The Art of Writing Job Descriptions

The job description has an application in virtually every aspect of employment:

- Workforce Planning
- Recruiting, Selection and Placement
- Orientation
- Compensation
- Goal and Expectation Setting
- Performance Reviews

◊ Career Planning, Progression and Succession Planning
◊ Training
◊ Regulatory Compliance

Job Duties Writing Method

1. Position descriptions are written about the job, not the person holding the job.
2. Brainstorm a list of all duties/tasks required to perform the job. These are the individual tasks completed on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis.
   - Arrange catering; compose and type correspondence;
   - Coordinate logistical support for meetings, seminars, and department events;
   - Determine and secure event location;
   - Make travel arrangements;
   - Monitor levels;
   - Prepare budgetary reports.
3. Review the list and group the duties based upon the specific functions and responsibilities of the positions, also known as Duty/Responsibility Statement.
5. Condense the specific job duties into 2 or 3 concise “Duty Statements,” Example: “Coordinate all Dean’s Office events, if possible.”
Essential Job Duties

The American’s with Disabilities Act requires employers to accommodate qualified individuals with disabilities in performing the “essential functions” of a job. This is defined as a duty which is fundamental to the job and cannot be reassigned without substantially changing the job or resulting in an undue business hardship. Duties that meet the definition of “essential function” must be marked with an asterisk (*).

It is an essential function duty if:

A. The job exists specifically to perform this duty: for example, Programmer jobs exist to code programs in computer language.
B. The incumbents were specifically hired to perform the highly specialized function. For example: a person hired to translate a foreign language would have the essential function of “translating”.
C. No other employee in the location is available to perform the duty or responsibility.

It is probably essential if:

A. The duty takes up more than 5% of the employee’s time;
B. The duty takes up less than 5% of the time but is a critical function;
C. Eliminating the duty fundamentally changes the job;
D. Operations will be disrupted if the duty is not performed.

Other Things To Remember When Completing A Job Description

* The Job Description should contain 3 -5 Duty/Responsibility Statements.
* Title each Duty/Responsibility Statement to summarize the function or role.
* Begin each task involved under the Duty/Responsibility Statement with an action verb.
* Limit the tasks listed to what is required to do the job.
* Do not include tasks that are no longer performed or those that may be required in the future.
* Write task associated with job not the capabilities of person performing the job.
* Determine an accurate percentage of time the incumbent should spend on a particular Duty/Responsibility Statement over the course of a year.
Job Description Dos and Don’ts

DO:
- Use factual and impersonal style when writing the job description
- Base job description on the department’s needs
- Write an accurate, concise and complete job description
- Use complete sentences
- Bullet each task
- Begin each task with an action verb
- Be consistent when using terms like “may” and “occasionally.”
- Focus on critical activities

DON’T:
- Use a narrative form when writing a job description
- Base the content of the description on the capabilities, skills, or interests of the incumbent
- Write the description as a step by –

Don’t cont’d:
- step guide on how to do the job
- Include minor or occasional tasks, which are not unique to a specific job
- Write the description based upon the desired job classification

Adding Department Approvers to Benefited Hires

When adding Department Approvers to Benefited employee hires, do not enter someone who is an approver in the Dean/AVP or VP level. They will be in the automatic flow for benefited hires. Adding them as a Department Approver duplicates the need for them to approve the hire.

If you are unsure if you need to add someone as an approver, please contact Heidi in HR at 777-4988.

Remember that the person initiating the hire should not be entered as a department approver. They cannot initiate and approve the hire.

“Reports To” Changes for HRMS/TLAB

The MSS system time stamps any changes made to an employee record. For “Reports To” changes to be effective on the day the new “Reports To” starts approving Time & Labor and Absences (TLAB), this change needs to be entered into Job Data/Position Data prior to the effective date. If not, the previous supervisor must approve any TLAB requests up to the created date in Job Data/Position Data.

For any clarification on this please call Misty, Heidi or Joanne in HR/Payroll – 777-4226.