KnowledgePay™
Six Pack
of Job Description Tips

"Hey, have the intern write all the job descriptions."

Job descriptions serve as the platform for virtually every human resource process. At their best, job descriptions can be the linchpin in making the overall organization effective…and at their worst, they can be the golden ticket for some disgruntled employee's attorneys.

We've put together this Six Pack of common problems that organizations run into as well as some tips on how we have been able to make job descriptions an essential tool for helping improve organizational performance.

Least Qualified Writer

Having the intern write all job descriptions might seem like a good idea, but doing so under values the significance of these documents. It is a flawed assumption to think that anybody can write them. We're not just picking on interns though. The same problem exists when accountability for writing job descriptions is pushed out to line management.

Solution: Invest in a multi-disciplinary approach. Incumbents or line managers know the job content the best, but the competencies needed to write crisp, clear and consistent job descriptions usually resides with compensation experts. You need people who are skilled and experienced in breaking down work activities, knowledgeable about the overall organization and yes, can spin words on the page.

Done in a Vacuum

Too often, organizations write one job description at a time without taking in to account the overall context surrounding how a job is being performed. Jobs are performed by individuals that interact with other jobs, other people and other business processes. Not in a vacuum.

Solution: Leverage other organizational analysis techniques such as business process mapping and decision-chain analysis using RACI (Responsibility, Accountability, Consult, & Inform). These techniques are more likely to expose overlapping responsibilities, fragmented job responsibilities and clarify the true level of authority a job holds. There really should never be a time when you are writing one single job description.

What Constitutes a Job

Job descriptions getting created for relatively small differences in responsibilities create confusion and add administrative complexity. Too often, we see people confusing task differences that are common between "positions" with more substantive differences of responsibilities and accountabilities that would exist between "jobs".

Solution: Solving this issue requires a philosophical framework at the organizational level that guides your judgment when considering whether a new job description is warranted or not. Our belief is that a "job" is broadly defined at the intersection of functional area definitions and levels of responsibility, so it helps to have those things defined first.

Fitting a Person, Not the Business Process

When John Doe worker is asked to write his own job description, don't be surprised if it highlights the things John likes to do the most…and glosses over things that John avoids. Not that big a deal if it happens once or twice, but imagine the impact if you've tasked hundreds of employees to write their own descriptions. You can conceivably end up missing an entire business process.

Solution: **Job design really should one of the last steps in a disciplined organizational design process. A process that begins with definition of the results needed and the work to be done and includes analysis of the structural alternatives and the decision-making authorities needed. Granted, there will be some give & take about the definition of the job when you start assessing the people that you'd like to have in the roles, but focus first on designing jobs that optimally meet the needs of the organization….not the other way around.**

Scattered About

Most organizations, if they have job descriptions at all, are still having them written using Word and saving them to some network directory as individual files. Not a bad first step, but terribly inefficient when you try to do any sort of data analytics to understand the health and quality of your job documentation.

Solution: **With KnowledgePay, you have a central repository of all job analysis, evaluation and documentation stored in our cloud-based software solution. Designated users can access your descriptions and you can even grant security privileges to control access to specific users who have view only, or edit capabilities. You also have an analytics platform to be able to analyze, diagnose and resolve job design efficiently.**

Looking for the "Easy Button"

We frequently get requests from people looking for pre-defined job descriptions, i.e., ones that are filled with generic boiler-plate language. Even if the rationale is to just use that as a starting point, we find that people tend to get lazy and just accept the language as-is, without taking into account their own organizational design and business processes.

Solution: **We think it's totally fine to have some standardized language around requirements, experiences or competencies, but when it comes to defining a job's key responsibilities the organization needs to "own" that content. Anything less than that is abdicating a key managerial accountability.**

Do these problems sound familiar?

Contact KnowledgePay to learn more about how we can help transform your job descriptions into the solid foundation needed for organizational high performance.

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