficult to communicate level of responsibility as a creative job title may sound too junior or senior.

- ***They can be confusing externally in candidate searches:***

The same challenges as with internal communications, recruiters and job candidates may struggle to pinpoint the level and the details of the job from a creative job title

- ***The machines may get more confused:***

Candidates usually search by job title and if your job title is not aligned with what a candidate is searching for it may be missed. Similarly, technology pulling jobs into popular job boards may be confused where to place the job. Additionally ATS may miss candidates who do not include your job title in their portfolio.

When being creative in job titles keep 3 things in mind

- 1) Consider all interpretations of the title and look for negative connotations from external points of view
- 2) Create more literal sub-titles that can be used to help clarify the job title to everyone including candidates, other members of the organization and external people
- 3) Ensure the title does fit your company culture and the role. Try to consistently apply your creativity. Mixing too many metaphors or going all over the map could make things pretty messy.

Recently I worked with a number of employees who were laid off from a Canadian tech giant who used some interesting job titles to describe their employees. Often those job titles were uninformative and did not showcase those job seekers well during their job search. The job titles made sense to the insiders but once outside the doors they did not translate well. However, Subway does have their Sandwich Artists™ and that may just attract for them minimum wage earners who are a little more creative and happy to be an Artist and not 'counter help'.