



Center for Training & Professional Development

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GUIDE TO WRITING JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND JOB POSTINGS

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3 Steps for Writing a Job Description (for internal use):

- **Step 1: Define the Position – What is needed?**
- **Step 2: Perform a Job Analysis – What is required to perform the job?**
- **Step 3: Write the Job Description – What should be included?**

The Purpose of a Job Description

A job description is an internal document that lays out in detail the exact roles and responsibilities of a particular position. A job description can be used as a tool for:

- New employee orientation to help set expectations
- supervision
- performance reviews

The primary purpose of a job description is to identify the **essential functions** of the position. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), **essential functions** are those tasks or functions of a particular position that are **fundamental** to the position. Knowing the essential functions of the job will aid you in:

- Assuring compliance with legal requirements related to equal opportunity, equal pay, overtime eligibility, etc.
- Establishing a basis for recruitment, selection, and hiring
- Writing appropriate interview questions
- Determining whether a person is qualified to perform the essential functions
- Identifying reasonable accommodations to enable a disabled person to perform the essential functions
- Evaluating work distribution and departmental organization
- Analyzing jobs to determine appropriate pay ranges and classifications
- Training employees
- Allowing clear and accurate performance reviews

Step 1: Define the Position - What is needed?

Before beginning the process of writing a job description, you need to think carefully about what is **REALLY** needed. Do you need an experienced person who can come in and immediately start doing the job? Or is this an entry level position where it is expected that there will be a learning curve? Some questions to answer include:

- What are the key roles and responsibilities for the position?
- What are the opportunities and challenges presented by the position?
- What competencies are required for success in the role?
- What organizational values would an ideal candidate reflect?
- What kinds of people and personality traits are generally successful in this organization, and in this type of role? What kinds of people and personality traits are generally not successful in this organization, and in this type of role?
- Where does this position fit in the organization?
- What is the background of the ideal candidate for this role (e.g. educational background, professional experience, skills, cultural/personality characteristics)?

Step 2: Perform a Job Analysis - What is required to perform the job?

A Job analysis is a process of systematically collecting, analyzing and documenting the important facts about a job. The purpose is to provide you with the following information:

<p>A. <u>WHAT THE WORKER DOES</u></p> <p>Duties Tasks</p>	<p>B. <u>HOW THE WORKER DOES IT</u></p> <p>Methods Tools Techniques</p>
<p>C. <u>WHY THE WORKER DOES IT</u></p> <p>Products Services</p>	<p>D. <u>WORKER QUALIFICATIONS</u></p> <p>Knowledge Skills Attitude Experience</p>

Adapted from Aurora University Job description Manual

A. What a Worker Does: Duties and Tasks:

The basic function of a job is the performance of specific tasks and duties. Information to be collected about these items may include: frequency, duration, effort, skill, complexity, equipment, standards, etc. Example – Executive Administrative Assistant:

Duties	Tasks
<p>A. Manage telephone calls B. Process supply orders</p> <p>C. Coordinate and facilitate special events</p> <p>D. Maintain office equipment</p>	<p>C. Coordinate and facilitate special events Under general direction, coordinate and plan special events as assigned. Schedule and maintain communication with vendors, volunteers and participants. Prepare materials and programs for events. Ensure proper implementation of setup, event registration and distribution of event materials</p>

B. How The Worker Does it: Methods, Tools and Techniques:

Some duties and tasks are performed using specific equipment and tools. These items need to be specified in a Job Analysis.

C. Why the Worker Does it: Products and Services:

This includes the specific services to be provided and/or the specific population to be serviced.

D. Worker Qualifications: Knowledge, Sills, Attitude and Experience

- **Qualifications:** The knowledge, skills, attitude and experience required to perform the job
- **Knowledge:** The level of education, experience and training an individual must have **at a minimum** to be considered qualified for the position.
- **Skills:** Specific skills such as ability to create manipulate and utilize spreadsheets, word processing programs and so on.
- **Attitude:** The desired attitude given the organizational culture and client base.
- **Experience:** Prior work and life experience that might be relevant to the job should be assessed along with knowledge and skills.

Step 3: Write the job description – What should be included?

Now that you thought through what is needed and gathered the information, it is time to write the job description.

A basic job description will include the following:

- **A job summary** – This section describes in very brief terms, the duties and responsibilities of a position. It explains the general reporting structure, what is done, how it is done and why it is done. For example:

Job Summary- *Executive Administrative Assistant, Live Positive*

Provide administrative support to senior management team at large AIDS Service organization with 3 divisions and 100 employees. Duties include receiving and triaging telephone calls; managing correspondence, managing database systems; scheduling, coordinating and facilitating special events and meetings; processing supply orders; typing, filing and scheduling of appointments; and supervising office systems.

- **Degree of Supervision** -- This section of the job description describes the way in which work is assigned, when it is reviewed, how it is reviewed, and what guidelines, prototypes and protocols are available. For example:

Staff member works independently to prioritize and complete assigned tasks. Assignments are periodically checked for progress by direct supervisors through regularly scheduled supervision meetings. In addition, supervisors will review work upon request, when tasks deviate from established guidelines.

- **A list of job functions** –There are two sections that make up the job function section: **Primary Duties and Responsibilities** and **Other Duties and Responsibilities**. The Primary Duties and Responsibilities covers the **essential functions** of the position.

○ ***What are Essential Functions?***

In identifying essential functions, be sure to consider (1) whether employees in the position actually are required to perform the function and (2) whether removing that function would fundamentally change the job.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) lists several reasons why a function could be considered essential:

- **The position exists to perform the function.** For example, if you hire someone to proofread documents, the ability to proofread accurately is an essential function, since this is the reason that the position exists.
- **There are a limited number of other employees available to perform the function or among whom the function can be distributed.** For example, it may be an essential function for a file clerk to answer the telephone if there are only three employees in a very busy office and each employee has to perform many different tasks.
- **A function is highly specialized and the person in the position is hired for special expertise or ability to perform it.** For example, an organization is expanding its training department is hiring new trainers, so it requires someone with the ability to train and preferably in the area of training needed.

The EEOC considers various forms of evidence to determine whether or not a particular function is essential. These include, but are not limited to:

- The employer's judgment;
- The amount of time spent on the job performing that function; and
- The availability of others in the department to fill in for the person who performs that function.

In defining the essential functions of a job, it is important to distinguish between **methods** and **results**. For example, is the essential function *moving* a 50 pound box from one part of the office to another, or is it *carrying* the box? While essential functions need to be performed, they often do not need to be performed in one particular manner (unless doing otherwise would create an undue hardship).

Sample Description of Primary Duties and Responsibilities:

Primary Duties and Responsibilities – *Executive Administrative Assistant, Live Positive*

1. Screen incoming calls to 3 Division Directors and, as appropriate, provide requested information, take messages or redirect inquires to the appropriate staff member.
2. Schedule appointments
3. Schedule, coordinate and facilitate special events, fundraisers and meetings, as requested. Coordinate with vendors, volunteers and staff.
4. Manage database systems for mailings, fundraising efforts and CORI requests.
5. Collect, update and maintain information for grant applications
6. Compose routine correspondence for the directors from general oral instructions.
7. Proofread drafts of correspondence for correct grammar, punctuation and spelling and make corrections.
8. Create and maintain office filing system
9. Process all supply orders
10. Oversee maintenance of office equipment
11. Supervise mail services

- **A qualifications section** -- a list of the education, certifications, licenses, and experience necessary to do the job. For example:

Qualifications - *Executive Administrative Assistant, Live Positive*

- Experience working in a human services environment performed.
- Ability to interact with people from all walks of life and diverse populations, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, homeless and addicted individuals, people living with HIV/AIDS, people living with mental health issues, individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and funders and donors.
- Excellent organizational skills, attention to detail, ability to problem solve, multi-task and prioritize.
- Strong initiative and excellent follow through
- Flexible and adaptable
- Willing and able to create record keeping and tracking systems
- Exceptional interpersonal, oral and written communication skills necessary
- Ability to work independently
- Proficiency in Microsoft Windows, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint; expertise in desktop publishing preferred
- Strong internet research skills
- Associate's degree or certificate of training in administration required; Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience strongly preferred

- **A section for other important information and clear instructions** about the position, such as location, working hours, travel requirements, reporting relationships, and so on.
- **A statement describing your organization as an equal opportunity employer.** This is a legal requirement. For example:

Live Positive is an equal opportunity employer and actively seeks candidates from diverse background including women, communities of color, the LGBT community, and people with disabilities.

Sample Job Description

LIVE POSITIVE Executive Administrative Assistant

Job Summary: Provide administrative support to senior management team at large AIDS Service organization with 3 divisions and 100 employees. Duties include receiving and triaging telephone calls; managing correspondence, managing database systems; scheduling, coordinating and facilitating special events and meetings; processing supply orders; typing, filing and scheduling of appointments; and supervising office systems.

Degree of Supervision: Staff member works independently to prioritize and complete assigned tasks. Assignments are periodically checked for progress by direct supervisor through regularly scheduled supervision meetings. In addition, the supervisor will review work upon request when tasks deviate from established guidelines.

Primary Responsibilities:

- Screen incoming calls to 3 Directors and, as appropriate, provide requested information, take messages or redirect inquires to the appropriate staff member.
- Schedule appointments
- Schedule, coordinate and facilitate special events, fundraisers and meetings, as requested. Coordinate with vendors, volunteers and staff.
- Manage database systems for mailings, fundraising efforts and CORI requests.
- Collect, update and maintain information for grant applications
- Compose routine correspondence for the directors from general oral instructions.
- Proofread drafts of correspondence for correct grammar, punctuation and spelling and make corrections.
- Create and maintain office filing system
- Process all supply orders
- Oversee maintenance of office equipment
- Supervise mail services

Qualifications:

- Experience working in a human services environment preferred.
- Ability to interact with people from all walks of life and diverse populations, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, homeless and addicted individuals, people living with HIV/AIDS, people living with mental health issues, individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and funders and donors.
- Excellent organizational skills, attention to detail, ability to problem solve, multi-task and prioritize.
- Strong initiative and excellent follow through
- Flexible and adaptable
- Willing and able to create record keeping and tracking systems
- Exceptional interpersonal, oral and written communication skills necessary
- Ability to work independently
- Proficiency in Microsoft Windows, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint; expertise in desktop publishing preferred
- Strong internet research skills
- Associate's degree or certificate of training in administration required; Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience strongly preferred

EEOC Statement:

Live Positive is an equal opportunity employer and actively seeks candidates from diverse background including women, communities of color, the LGBT community, and people with disabilities

Elements of a Job Posting (For external use)

A job posting is an external document that is created to motivate candidates to apply to the open position. As such, it is viewed as a marketing tool. Because this will be the first thing applicants read, it's a great place to sell the job to the candidates you're trying to attract (and to weed out those who won't be able to meet your expectations).

- ***A compelling but concise description*** of the organization's history, mission, and key programs. Communicate what an exciting place it is to work.
- ***An overview of the position*** that summarizes the key responsibilities while demonstrating the importance of the role to the overall success of the organization.
- ***A well-constructed and organized list of key roles and responsibilities.*** An exhaustive list is not required but do provide some detail about what the role entails, including highlighting the appealing aspects of the position, such as decision-making authority, participation in strategic planning, etc.
- ***A list of the required qualifications.*** Focus more on the competencies required than specific levels and types of experience. For example, "exceptional relationship-management skills, especially working with high net worth individuals" is better than "4 years of experience leading major donor campaigns" because it encourages non-traditional candidates with transferable skills to apply.
- ***Clear instructions on how to apply.*** Receiving applications only through email is recommended to control and manage the recruitment process
- ***A brief description of benefits (optional).*** This can be a useful tool for marketing the organization. For example, "medical and dental insurance coverage and 3 weeks vacation."
- ***A statement describing your organization as an equal opportunity employer.*** This is a legal requirement

Sample Job Posting - *Executive Administrative Assistant, Live Positive*

Live Positive has an exciting opportunity for the right administrative professional. A full-time executive administrative assistant is being hired to provide administrative support to senior management team at a large, dynamic AIDS Service organization with a 15 year history of providing improved access to services and care for people living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS.

Successful candidates will have experience working in a human services environment, the ability to interact with people from all walks of life and diverse populations, excellent organizational skills, attention to detail, ability to problem solve and multi-task, strong initiative, and excellent follow through.

Duties include managing telephone calls, database systems, and mailings; scheduling, coordinating and facilitating special events, fundraisers and meetings; coordinating with vendors, volunteers and staff; collecting, updating and maintaining information for grant applications; processing of all supply orders; overseeing maintenance of office equipment; typing, filing and scheduling of appointments; and supervising mail services.

Proficiency in Microsoft Windows, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint; expertise in desktop publishing and strong internet research skills. Associate's degree or certificate of training in administration required; Bachelor's degree or equivalent experience strongly preferred.

Application deadline is December 31, 20XX. Interested applicants should send a cover letter and resume to Jane Doe, Live Positive, 20 Johnson Road, Any town, Any state, 00000 or email the information to j.doe@livepositive.org. No phone calls, please.

Live Positive is an equal opportunity employer and actively seeks candidates from diverse background including women, communities of color, the LGBT community, and people with disabilities

References

Guide to Writing Job Descriptions, <http://www.college.ucla.edu/personnel/jobdesc/>

Developing a Search Strategy: Your Roadmap for Hiring, Commongood Knowledge Center, <http://www.cgcareers.org/knowledgecenter/>

Job Description Manual, Aurora University, www.aurora.edu/hr/forms/job-descr-manual-AU.pdf