

Guidelines – Job Descriptions

Introduction

Cambridge HR Solutions provides advice and guidance to organisations big and small in the private, public and third sectors on all HR matters.

These guidelines¹ are intended to help managers navigate the sometimes complex world of HR.

Job Descriptions

A job description, put simply, describes the job an employee is required to do, and may include a person specification.

This template works very well, and can be adapted to meet your needs:

Job Title:	One that makes sense to employees and clients.	Department:	Name of department or function where the job resides.
Place of Work:	Physical location of normal place of work.	Reporting To:	The manager's job title – rather than his/her name.
Grade:	If appropriate.	Date and Written By:	Useful for version control.
Purpose of Job:			
A short statement confirming in one sentence the purpose of the job.			
For example:			
<i>To establish, maintain and monitor XYZ Ltd's financial and accounting procedures in compliance with all regulatory obligations and Company management reporting policies.</i>			
Key Accountabilities:			
1. It is good practice to limit the number of key accountabilities to seven plus or minus two. A job description with more than nine accountability statements is in danger of listing duties; and one with less than five hints at the job not being very big.			
2. A strong accountability has an input , process and output statement. For example:			
<i>To provide leadership and management in the development and execution of sales initiatives to achieve long-term sustainable market growth.</i>			
3. It is likely your staff handbook will make reference to all employees being required to carry out tasks and duties other than those listed in their job descriptions. It is sensible to include a general statement to reinforce this in all job descriptions. For example:			
<i>Undertake all other duties and responsibilities commensurate with the role and level of this job as may be requested by your manager or his or her designate.</i>			

¹ These are for information only. We therefore regret that we cannot be responsible for any loss you may suffer as a result of any omission or inaccuracy, and we encourage you to seek advice accordingly.

Person Specification

If you include a person specification in your job descriptions it is very important to describe what knowledge, skills and experience are required to satisfactorily perform the job – and not just those which are held by a current or previous incumbent (although they may of course be the same).

They should also be gender and age neutral.

You may want to discriminate between those which are **desirable** and **essential**.

<p>Knowledge</p>	<p>Describes the minimum qualifications</p> <p>Example include:</p> <p><i>GCSEs, 'A' Levels, Degree, NVQ, Professional membership etc.</i></p>
<p>Skills</p>	<p>Skills fall in to any number of categories including technical, vocational, administrative, operational, management etc. which may or may not be evidenced by certification.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MS Word and Excel – Intermediate</i> • <i>Category of driver's licence – C, C+E etc.</i> • <i>Apache, JavaScript/Ajax/CSS and MySQL.</i>
<p>Experience</p>	<p>Try and avoid defining experience in terms of years' service, since this may expose you to a claim of age discrimination.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Strong in-depth experience of transactional and inside sales.</i> • <i>Direct experience of account/enterprise software sales.</i> • <i>Worked in territories outside the UK and US, especially BRIC countries.</i> • <i>Led a team of software engineers.</i>

Next Steps

Job descriptions can be an integral component of a Performance Management System, and where you have them, help frame a discussion with your employees when you are reviewing performance.

They are particularly useful during a recruitment process.

It is therefore good practice to keep them up-to-date, but the effort in doing so should be proportionate to the value to you, your department or organisation.

For more information, or if you have any questions, do please drop us an [email](#).