

A guide for business owners:

How to write a job description



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Writing job descriptions can be time-consuming, especially if you don't have an HR team or job description examples to draw from. The best job ads clearly articulate your needs and what you offer, helping to attract workers with the right skills. Here's the good news: With structure and a plan, it's possible to learn how to write a job description that can help you attract the talent you need to build your business.

Why job descriptions matter

When your organization is growing, every position matters. You're not just hiring to fill a seat. With every hire, you're looking for a worker who can bring specific skills, perspective, and energy to the team and be a good fit. A well-written job description is key.

Consider your job description as your first conversation with potential candidates. It defines your expectations, clarifies day-to-day responsibilities, places the role within the larger context of your business and helps applicants determine if they're a good fit.

Ultimately, taking the time to write an effective description saves you time and effort. The better the description, the less likely you are to waste time interviewing or screening applicants who aren't qualified. A good job description can make onboarding easier, reduce misunderstandings and help guide performance conversations. They lend clarity to candidates and people involved in the interview process and management.

How to write a job description: What to include

Designing a clear and effective job description requires careful planning. Begin by considering what would make this job appealing to a prospective candidate. By understanding the value you're offering, whether it's interesting tasks or a flexible schedule, and what you want from employees in exchange, you can create a job description that encourages people to apply.

Begin with the job title

A clear, searchable title can bring your opportunity to the attention of talent seeking similar roles. "Customer Support Specialist" is a more accurate title than "Happiness Hero." Candidates are often looking for specific roles, so choose a title that aligns with your company's offerings and makes sense in the broader market.

Create a short job summary

Inform candidates about the role's responsibilities and how it contributes to your business. Focus on clear examples that tie into the impact the role can have on your business. This approach can help potential applicants see the bigger picture and feel connected to your mission from the start.

Here's an example: "We are a small marketing agency that helps businesses across New England focus on digital growth. We're hiring a Social Media Manager who can create scroll-stopping content, manage our client accounts and understand how to create engagement with our customers' high-value audiences. Social media plays a significant role in the broader digital plans we create for our clients."

Describe the responsibilities like a day-in-the-life

It's easy for a job description to become a wish list of tasks that you want a candidate to take off your plate. Instead, put those tasks into context. What will their day look like? What are the goals they'll be responsible for? What does success look like after 90 days? The more you can help them envision the role, the more effectively candidates can evaluate whether they're a good fit.

For example, if you're hiring an executive assistant for finance: "You'll work closely with our CFO to streamline finances. You'll handle weekly reconciliation in QuickBooks, prepare financial reports and flag unusual spending. You'll also work closely with our CPA during tax season and be the point person on scheduling finance team meetings."

Realistically outline the experience and skills needed

Skills-based hiring focuses your efforts on finding the best candidates for the role you want to fill. Begin by outlining the experience and skills necessary for the role. Prioritize what's truly required to do the job well. Then, consider any skills that can help make a candidate more valuable or create growth opportunities as "nice-to-have."

For example, a marketing coordinator role might require someone comfortable creating marketing content and can show a portfolio. Existing knowledge of the software programs you use can be a valuable addition.

Be clear on logistics

Is the role remote, in-person or hybrid? Share expected hours, pay range (when possible) and benefits. Candidates want clarity. The more transparency you offer from the start, the more prospective employees will trust you. This information includes pay transparency, which is increasingly necessary to attract talent and, in some states, it is required by law. For example, Massachusetts recently passed a law requiring Massachusetts employers with 25 or more employees to post a realistic range of expected compensation, among other requirements. Find the right candidates by listing a compensation range, whether it's an hourly wage or salary, and estimates for full-time or part-time positions.

How to help your job description stand out

The best job descriptions sound like they were written by real people. Keep your tone conversational and professional. Here are a few tips to help your job description stand out:

- Write in plain language: Use simple, clear sentences that are easy to read.
- Speak to the person, not just the resume: Explain to the reader why this role is important. What kind of person will thrive in your company? For example, are you seeking a fast-paced innovator or someone comfortable navigating formal meetings?
- Be concise: Aim for 500–750 words. That's long enough to give real context but short enough to hold attention.

You don't need a degree in HR to write a great job description. Be clear about what you want, what the role entails and what you can offer in exchange. Find ways to communicate this in an on-brand, human voice to connect with prospective talent that can help your business growth goals become a reality.

The author of this content is a paid contributor for Verizon.