



the hiring manager's guide

to writing successful  
job descriptions.

# introduction.

Today's tight labor market is significantly impacting employers' ability to attract, acquire and retain the talent they need. And while there are many talent acquisition strategies available, they all start with one common denominator: the job description.

The job description you create determines the types of candidates who apply. In other words, the quality of candidates directly reflects the quality of your job description. It's not surprising that job descriptions are often referred to as the 'currency of recruitment.'

This guide is designed to provide hiring managers and HR professionals with practical and tactical advice to write better job descriptions. It will help you develop a simplified yet effective approach to matching the right candidates with the roles for which you are hiring. The guide covers:

- an overview of the job description and its purpose
- what candidates look for in job descriptions
- common job description mistakes to avoid
- six techniques to ensure your job description sets you up for success

So, let's take a closer look at how to create job postings that drive results.



# working with HR to optimize job descriptions.

Too often, hiring managers approach the 'job description' as a self-serving effort. In truth, the job description's purpose is to help candidates determine if they will be happy and successful in the roles they describe. As a hiring manager, it's critical you ensure each job description does this successfully.

The consequences of unsuccessful hires can be costly and long-lasting. Research indicates that the cost of just **one bad hire can range anywhere from USD\$17,000 (€15,216) to USD\$240,000 (€214,821)** or higher. To prevent this, HR professionals and hiring managers must collaborate to create detailed job descriptions. They should think deeply about the most important aspects of their open positions, what makes working for their company great and what constitutes the 'right candidate.'

In addition, it's worth seeking input from employees in similar positions when preparing a job description. For instance, if you are replacing an employee with a new hire, involving someone who has experience in that position to assist you in writing or revising the job description can prove to be immensely valuable in finding the right candidate.

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# common mistakes to avoid when writing job descriptions.

As it turns out, modern job seekers don't spend a lot of time [reading job descriptions](#). An average of 14 seconds is all you have, according to a recent study. If you want prospective candidates to stick around longer, you must pique the applicant's interest as quickly as possible. This means starting with an attention-grabbing headline, putting your most important points at the top of the job description and using a format that's easy to scan and read.

'candidates spend an average of 14 seconds looking at a job description before deciding whether to apply.'

source: LinkedIn

There are also several things you want to avoid when it comes to creating job descriptions. Here are some common mistakes recruiters make when writing job descriptions:

- ✗ using jargon, slang, and acronyms that quickly polarize and turn away candidates
- ✗ writing a 'brain dump' of requirements rather than a compelling advertisement
- ✗ using meaningless, redundant, or obvious qualifiers (e.g., 'highly motivated')
- ✗ omitting unique benefits, like education support, remote work options or travel expense coverage
- ✗ attempting to write the job description without the support of an HR colleague or expert
- ✗ using gender biased terms, such as spokesman or chairman

As the job market evolves, hiring managers and HR leaders need to stay aware of the latest trends. One important trend to consider is the increasing number of job applications being made through mobile devices, which accounts for nearly **70% in the U.S.** Moreover, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for connecting with both active and passive candidates. Some common mistakes in the post-digital age include:

- ✗ failing to optimize postings of job descriptions for mobile devices
- ✗ highlighting prerequisites rather than future- and growth-oriented skill sets
- ✗ excluding details about the company's social or environmental responsibility efforts
- ✗ including details of tasks in place of professional opportunities and benefits
- ✗ neglecting to clearly define your company's diversity and inclusion efforts

Job seekers themselves are becoming strategic and data-driven in their efforts. Online platforms that automate aspects of the job search — leveraging artificial intelligence to match resumes with job ads, for example — are emerging. You must become strategic and data-driven yourself to succeed.

# 6 job description hacks for engaging the right candidates.

HR leaders that identify the shortcomings in their hiring processes and establish best practices for writing successful job descriptions can lay a foundation for future hiring success. This in turn drives wide-scale value for hiring managers across the organization, as well as long-term value for the organization itself.

At Randstad, it's our goal to empower HR leaders and hiring managers as they look to create the successful workforces and companies of tomorrow. That's why we've put together six 'hacks' that will boost views, engagement, and the quality of applications arriving in hiring managers' inboxes.



# 1. articulate what you really want from a new hire.

Do more with your job description than craft it to accurately describe your own needs. Reflect on past employees that didn't work out, issues related to knowledge gaps, or why they weren't a cultural fit, then articulate what hard skills, soft skills or personal qualities will ensure a candidate's success in the job.

Ensure your job description targets candidates who align with your future goals for the role, not just its immediate responsibilities. This approach, known as the [skills-based approach](#), is gaining popularity. Instead of focusing solely on degrees and job histories, this method evaluates candidates based on their abilities and potential. It requires thinking about what skills are truly needed on day one and the ones that can be taught later.

For example, you might avoid inserting the name of your analytics software as a prerequisite, opting to include a statement like 'interprets data and applies insights from enterprise analytics successfully' instead. After all, software skills can be trained;

this way, you ensure you capture this skill set in your pool of candidates, even if the analytics software you use changes over time.

If you're not sure whether you've achieved these things with your job description, have a colleague or HR professional review your posting and provide feedback based on their understanding of the role in question.





## 2. optimize job descriptions for digital environments.

Many of today's jobseekers are quite tech-savvy. They know how to navigate job boards and skim through job postings until they find a job opportunity that piques their interest. They rarely spend time reading an entire job description if they're abruptly turned off by parts of the text.

Online prospects use a range of devices as well. Failing to optimize job descriptions for these devices excludes huge portions of potential candidates. Much like your company optimizes its online content to reach its target customers, you also need to optimize your job descriptions to reach your target candidates.

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Here are some straightforward tips to ensure your job descriptions are easy to read and desirable for candidates browsing online:

use Google Trends to create job titles. Always use the terms and phrases your ideal candidates are most likely to search for; your job titles should be as close to exact as possible

- ✓ use bullet points and keywords that capture readers' attention as they scan multiple posts
- ✓ use large, purposeful subheadings often to aid readers as they skim your post
- ✓ use bold words — sparingly but meaningfully — to draw attention to certain text
- ✓ be concise and precise, transmitting only information that is necessary and of interest
- ✓ put the most attractive information near the top of the job description
- ✓ don't use jargon, acronyms, 'all caps' or callouts like 'WANTED' or 'HURRY!'



### 3. make the job attractive, not overbearing.

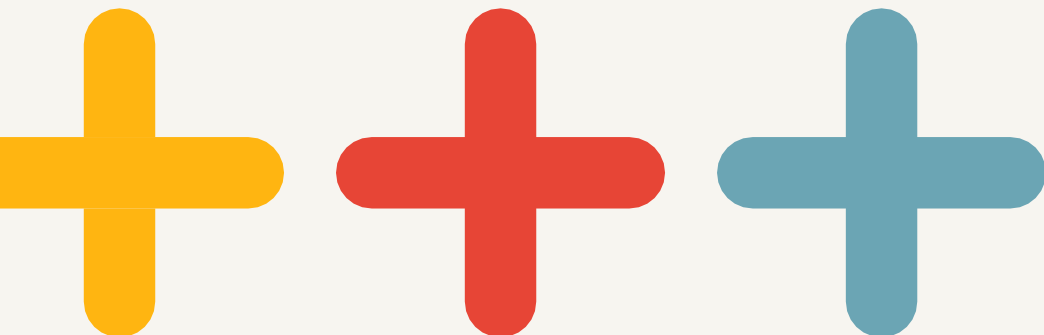
Grab the attention of candidates with the first three lines of your introduction. Connect with them on a personal level by differentiating your company from its competitors, displaying empathy and briefly getting your brand culture across.

Then, rather than highlight the stringent aspects of the job, highlight the professional opportunities and benefits candidates could enjoy as part of their responsibilities. The 'responsibilities' section of your job description should tell job seekers what value they bring to the company and what they get to do. That means focusing on the positives and helping candidates visualize themselves in that role. The difference is subtle but significant.

Do more to highlight the amenities and benefits the job provides, including as many details as possible. Simply writing a 'competitive benefits package' isn't enough. According to our [Randstad Employer Brand Research](#), salaries are the number one motivator for choosing an employer. However, it's not the only factor, today's workers also value work-life balance and job security.

These are the attributes that are most important to today's employees:

-  attractive salary
-  work-life balance
-  job security
-  workplace atmosphere
-  financially healthy company





## 4. help candidates find the right job for them, not the other way around.

Sometimes, helping candidates find the right job means ensuring unsuitable candidates turn away from your own. Your goal is to find the right balance between turning away undesirable candidates in a healthy way and enticing the right candidates to continue through the application process.

Always draft a conclusion that is truthful and includes a call to action, but set realistic expectations about the next steps. Including instructions for multiple, tedious application steps can turn away good candidates as well as bad ones. Redesign the call to action in your conclusion with your ideal candidates' strengths in mind — providing a better experience for them while decreasing the chance you will engage the wrong people.

## 5. advertise your company culture and employer brand.

Candidates aren't just interested in filling a role — they're interested in partnering with a company that will bring them long-term satisfaction and growth. Increasingly, job seekers align their personal growth with a healthy corporate culture, [employer brand](#) and social responsibility.

In this way, taking a new job is a bit like starting a new life. By describing life on the inside of the company, you'll help candidates picture themselves as part of your team. These types of details reinforce your company's brand and can help set you apart from competitors.

The job description is prime real estate — don't waste it with a generic company boilerplate description. Instead, showcase your company so that it stands out from your competitors in the eyes of potential hires.



## 6. take advantage of advancements in HR technology.

Today's advancements in HR technology can facilitate the process of writing job descriptions. For example, you can use AI-powered tools such as [Jasper](#) to write job descriptions and ensure your content is concise and on point. This tech can help you identify the right keywords to attract your ideal candidates

HR tech can also be used to spot hidden bias in your content, such as gender-bias terms, and recommend alternative phrasing. Tools like [Textio](#) and [Texmetrics](#) can help you check for discriminatory language that could turn away some applicants and reduce the quality of your talent pool. This technology can assist your organization with meeting its diversity and inclusion goals and avoid the risk of compliance issues.

When it comes to using AI-powered technology for job descriptions, it's essential to proceed with caution and maintain ongoing human supervision. It is important to strike a balance between technology and the personal touch that humans bring. After all, candidates highly appreciate a personalized approach that resonates with them.



# getting started: setting up your organization for success.

Although there are many details, a successful job description is more within reach than you might think. Once you master the approach, you will ensure your future job descriptions are successful as well. Just remember:

1. **articulate:** Create a job description that helps candidates visualize themselves in the role: becoming a happy, successful part of a team with responsibilities that make a difference.
2. **optimize:** Provide a user-friendly experience, no matter the device your candidates use to access your job description and advertisements.
3. **highlight:** Share what candidates will gain from their responsibilities, not what they 'have to do.' Differentiate your company with clear descriptions of benefits and amenities as well.
4. **help:** Be honest and strategic about the next steps so that the right candidates move forward and the wrong ones turn away. Make the application process straightforward and easy as well.
5. **share:** Paint a clear picture of your company culture. The right candidates will be drawn to what you share and are more likely to build a long and productive relationship.
6. **leverage HR tech:** Take advantage of today's advancements in HR technology to help streamline the recruitment process.

Never resign yourself to believing you cannot find the 'perfect fit' — the future of your company depends on your and your fellow hiring managers' successes. Turn each of your job descriptions into a marketing tool for the role, your team, and your company. But most of all, make sure it serves as an opportunity for the right candidate's personal growth and success.



Randstad is the global leader in the HR services industry. By serving as a trusted human partner in today's technology-driven world of talent, we support people and organizations in realizing their true potential. For more advice on creating successful job descriptions, cultivating successful HR practices or outsourcing recruitment, contact us today.

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