

Definition of a Job Description

The primary purpose of a job description or profile is to identify the essential functions of the position. According to the Human Rights Act essential functions are those tasks or functions of a particular position that are fundamental to the position and removing them would dramatically change the nature of the job.

The Human Rights Act 2000, from which the issue of essential functions has come into focus, lists several reasons why a function could be considered essential:

- The position exists to perform the function
- There are a limited number of other employees available to perform the function
- A function is highly specialised, and the person in the position is hired for special expertise or ability to perform it.

Knowing the essential functions of the job will aid you in:

- Writing appropriate interview questions
- Determining whether a person is qualified to perform the essential functions

How to Write a Job Description

So now it's time to write the job description. Have you carefully thought about what is REALLY needed? Is there tolerance for a new person's learning curve?

Make a list of the top 5-8 things a person must do to be successful in the job. These are performance objectives. Tasks are much easier to prioritise than lists of skills and experience. Once you set up the major objectives for each job, you'll also want to touch on some supporting objectives such as management or organisational issues, improvements you'd like to see implemented, technical issues or team and people issues.

Get S.M.A.R.T, be Specific, Measurable, Action-orientated, Results-focused and Time-based.

Job description checklist

- List all the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the job, divide them into requirements and preferences
- The requirements listed on the job description must support the essential functions, and serve as the primary criteria for selecting/rejecting candidates
- Don't lock yourself into strict requirements that may prevent you from considering qualified candidates. Consider substitutions, for example 4 years of professional experience or a bachelor's degree
- Keep in mind that, under the Human Rights Act, you cannot refuse to hire a qualified candidate who meets the requirements and whose disability can be reasonably accommodated.