



## 2. Writing a Description

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# Writing a Position Description

Attracting the right applicants isn't solely about where you're advertising – it's also about what you're advertising. Your company's job description is your advertisement. It's designed to attract the right people so that you have the best applicants applying to the position.

Writing a quality job description can be tricky, but it is far more important than most businesses give it credit for. A quality job description:

- Gets people excited about the prospect of working for your business.
- Dissuades potential applicants that are not right for the position.
- Encourages potential applicants that fit the position.
- Prepares applicants for what the job entails.

Each of these is extremely important. You want people to be excited about working for you. You want those that aren't right for the position to recognize they're not a good fit. You want great applicants to know that they should apply, and you want to make sure that when people do start to work for you, they're not surprised or disappointed by what their tasks are.

## How to Write a Job Description

There's no specific formula used in the development of ideal job descriptions, because all jobs are different. But one of the best ways to write these descriptions is to set them up in the following order:

- Summary of the position.
- Introduction to the company.
- Type of person you're looking to attract.
- Knowledge and needs.
- Benefits of working for your company.
- Additional qualifications.
- Contact information with multiple contact options.

Each of these needs to be short and to the point, focusing on the specific needs of the company and the applicant. Let's break them down and address each individual part:

## Summary of the position

You need something here that captures people's attention. It should have the title, some brief details about the position, and an introduction to your company. It should be written in a way that motivates people to apply and read onward, focusing on key words that may attract their attention like "entry level" or "supervisory." Ideally, the field and industry should be in this section as well, so that people can spot positions that appeal to them.

## Introduction to the company

Next up is talking about the company. Some people put this section last, or near the end, but most companies will want to place this information up higher so that people aren't just excited about applying for the job – they're excited about applying for the company. You want people to want to work for you. Those that aren't interested won't read onward, and while this sounds like a bad thing, it is actually good for attracting the applicants you truly want.

## Type of person you're looking to attract

Next you're going to want to go into the type of person you're looking for. Even though this isn't the specific breakdown yet of exact needs, you don't want this to be fluff. Avoid phrases like "go getter" and "leader" and focus instead on the ideal applicant. For example, "someone with a background in IT and interest in psychology" if you're looking for someone to help develop a research program.

# Continued...

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Make sure, however, that you're not unintentionally stereotyping the position. There can be some great applicants that may not fall under what you originally assumed you wanted. That's why it's best to avoid fluff and clichés. Focus on what the day to day tasks are, what the role will entail, and who is right for it.

### Knowledge and needs

Here you'll actually start listing what you need from an applicant. Once again, think about each thing you place. Do you really need someone with two years of experience? Do you really need someone with experience with some obscure program? If the answer is yes, put it in. If the answer is no, don't.

The needs of your company need to discourage those that aren't right and encourage those that are. You want the perfect applicant to read it and say "wow, this is me" while the other applicants decide they aren't right for the job. But you also don't want to hamstring yourself by asking for more things than you actually need, since that type of applicant both may not be out there and may not be necessary. Pick and choose each and every skill, qualification, or piece of knowledge that the position genuinely needs.

### Benefits of working for your company

Once again, the benefits of working for your company are your chance to attract people to you. Applicants care about pay, about potential for raises and promotions, telecommuting, liberal hours, about experience, perks, benefits, and so on. Get people to want to apply for you here by talking about the benefits of working for your company and why you're a great fit for them, just as they're a great fit for you.

### Additional information/ qualifications

Finally, you can add in any final thoughts that you have before the contact info. For example, if this is a contract position, if the hours are flexible, if you check references. This space is up to you. Keep it brief, because most of the information can go above.

### Contact information with multiple contact options

Finally, end with contact information, and consider more than one contact option, such as email or online form. Some people still send letters, so an address may be nice too. You should also talk about when you plan to contact them, whether they should expect a response, and when you're hoping to fill the position by. Referencing a specific hiring manager may be helpful as well, so that people know who to write to.

### Developing Your Job Description

Your job description doesn't have to be perfect, but the closer it is to perfect the better the responses will be. Remember, people are going to be looking at your job description much like you will look at their CV - do your best to attract the best candidates, and you'll improve your chances of filling the position with exactly the type of candidate you wanted.

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