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How do you write a Job Description?



Overview:

The Information Resource Centre (IRC) is an extensive small business online resource, which can be found at MAUS' website www.maus.com.au. There you will find an extensive and growing range of articles and "how to" solutions to help you in starting, growing and managing your small business. You can benefit from over 7,500 pages of accurate and practical business content!

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<http://www.maus.com/artserver/as2.asp>

How do you write a job description?

What is a job description?

A job description is a broad statement of the duties, accountabilities and responsibilities of a position. Every employee needs a job description so that they clearly understand the nature of their role within the organisation. As well, employers need to know what can reasonably be required of an employee. Job descriptions can also assist the recruitment process by:

- making it easier to draft job advertisements and specifications for employment agencies
- providing applicants with an outline of the main duties of the job
- providing a basis for future performance measurement and future identification of training needs.

A job description can be either:

- task-oriented
- outcome-oriented.

For example, managers typically occupy outcome-oriented positions in which success is measured by, eg. sales figures, new product launches, high staff retention rates. A machine operator would occupy a task-oriented position, in which success is measured by things like production levels.

What are the elements of a job description?

A job description should normally contain the following basic elements:

- job title and identification
- summary statement of the job
- detailed description of tasks or outcomes expected
- outline of working relationships
- summary of working conditions
- conditions of service.

Sample guidelines

Use the following sample guidelines to help you write a job description.

Job title and identification

- Keep this short.
- Avoid titles or terms that are gender specific.
- The job identification should set out the job site/location, the title of the person the employee reports to and the date of the job description.

Summary statement of the job

- Set out a summary of the main tasks of the job or expected outcomes in a few sentences.

Give a detailed description of the tasks, outcomes

- List major tasks/duties performed in the job.
- Avoid detailed lists of specific job procedures. Instead, describe the functions, responsibilities and activities performed.
- List tasks/duties in descending order of performance, ie the most important ones first.
- Emphasise responsibilities, results expected from particular duties and tools to be used.
- Describe whether the position requires the person in the role to function independently, exercise initiative, comply with guidelines or policies or perform limited tasks that are closely monitored by others.
- Use verbs such as: plans, develops, supervises, directs, recommends, operates, sets up etc to describe functions and activities.
- Also describe:
 - timing of work – ie when it has to be done
 - volume of work – eg how many calls a telephonist has to answer per hour rather than "answers incoming calls"
 - accountability for safety at work
 - the approximate proportion of time to be spent on management work versus operational work, where relevant, eg 60% management duties, 40% operational duties (include communicating information to employees and conducting performance reviews of subordinates as standard management functions).

Working relationships

- Note the relationships between the job holder and line management, other employees, customers or suppliers.
- Describe the nature of communication and contact with these people/groups.

Working conditions

- Describe the physical demands of the job, where relevant.
- Highlight whether a person with disabilities could perform the job as it stands or with appropriate modifications.

Conditions of service

Describe:

- any travel requirements
- working hours
- salary
- employee benefits
- leave entitlements.

Sample form

Adapt the following form to suit the needs of your organisation.

Keep job descriptions up-to-date

Use the following checklist to ensure your organisations' job descriptions are up-to-date and user-friendly:

- Review job descriptions at every opportunity - new appointment, performance review and salary/wage review.
- Provide opportunities for employees to update their own job descriptions when they know they're out of date.
- Use job descriptions flexibly so that there's scope to handle contingencies.
- Emphasise why work is done to maintain direction and help the development of creative approaches.
- Review how a job relates to other jobs to identify inconsistencies, eg in responsibilities or rewards.
- Consider group job descriptions so that people know what is expected of them as a team.

MAUS Job Descriptions

Create job descriptions in minutes



Have you ever had an employee say, "I didn't know that was my job?" Effective job descriptions help you avoid that scenario by allowing you to realistically and consistently establish job content and appraise performance against measurable criteria.

Detailed job descriptions will also help you to hire the right candidate since you have clearly assigned and fixed the responsibilities and authorities of their position. It will also enable you to have a solid understanding of what you are seeking in a potential candidate. New employees will rapidly become more effective because their duties and responsibilities are not left to guesswork and chance.

Key Benefits

- Save up to 90% of the time currently spent on creating job descriptions.
- Increase productivity through better educated and motivated staff.
- Increase the likelihood of hiring the right candidate for the job.
- Protect your business from discrimination or unfair dismissal claims.
- Orient new employees and realign the priorities of existing staff.

At the click of a button, MAUS Job Descriptions will provide you with

- An accurate, concise library of customisable job descriptions
- Expert HR advice Customised interview questions and rating forms
- An 'Ad Writer' to help you write and place effective employment advertisements
- Protection from unfair dismissal claims.

Testimonials

"If you want a package that can facilitate every phase of employment, from hiring to performance review, Job Descriptions can do the job..."
PC World Magazine

"MAUS Job Descriptions is a tremendous time saver. Our managers absolutely love it! It's easy to use and allows them to create meaningful job descriptions which are consistent company wide."
Anita Ruka (HR Director) - "A" Company Orthodontics

Summary of Features

3,800 built-in job descriptions, on-going user library, automatically generated text, performance competencies, customisation module, hiring module, reporting module, job questionnaire, links to Hrtools.com, expert HR advice.