

Guide: Writing position descriptions

Introduction

A position description is a product of thinking about what you really want from this position.

Task Review

Sometimes the tasks associated with the position you are recruiting to are clear cut, such as for a pastry chef, a machinist, a carpenter/joiner. Sometimes it is not so clear. You may want to group tasks together in one role (common with receptionist positions). You may be recruiting to ease the pressure on other positions. A task review at this stage will help you to produce a clear position description.

If the position is a new position in the business, use the Tasks Review form to list what needs to be delegated. If the position is an existing one, review the position description and use the Tasks Review form to consider whether you want to restructure the role in any way. The Tasks Review form in this guide is based on what could be delegated to a typical administrative support role. Edit it to suit your business.

Position Analysis and Description

Once you know what tasks you want the role to perform, think about other requirements. Outline the areas of responsibility with a position analysis. Be detailed and allow for growth.

Position analysis identifies your resource requirements, major areas of responsibility and characteristics of the role.

Are qualifications necessary? A driver's licence? Is the role full-time or part-time? If part-time, could it be done in one or two days a week or do you really want a person to come in for a couple of hours every day?

If a specific skill at a specific level of competency is required, think about how you can test for this and whether external skills testing will be necessary when you are ready to interview. For instance, external agencies can test applicants for skills and competence in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and other programmes and produce a detailed report on applicants' test performance.

The position analysis gives you the scope of the position. It allows you to distinguish essential criteria for selection from desirable criteria, i.e. 'needs' vs 'wants'. You can then draft the position description. The position analysis and position description will become the basis for your recruitment process — writing the ad, shortlisting, and devising interview questions.

Complete the position description. Specify to whom the position reports. List key tasks in order of importance or grouped according to the role's main responsibilities. Start each point with a verb to make it clear what action you want the position to undertake with each task, e.g., 'make', 'prepare', 'organise', 'liaise'.

Tasks Review Form

This template provides a list of tasks for you to review to determine if they should be completed by the position you plan to recruit for.

Add relevant tasks as needed.

Month	Task	Time to complete	Delegate to	Tool available to assist
Customer-related tasks				
	Dealing with customer correspondence			
	Maintaining records of customer contact			
	Making and changing customer appointments			

Team and personnel				
	Organising team induction programmes			
	Bank account management			
	Organising performance reviews			
	Day-to-day work management			
	Following up performance review outcomes			
	Coordinating team meetings			
Recruitment				
	Writing recruitment ads			
	Corresponding with candidates			
	Organising recruitment interviews			
	Organising employment agreements			

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