



IT TALENT MANAGEMENT



Making the Right Match: The Value of Effective Job Descriptions

Attracting and recruiting employees is not a new phenomenon. The recruitment process, in its most basic form, has been around for a while—and although it has evolved over time, it isn't going away. When there is a need for talent and specific skill sets, hiring managers and recruiters work to attract qualified job seekers that they will screen and take through the steps of interviewing and hiring. From the side of the employer, recruiting practices have evolved to become more automated and efficient by taking advantage of advances in technology. From the job seeker's perspective, the standard resume and cover letter are not the only way anymore—leveraging nontraditional job search strategies, such as personal, professional and social networking, can generate positive results as well.

With greater technical and social support available for job seekers, it would seem that the recruitment process would have greatly improved. Yet, nearly two-thirds of employers and more than half of job seekers report frustration with the recruitment process. Why is there a lack of satisfaction with this long-standing employment process? TEKsystems, an IT staffing, IT talent management and IT services firm, tries to understand using data generated from an Allegis Group survey. This survey was fielded among approximately 13,000 job candidates and more than 1,400 employers (i.e., HR professionals, non-HR executives, hiring managers).

Defining Recruitment Priorities

Understanding employer and candidate priorities helps define the root of dissatisfaction: job descriptions. Employers rank accurate job descriptions as the most important driver for attracting/hiring top talent, while candidates rank job descriptions as the second most important part of the recruitment process. Effective job descriptions are beneficial to both employer and candidate sides of the equation. They help attract only the most relevant candidates—saving the employer from reviewing irrelevant applications, and saving the job seeker from applying to jobs that don't fit their background. Yet, not enough weight is placed on this step in the hiring process.

Despite the larger lack of attention on job descriptions, there is a positive trend among employers who do emphasize job descriptions in their recruitment process: they fill positions faster, and with better quality candidates. In fact, employers who fill full-time positions fastest are more likely to believe accurate job descriptions are most important to attracting and hiring top talent. They are also more likely to update their job postings often, and believe that their job descriptions do a good job of representing their corporate culture. Employers who are very satisfied with applicant quality spend three-times longer on job descriptions, and believe accurate job descriptions are most important to attracting and hiring top talent.

Assessing Employer and Candidate Perception Gaps

According to the majority of employers (61 percent), posting a position to job boards is one of the first actions a recruiter should take in the recruitment process, but only 22 percent say writing the actual job description should be one of the first actions. It seems counterintuitive that employers think posting openings to job boards should happen prior to actually preparing the job description. The majority of candidates agree it doesn't make sense to put the cart before the horse. Eighty-one percent of candidates rank accurate job descriptions as one of the top actions recruiters should take—second to consistent communication (85 percent). There is a clear sense of urgency to fill open positions as

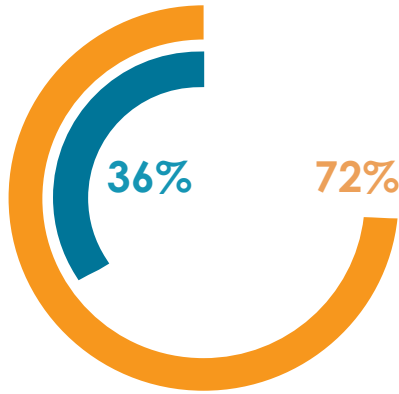
Employers who are very satisfied with applicant quality believe accurate job descriptions are most important to attracting and hiring top talent—and they spend three-times longer developing them.

soon as possible in order to start attracting candidates right away. However, employers/recruiters who don't take the time up front to write a quality job description surely spend that time sorting through unqualified candidates later.

There is a notable disconnect. Despite employers saying job descriptions aren't one of the first actions recruiters take when initiating the recruitment process, they rank writing effective job postings as the most important recruiting activity for attracting top talent. Plus, recruiters spend 12-times longer on sourcing and screening activities than job descriptions. And coincidentally, employers who are not very satisfied with the quantity and quality of their applicants and the time to fill positions place less emphasis on actual job descriptions and more on the marketing of jobs (e.g., SEO / SEM / digital advertising, employer job site / job boards, email marketing).

In fact, looking at what hiring managers say they do compared to what current employees perceive, the biggest perceptual gaps lie in spending sufficient time determining what is needed for the position, and providing a clear job description. Seventy-two percent of hiring managers believe they are giving candidates clear job descriptions, yet only 36 percent of candidates say that is what they experience.

Are job descriptions clear?



Employers and candidates don't see eye to eye.

● Employers ● Candidates

if they sound like a good fit. They may also share the experience and frustrations with their industry peers, creating a ripple effect. Optimizing job descriptions can circumvent this issue.

Automation Dependency

With new and updated technologies being introduced all the time, a common job description pitfall is including requirements that are unrealistic or illogical. Job seekers may see an organization is looking for several years of experience on a brand new technology. Another pitfall is failing to update job descriptions frequently in order to reflect current technical skills required of the job. Ultimately, this could lead to applicants making over-ambitious claims on their resumes.

Many job descriptions have impossible expectations and grow stale because there is too much dependence on automation through tools such as applicant tracking systems and job description repositories. The majority of employers think the recruitment process has become more automated over the past five years. This is problematic because 2 out of 5 employers claim it is now more difficult to judge if a candidate's skills match the position requirements and if they would be a good fit for the team's culture. While these tools drive speed and efficiency—via recycled job descriptions, for example—oftentimes, relying on automation can hurt in the long run. Job descriptions get posted

Evaluating the Impact

Time, Money and Corporate Reputation

Looking at the recruitment process, employers are most dissatisfied with the length of time needed to fill open positions, the number of applicants for each open position and the quality of those applicants. From the candidate point of view, more than half (55 percent) report frustration with the recruiting process—citing the time required by the recruitment process as the biggest contributor to their dissatisfaction. Job descriptions can potentially address these top pain points if written to be more direct, specific and relevant to the target applicant pool.

Beyond time efficiencies for employers and job seekers, improving job descriptions can mitigate potential negative perceptions of a company. When applicants have not been selected for a position, they can feel resentment or slighted, especially if they learn the position was not a true reflection of what the job actually was. This negative experience can hold a lasting memory. The misled job seeker may be less likely to consider the company's future postings even

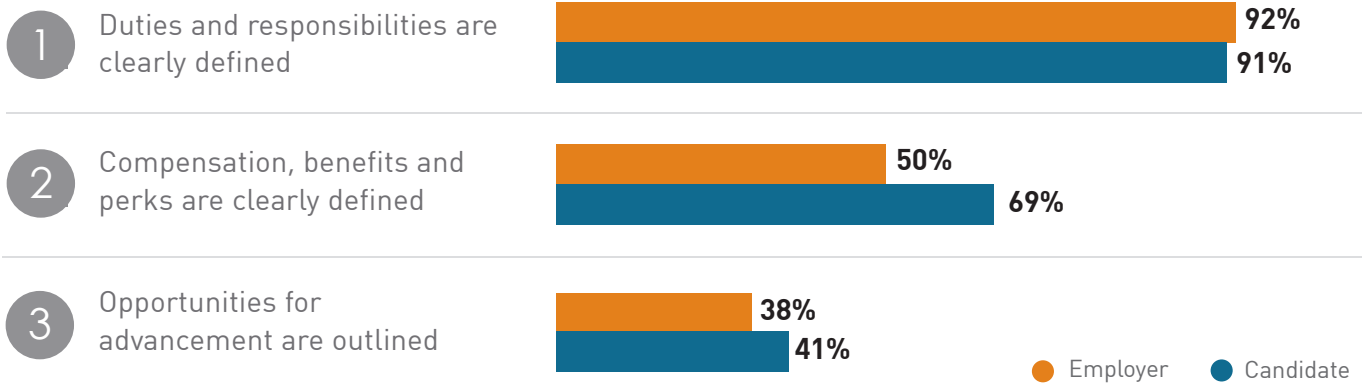
Time is the top frustration with the recruitment process.



Nearly 1 in 3 employers and candidates agree.

Top Elements of a Job Description*

Effective job descriptions should give a clear picture of the job and company.



*Ranked in top-3 items that make a job description intriguing

quickly without modifications to reflect the present day expectations and responsibilities of a position and the company/team culture.

Compounding the problem with overdependence on automation, if applicant tracking systems don't identify keywords within a resume/application, the job seeker will go unnoticed. This can be frustrating from both perspectives: Not only do employers run the risk of overlooking qualified candidates, but job seekers may be compelled to stuff their resumes with certain keywords or worse yet, false claims. But the candidate/ employer perceptions are grey regarding this issue. Employers find resume embellishments far more often than candidates are willing to admit they've used them. A staggering 71 percent of employers have found misstatements or embellishments about skills and experience on resumes and more than 40 percent have found a new hire didn't have the skills they claimed they did. Meanwhile, 1 in 3 candidates believe they've been passed over for not having certain buzzwords on their resume.

Adapting to the Present

It may be surprising to learn job descriptions are one of the most impactful changes that can be made to drive higher quality candidates, improved efficiency in the hiring process, stronger job opportunity / job seeker matches, and an overall better experience for employers

and job seekers.

How do you begin to make this change?

The No. 1 trait that makes a job description intriguing according to employers and candidates: clearly defined job responsibilities. In fact, 68 percent of employers think clearly defining duties and responsibilities is the top way to make job descriptions more interesting and attractive. But 9 in 10 candidates think cultural fit is important when deciding to accept a position, so it is important to cover this in a job description as well. Although clearly defining job duties is critical to designing an effective job description, it is evident there are other important components to the job description that mustn't be overlooked (e.g., compensation, perks/benefits, culture, opportunity for advancement).

How do you sustain this change?

Job description repositories are useful for storing and maintaining job description data. Instead of re-inventing the wheel by creating a new job description every time a business analyst or project manager is needed, repositories can help organizations save time. But these libraries must be used wisely. Whether the job description is adapted from an existing one or built from scratch, they should reflect the present state of the company, as well as the roles, responsibilities and skill requirements of that specific position. Of the 9 in 10 employers that have a job posting repository, 44

percent say postings are revised often and 43 percent say they are revised sometimes. This indicates they are taking a lackadaisical approach to leveraging the repository.

Meanwhile, employers who are fully satisfied with candidate quality spend three-times longer revising and updating job descriptions—suggesting the upfront investment of time is worthwhile in the long run. Although repositories are helpful for staying organized and efficient, they do not replace the human ability to customize content and provide specific details about job opportunities. With more than 8 out of 10 candidates ranking accurate job descriptions as one of the most important recruitment activities, it is critical to find the right balance when using a repository.

Achieving Long-Term Return on Investment

Going beyond the recruitment process, the role of the job description does not end once the right candidate has secured the position. Employers should take advantage of the job description as a tool during the onboarding process and throughout the employee's tenure in the position. Crafting accurate job descriptions is not only conducive to finding the best job opportunity / job seeker matches, but it also lays the foundation for effective onboarding, growth and career pathing plans, and performance reviews. Yet, many employers are not using job descriptions for this added benefit. In fact, nearly half of candidates (45 percent) report a formal orientation and onboarding program were not part of their hiring process.

There are huge discrepancies in what candidates actually experience compared to what hiring managers say they do throughout the hiring/onboarding processes. A majority of hiring managers (72 percent) say they provide clear job descriptions, yet only 36 percent of candidates say they actually experience it. Notably, hiring manager and candidate perceptions are also significantly different when it comes to providing enough information in terms of technical aspects of the job as well as cultural fit needed for the position.

Candidates identify career development opportunities and issue escalation processes as areas that aren't being

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covered in a formal orientation program, but should be. Hiring managers / employers can strengthen their onboarding and subsequently make new hires productive faster by leveraging job descriptions to establish expectations; define roles, responsibilities and escalation points; acclimate to company culture; and discuss career development and growth opportunities.

Conclusion

The need for effective recruiting is relatively simple and straightforward: Organizations require specific skills to support their needs and job seekers aim to find positions that fit their skills, goals and interests. Effective recruiting balances both employer and job seeker sides of the equation. Although the desired outcome of recruiting is clear, it is not all that easy to achieve. While the overall structure of the recruitment process hasn't changed, there are opportunities to optimize it and become more efficient with finding the best talent. Paying due diligence to job descriptions can be one of the most impactful changes in recruiting.

Although automation has the potential to speed the recruitment process, it threatens to stand in the way of selecting the best people. Investing the time up front to make accurate and direct job descriptions will help in the short- and long-term.

Job descriptions have the ability to attract the optimal applicant pool—easing the initial job/candidate search for both sides of the equation. And after a candidate has been offered a position, employers and new employees should continue to use the job description as a baseline point of reference for onboarding and career progress beyond. Taking these measures will only help facilitate a successful match between employer and job candidate.

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