



Writing Job Descriptions

Description:

This tool provides an overview of job descriptions, the steps to creating a job description and a sample job description.

How it can be used:

Think of a job description as a 'snapshot' of a job. The job description needs to communicate clearly and concisely the responsibilities and key qualifications of the job. Without a clear job description, it is not possible for a person to properly commit to or be held accountable for a position. Effective job descriptions will provide a consistent hiring and management foundation for all positions.

AN EFFECTIVE JOB DESCRIPTION	
	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defines a candidate's role and accountability• Covers main responsibilities, not detailed tasks• Is brief and concise• Describes and reflects the current position• Positions the job within the current organizational chart	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lists all the tasks of the job• Describes how each individual task is done (that is for the operational manual)• Relies on the job's history or past tasks• Is based on the qualifications of the person who currently holds the position

Why job descriptions are important

Job descriptions improve an organization's ability to hire and manage people in the following ways:

- provide a clear description of the role for job candidates
- provide a consistent structure for the organization to describe all jobs and ensure all necessary activities, duties and responsibilities are covered
- enable pay systems to be structured fairly and logically
- prevent arbitrary interpretation of roles by employee and employer
- function as a reference tool in issues of employee/employer dispute or discipline issues
- provide important reference points for training and development areas
- provide a neutral and objective reference for performance reviews and counselling

Steps in creating a job description

1. Write clearly and concisely.
 - a. Use short sentences that are to the point.
 - b. Use descriptive verbs, in the present tense (e.g., reviews, develops).
 - c. Avoid vague words (e.g., may); use specific words and phrases (e.g., routine, daily, etc.).
2. Include the correct title of the position and the Department/Division/Unit.
 - a. Ensure that the position is up to date.
 - b. Describe where the position is situated within the organization.
3. Outline *to whom* the position reports.
 - a. Describe the position, not names of people (e.g., 'Manager of Quality Improvement', not 'Mary Brown').

4. Outline the direct reports who *report to* this position.
 - a. Describe the positions, not names of people (e.g., 'administrative assistant', not 'John Brown').
5. Describe the overall responsibilities of the position
 - a. Structure it by main responsibilities (e.g., 'manage the financial reporting of the unit', 'coordinate the development of all quality improvement strategies', etc.).
 - b. Consider doing this after you have created the key functions as it may be easier to roll them into overall responsibilities by theme.
6. Key functions:
 - a. List 6 - 10 major duties or functions.
 - b. Describe each to further clarify what is involved (i.e., how each function is done).
 - c. If necessary, begin with a list of 20-30 tasks and then combine relevant tasks into key functions. About 8 - 10 is ideal.
 - d. Some examples of how to roll up tasks into key functions would be:
 - i. All tasks concerned with 'invoicing', could be covered by: 'manage and report on all invoicing activities using approved systems and processes (as defined in the operational manual).'
 - ii. All tasks concerned with 'cash management', could be included in 'manage movement, security and accounting of cash in accordance with agreed processes and standards (as defined in the operating manual).'
 - e. Smaller organizations commonly require staff and managers to cover a wider or more mixed range of responsibilities (for example, the 'office manager' role can comprise financial, HR, scheduling and other duties). Therefore in smaller organizations, job descriptions might contain a greater number of listed functions, perhaps 12 -16.
 - f. If you are combining several functions into the same job description, make sure that you are creating a job that is possible and 'doable'.
 - g. Include any supervisory duties which are part of the functions, such as:
 - i. recruiting
 - ii. assessing
 - iii. training
 - iv. managing
7. Consults:
 - a. If relevant, note the types of problems/questions that are dealt with by the candidate and those that are referred to others (identify to whom they would be referred).
8. Qualifications:
 - a. What are the experience requirements? They must be essential and justifiable.
 - b. Educational requirements must be a real necessity for the job. If someone could accomplish the work with equivalent job experience but who lacks a specific credential, the job description should be modified.
 - c. Credentials (e.g., diplomas, degrees and designations) that are required for the position.
9. Terms of employment:
 - a. Is this position full-time or part-time? Permanent, temporary, casual or contract?
10. Conclude with the date and when the job description will be reviewed to ensure it is kept up to date.

Sample Job Description

Position: Administrative Assistant, Quality Improvement Unit, Clinical Services Division

Reporting to: Manager of the Quality Improvement Unit

Direct Reports: Data entry clerks in the Quality Improvement Unit

Overall Responsibility: Coordinate all administrative activities of the Quality Improvement Unit

Key Functions

1. Regularly create various documents and reports using word processing software.
2. Monthly, create financial and statistical tools and reports using spreadsheets.
3. Regularly manage, organize, and update relevant data using database applications.
4. Regularly communicate and provide information by a variety of methods, including email, written correspondence, and telephone; both internally and externally.
5. Periodically research and investigate information to enable strategic decision-making by others.
6. Regularly arrange and participate in meetings, conferences, and project team activities.
7. Periodically approve decisions, requests, expenditures and recommendations on behalf of the Manager of the Quality Improvement Unit in their absence, according to agreed guidelines and policies.
8. On an ongoing basis, provide guidance and direction to the data entry clerks of the Quality Improvement Unit. This includes assessing and training to support quality performance.
9. Always adhere to stated policies and procedures relating to health and safety, and quality management.
10. Always adhere to procedures relating to the proper use and care of equipment and materials for which the role has responsibility.

Consult:

The Administrative Assistant will be responsible for decision-making related to the data entry clerks in the Quality Improvement Unit, as per the operations manual.

The Administrative Assistant will consult with the Manager of the Quality Improvement Unit on any decisions related to external stakeholders, as per the operations manual.

Qualifications

The position of Administrative Assistant requires:

- a high school diploma
- completion of a 2 year administration program in a post-secondary institution
- a minimum of 2 years experience in a health centre

Terms of Employment:

The position of Administrative Assistant is a full-time permanent position located within the Quality Improvement Unit of the Clinical Services Division.

This job description was created July 25, 2013, and will be reviewed July, 2015.