



Sound Job Descriptions

They can help you select the right people

by: Rich Sissen, Sissen & Associates

Employee selection errors are commonplace and their costs are staggering. Tens of thousands of dollars are lost each year by companies of all sizes because they select people who are not qualified to fill key jobs. The cost of turnover is increased dramatically when we add in training expenses, additional recruiting and selection expenses, loss of productive time by management and lost business through dissatisfied customers who are served by incompetent individuals. Additionally, managers experience discouragement and frustration in their own job when they realize they must begin all over to recruit a replacement for a position.

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The ability to match the capacities of a person to the requirements of a job is a vital personal management skill and a major factor in promoting your company's efficiency, growth and earnings. The underlying key to a successful business operation lies in the initial selection of the right people for the right jobs. The first step in this process is a complete and comprehensive job description. Below are step-by-step guidelines on how to write a full and sound job description.

■ **Job Title:** State the official job title.

■ **Major Goals and Responsibilities:** Briefly describe the basic purpose of the job. In other words, describe what the results will be if the job is done successfully. Include the most important goals, outcomes and responsibilities for which the person will be held accountable. Indicate the criteria that will be used to measure success in the position (cold calls per day, phone calls, quota, etc.). If the job primarily involves sales, management or other kinds of responsibilities, indicate the percentage of time that will be spent on these duties.

■ **Products and Services Involved:** Indicate those products or services sold if it is a sales job. Otherwise, state the products and services your company represents or produces.

■ **Essential Activities:** Briefly state the five most important functions of the job and what percentage of time should be spent doing each. List these duties and responsibilities in order of their importance to the job. Be specific.

■ **People Managed:** If applicable, specify the number and job titles of the people managed or supervised by the person in the position. Include those who the employee will manage

directly, as well as those who he (or she) will only be indirectly responsible for.

■ **Primary People Contacts:** Identify those people who the person in this position will have frequent direct contact with. Include contacts both internal and external to the organization.

■ **Behavioral Characteristics, Attitudes and Skills Required:** Consider the specific job carefully and describe a successful

person, but not one who is overqualified. Avoid the temptation to "idealize" every job.

■ **Prerequisites:** State the minimum requirements (education, training or experience) needed to function effectively on the job.

■ **Toughest Parts of the Job:** Include the most difficult aspects of the job the person is likely to encounter during start-up and on an ongoing basis (new sales territory, lots of rejections, product knowledge, etc.).

■ **Compensation Methods, Range and Advancement Opportunities:** This information is crucial to selecting the right people. Be candid about limitations as well as opportunities when completing this part of the job description. Provide figures for the low and high range of salary or commission earnings. What percent of the total is commission?

■ **Outside Influences:** State any unusual circumstances occurring within the team environment or circumstances that will directly impact performance. For example, what training, by whom and how much? What kind of support will he receive? From whom will he receive it? What are the realistic advancement opportunities? What behavioral characteristics should he have for this job? How many hours per week are required?

Once you have the right job description in place, you are better prepared to match the description to the skills, experiences and behavior patterns of applicants to any position. ■

Rich Sissen has more than 30 years experience in the office technology industry, including 10 years with a major manufacturer and 18 years as the owner of a copier and facsimile dealership. For the past 10 years, he has served as a management consultant for the office equipment industry. Visit www.sissenandassociates.com.

