

Writing Skills—First Job Descriptions

A Best Practice Checklist


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In today's competitive labor market, writing effective job descriptions is crucial for attracting top talent. This best practices guide, based on research performed by OneTen in collaboration with Ipsos and featuring recommendations from the Rework America Alliance, is designed to help HR professionals write optimized and effective skills-first job descriptions to find and attract the qualified talent they need to take their businesses forward.

**Identify Occupational and Durable Skills Clearly**

Use clear, skill-centric language and action verbs to define the skills necessary to be successful in the role. This helps candidates better understand whether they're a good fit, leading to more qualified applications.

Tools for identifying skills for a role: ^[1] [Skillitizer](#) [O*Net](#) [SkillsEngine](#)

**Differentiate Required vs. Preferred Competencies and Skills**

Identify and rank the skills required for the job, distinguishing between those essential on day one (required) and those that can be taught (preferred). Make sure to use clear language without industry jargon to describe each competency in the job description. ^[1]

**Remove Credential Requirements and Proxies**

To broaden your talent pool, remove strict educational requirements such as, "Bachelor's degree in related field required." Remove proxies such as "4+ years of related experience required," where possible.

**Remove Time-Based Experience Requirements**

Instead of specifying years of experience such as "Minimum of four years of related work experience required," focus on relevant skills and achievements.

**Encourage Non-degree Holders**

Explicitly state that candidates without four-year degrees are welcome. For example, include: "Applicants without four-year degrees are encouraged to apply" and avoid "Bachelor's degree in a related field preferred."

**Check Language for Potential Bias**

Ensure job descriptions are free from bias, which can deter qualified candidates from underrepresented groups. Candidates are more likely to engage positively with an organization if they feel valued and understood from the start.

Tools for checking for bias: ^[1] [Applied Text Analysis](#) [Gender Decoder](#) [ADA Compliant Language](#)

**Include an Inclusivity Statement**

Explicitly outline your values and mission to attract candidates who are not only qualified but who are also aligned with your commitment to inclusion. ^[1]

**Gather Feedback for Revisions ^[1]**

Collect and implement feedback from candidates and new hires regularly, which can help ensure job descriptions are optimized, inclusive and aligned with both candidate expectations and business needs.

**Incorporate Voluntary/Anonymous Demographic Survey ^[1]**

Consider using optional, anonymized demographic surveys to track the effectiveness of workforce strategies. To avoid bias, demographic information should not be inferred from application materials, and the survey should be sent separately, possibly after hiring decisions or through a third-party vendor.

For more detailed findings, read

OneTen's Research Snapshot: Creating Effective Skills-First Job Descriptions: An A/B Test and How-To Guide.

Works Cited

^[1] *Skills-Based Sourcing & Hiring Playbook. Rework America Alliance/Markle (September 2023)*