

Preparing a Job Description

By John Vamos

You will need:

1. The Job Description 'Booster' (included here for your convenience)
2. A Tape Recorder or Dictaphone
3. A Quiet Place
4. A Typist (two hours maximum)

The Challenge:

To prepare a job description for someone you've employed or for a position you are about to fill.

The Purpose:

To give you something upon which to:

1. Base your selection for the vacant position
2. Review the performance of an incumbent

More Assumptions:

1. You've never written a job description.
2. You think you should have them.
3. You don't think you'll ever get around to it.
4. You won't, unless we make it really easy for you.

Some Theory

I know you'd rather skip this, but I need to give you just a little motivation to make sure there is some momentum to finish the job.

Motivation Number One – your business interest:

We recently had a client face action from a terminated employee. The case did not proceed. Why? Because the job description was written, the employee had initialled the document and the diary notes to support the counselling were scribbled in the personnel file. (Disciplines like personnel files and performance management are separate topics...)

Motivation Number Two - your people would say:

"I can only do the job you want me to if..."

"You tell me what you want and you actually check that I do it."

"I can do the best job when..."

"You let me help you decide what to expect, we agree how I will be measured and you measure my performance and give me feedback!"

How to Create a Job Description

I have to own up. I am genetically lazy so this guide assumes you are too!

1. Get the tape recorder.
2. Think about the position and where it fits in the business.
3. Now, here's the difficult bit. Record your responses to the questions or statements in the Job Description Booster.

Job Description Booster

1. Position

What is this position is called?

2. Reporting

Who does the holder of this position report to, and do any other positions report to them?



3. Job Précis

Generate a list of the tasks the holder of this position does (or should do) by completing this statement: You know that you are doing the job well when ...
(Think of things external to your business, as well as the internal ones.)

4. Key Performance Indicators

Generate a list of the "Not Negotiable" tasks the holder of this position does (or should do) by completing these statements:

- A. Regardless of your performance overall, the five things that must be done, and upon which your performance will be measured, are _____.
(Talk to the machine and explain your five 'not negotiable' expectations of the person in this role. Consider also the things you didn't like about the way the previous employee did the job!)
- B. Your performance against the Key Performance Indicators will be measured the following way.
(List the reports or other tools you use to gauge performance. How often are they produced. If you measure by observation, say so!)

5. Team Placement

Your performance in this position affects other team members in the following way.
(Talk about why and how other team members rely on this job being done properly.)

6. Personal Attributes

- a. To be appropriate for this position, you need the following three critical personal attributes.
- b. The formal qualifications you must have before you start are
(List any industry or educational requirements.)
- c. The following qualifications, while not critical to begin with, will be part of your career development path
(List any enhanced or additional skills/training you expect of the person in the position.)

7. Review and Appraisal

Your appraisal will be conducted...
(Explain how often, who will do it and the system you use. Also explain any salary review details that are appropriate.)

8. General Comments

Brainstorm and add anything that's on your mind about this job.

Remember:

This is a 'more is better' situation. The more you say, the less we have to assume (and you know what happens when a staff member assumes!)
Talk to the machine! Pretend the taping device is a person as you explain each statement. Someone has to type this so speak slowly and clearly. If you have an afterthought during taping, add it as you go. The typist can add it in to the correct section later.

Checklist:

1. Have the tape transcribed.
2. Edit the job description.
3. Discuss with staff.
4. Make any additions and alterations. (Make sure it changes as a result of staff input!)
5. Have staff sign acceptance.
6. File in Personnel File.
7. Make it the basis of your Appraisal Interview.

Note: If you are about to hire someone, use this as the agenda for discussion in your second interview. This whole task should take no more than one hour per job description. Remember that your staff can't do their job unless you tell them what your expectations are!

