

VACO Reference Material

THE POWER OF EMPLOYEE INPUT:

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
EMPLOYEE-DRIVEN JOB DESCRIPTIONS

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The way many companies write job descriptions and create career paths today forces employees to try to fit into a mold. Job descriptions often possess lengthy requirements and rigid language that do a better job of weeding out qualified candidates than attracting them.

Today's job seekers and employees value flexibility and autonomy, two workplace characteristics that traditional job descriptions can actually undermine, and organizations need to take note. In the midst of the Great Resignation, involving employees in the job description writing process could be the secret businesses need to attract strong applicants and improve retention. After all, employees know firsthand what type of role and what type of person their team needs to succeed, so whether your Human Resources department is looking to redesign an individual's current role or create a new job for an external hire, your employees are the best resources to leverage.

But creating unique job descriptions comes with a few challenges. These new and sometimes non-traditional roles can complicate job leveling across an organization and be too employee-centric without the help and oversight of your HR team. Fortunately, both of these issues can be solved with some helpful tips and resources. Read on for best practices for leveraging the knowledge of your existing employees to create effective job descriptions and attract the best candidates to your organization.

WHY HR SHOULD HAVE THE FINAL SAY ON JOB DESCRIPTIONS

While creating employee-centric jobs personalized to an individual's strengths and passions can be great for improving engagement, these new roles need to be mutually beneficial to both your applicant/employee and your company. For this reason, your HR team should have the final say on employee job descriptions and how these new roles can help further your organization's mission.

For example, say an administrative assistant regularly helps out with planning team events and outings and discovers he loves and has a talent for event planning. If your company is small, you might not need a role dedicated to planning internal events, but the employee's skills may lend themselves well to another area of the business, like marketing. And if your marketing team needs an events person, you could work with the employee currently in this administrative assistant position and the marketing team to craft a new role that oversees external events, conferences, and even webinars. As a result, this employee can improve his event planning skills and your business can benefit from having someone help expand its external events program and raise awareness for your brand.

While you want all your employees to have fulfilling careers that successfully leverage their passions, you also need to keep business objectives top of mind. Luckily, business needs and employee passions often have significant overlap. It's up to your employees to voice their passions and your HR team to understand where to best leverage these skills. Then, together you can create impactful and mutually beneficial job descriptions for your organization.

Lastly, custom job descriptions can complicate job leveling across an organization. For instance, if your employees suggest you create a hybrid sales and marketing role, you might be unsure about which career path to include such a role in, or how the role will grow over time.

That's why when creating new career paths, it's best for HR teams to rely on market research and business needs to create job architectures and ensure that leveling across the organization isn't impacted. You should speak to employees and collect their feedback throughout the job design process, but ultimately your HR team needs to ensure that any new roles still fit neatly into your existing organizational structure.

HOW TO SOLICIT EMPLOYEE IDEAS AND FEEDBACK FOR JOB ARCHITECTURE

While HR should have the final say on job descriptions, your employees should also have an opportunity to weigh in on what shape they'd like their new role or a new opening on their team to take. They're the ones who will have to do the work or work alongside this new hire day after day, so you want to ensure they are on board with the responsibilities of the position.

Before you start writing job descriptions, ask your employees to reflect on their strengths, how others within the organization perceive their contributions, and what they're looking for in a new role. Here are a few steps you can follow to make employees an integral part of the job description building process and earn their buy-in from day one.

1. Have employees reflect on their strengths.

Few employees will know exactly what their ideal role would look like when you first approach them. Even if they think they do, ask your employees to take time to reflect on their current role, strengths, skills, and career development goals. You want them to think critically about what type of work excites and energizes them so you can try to incorporate these areas as much as possible in their new role.

This step is integral to help your employees realize the value they can bring to your organization and visualize a new high-impact role for themselves.

If the role in question is for a new hire, switch things up by having your employees brainstorm gaps they see on their team, as well as the strengths and expertise a new team member would need to succeed. This type of input can equally help inform your job description creation process.

2. Ask employees to collect feedback from colleagues

It's also a good idea to have employees reflect on how their colleagues and the organization at large view their work. This can help ground employees and ensure they're setting out on a realistic path. For instance, if a data analyst decides she wants to take on a more client-facing role, she should first consider feedback she's received from her colleagues in this area. If her colleagues report she has a tendency to talk over clients and overpromise deliverables, she might not be ready to take on a client-facing role just yet. That's why it's important for your employees to not only be mindful of their passions and strengths, but also aware of how others perceive them within the organization.

While your employees can request feedback from their colleagues during this step, they can also pull from past 360-degree reviews. Feedback that is from multiple different sources or anonymous can give your employees a more robust and less biased view of their performance, strengths, and areas for improvement — all information that help them develop a fuller picture of their competencies.

3. Have employees share their thoughts via survey

Once your employees complete the above steps, send them a survey to collect and record their thoughts. If the new role in question is for them, you'll want to ask that employee to outline their ideal role, their top strengths, and the competencies that are necessary to succeed on their team; how they see this role growing in the future; and how they think this new role would benefit your company.

If the new role will be for an external hire, ask your employees to include where they see skills gaps or a heavy workload on the team, the skills and strengths they think a strong applicant would possess, and how they see this role evolving in the future. With all of this information stored in one place, your HR team can use it to craft a detailed job description for this new role.

HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE JOB DESCRIPTION

Once you have employee feedback, you're ready to start writing the job description. The job description for a traditional role and a completely new role shouldn't differ too much; you'll still want to include the same key areas and job specifications, such as:

1. Job Title

Put some thought into your job titles as they're both internal- and external-facing. The right title should be short but clear and descriptive, like "Digital Marketing Specialist" or "Mobile App Developer, Android".

While we've listed job title first here (as it's typically found at the top of every job description), we recommend saving writing your title for last. Only after you've created and approved a detailed job description should you start brainstorming title ideas; that way, your title isn't forced and accurately fits your job description.

2. Core Competencies

Next, you'll want to describe the skills, certifications, expertise, and years of experience an individual should have in order to do well in this role. Keep this section realistic and be mindful of not including any unnecessary qualifications. For example, if an employee doesn't need an advanced degree to succeed in this role, leave off educational requirements to create a more inclusive job description. This section of the job description can get lengthy, so stick to bullet points to keep your job posting short and sweet.

3. Job Responsibilities

Providing a detailed list of responsibilities for the position helps an applicant get a high-level understanding of what their day-to-day experience will look like in this role. You'll want to include examples of job duties and essential functions this role will be tasked with, like "identifying and fixing system bugs" and "directing software programming and documentation development" for a software developer, for example.

You can even go a step further and include what your company expects this employee to have achieved after 30, 60, and 90 days. This helps set performance expectations from day one and gives applicants a clear understanding of what they'll be working on in their first few months on the job.

4. Additional Information

If you're sharing this job posting externally on job boards like LinkedIn or Indeed, you'll also want to include whether the role is full- or part-time, any healthcare benefits and perks your company offers, and location requirements, as well as what qualified candidates should expect from the recruitment process. These elements can help you write job descriptions that are clear, specific, and transparent, so you can attract and hire the right candidates for the job.

VACO IS HERE TO HELP

Involving your employees in writing new job descriptions shows that your business has a growth mindset and a company culture that puts employees first. Not only are you playing to the strengths of your employees, but you are also helping future-proof your organization. If you let your employees craft their jobs to be more aligned with their interests and strengths, your business can reap the rewards of a more motivated, productive, and happy workforce for years to come.

When your company does create new, non-traditional roles, don't worry about how they'll fit into your existing job architecture. VACO can help you seamlessly incorporate these jobs into new or existing career tracks for your business and ensure every employee has an individual growth plan to enable them to thrive in their careers. Contact us to learn more about VACO and how it can help your organization accelerate employee growth today.



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