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TIP SHEET #1

HOW TO CREATE BARRIER-FREE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Refer to Summary of Resources
Tip Sheet #12 for a listing of
information sources.

diversity

An Employer Advantage

Alberta 

Tip Sheet 1: How to Create Barrier-Free Job Descriptions

Companies that are able to attract, hire, and retain skilled immigrants have a competitive advantage in today's global talent marketplace. In this Tip Sheet, you'll find information that will give you an edge in creating job descriptions that will help to attract new immigrant talent to your workplace.

1 Specify the need, rather than how it's achieved:

- Ask for the ability to meet the requirement instead of a specific condition. For example, instead of requiring a valid driver's license, ask for the "ability to travel and provide own transportation", or instead of requiring a candidate to reside in a given location, ask for "the ability to report to work within 30 minutes of call".
- Focus on the desired skills and abilities instead of personal traits. For example, instead of requiring a "mature, cooperative person", ask for "ability to work effectively as a team member".

2 Ask for related work experience instead of Canadian experience:

- Ask for related work experience instead of Canadian work experience, a certain number of years of experience, or recent experience.
- Ask candidates to demonstrate their ability to do the job through past achievements, such as previous work and volunteer experience.

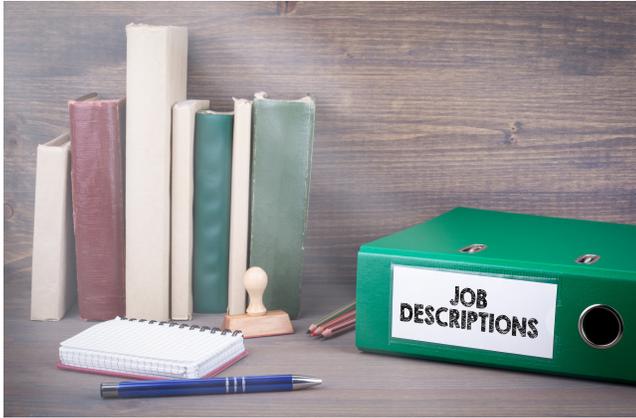
72% of hiring managers say they provide clear job descriptions, while only 36% of candidates say the same.

There is a large discrepancy between how employers and candidates perceive job descriptions.

3 Focus on skills or knowledge needed rather than credentials:

- Focus on relevant skills and competencies needed to perform the work effectively rather than a specific credential (e.g. a degree, diploma, certificate, or license), unless required by law.
- Consider other skills and knowledge relevant to do the job and include a credential where it's the only means of obtaining the skills, knowledge, and ability needed to perform the work.
- Ensure the qualifications you are asking for do not inadvertently rule out potentially qualified applicants.

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4 Identify the communication skills required to succeed in the role:

- Specify the kind of communication required such as listening or speaking on the telephone, writing, or negotiating agreements, rather than asking for general ability to communicate effectively.
- If reading or writing is needed for the position, give a specific example of how they would use this skill. For example, "required to read instructions and fill out daily safety checklists".

5 Specify the work conditions:

- Specify the number of hours of work per week and the expected duration of the term if it is not an on-going position. For shift or late-night work, include information about security and safety.
- Reference your diverse/inclusive hiring practices from your Employee Handbook.

6 Use plain language:

- Create a list of information critical for potential candidates to know and present the information in a logical order to avoid jumping around.
- Write clearly and simply, using common words with a straightforward style and simple sentences. Plain language is not just for Newcomers, plain language makes understanding descriptions easier for all candidates.
- Avoid long and complex words, slang, legal language, and acronyms.

7 Other considerations:

- Remember less is more: shorter job posts receive 8.4% more applications per view than average.
- Focus on what matters: 61% of candidates say the salary range is the most important part of the job description, but don't let it outshine the opportunity.
- Be mindful of the words you use: masculine or exclusionary language in job descriptions can make women or Newcomers less likely to apply.
- Post your ad on Mondays: more than half of all applicants apply early in the week.



For more tips and strategies to improve diversity in your workplace, check out our other Tip Sheets:

1. Job Descriptions
2. Recruitment and Job Sourcing
3. Assessing Skills and Competencies
4. Interviewing and Selection
5. Orientation
6. Onboarding
7. Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Work Environment
8. Training and Development
9. Communication
10. Employee Retention
11. Common Terms and Definitions
12. Summary of Resources

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