

# Making Job Descriptions Work for You

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**W**hen was the last time you took a second and thought about your job description? A couple of months ago? A few years ago? Never?

For most of us, job descriptions are tossed aside once a position is filled; doomed to collect dust until the day comes when they need to be pulled out again. The truth is that job descriptions are probably one of the most important, and underused, tools in any employer's arsenal, however.

Generally speaking, applicants see some form of job description when they apply for a job. Most job postings consist of the basics – job title, location, supervisory responsibility, summary of responsibilities, and a pay scale. While this whittled-down version might be great for recruiting, for employee development and legal purposes it's hardly a stellar example. When done well, a job description not only helps in finding the right applicant for the job, but also helps keep those great applicants. A solid job description is the foundation for many things, including:

- Developing effective interview questions
- Performance evaluations/appraisals
- Setting employee goals
- Salary increases

- Worker's Compensation documentation
- Unemployment documentation

Not all job descriptions are the same, but the two most common types are the traditional job description and the results oriented job description. Wondering what the difference is?

More likely than not the document that pops into your head when discussing job descriptions is a form of the traditional job description. Typically drafted by supervisors or administrations, the traditional job description focuses on how one should behave to perform well on a job, focusing only the qualifications that are necessary to do the job. It's a rundown of the tasks that need to be done such as "provide general administrative support to director" or "identify and assess customers' needs to achieve satisfaction." While those are, in fact, the tasks that need to be done, there is a lot of room for interpretation as to HOW they will get done.

That's where the results oriented job description comes into play. Growing in popularity, the results oriented job description, or ROJD, is a more comprehensive and detailed account of the position. More and more companies are starting to switch from the traditional job description to the ROJD in an effort to create more sustainable recruiting and career mapping initiatives.

Instead of placing the focus solely on the task that needs to be done, the ROJD places the emphasis on the result that needs to come out of it. A good results oriented job description starts by describing a broad key function and an end result, and then breaks that function down into tasks, detailing what exactly needs to happen for that end result to come into fruition.

For example, a key function for a receptionist might be "front end assistance" with an end result of "provide prompt

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*Kylie Fay is an Employees Resources Associate with HireElements, the recruitment network for A.W. Hastings & Co. As a strategic partner, HireElements aligns people and opportunities, leveraging a thorough understanding of its clients' corporate environment to provide the best human resources services for its culture. For more information, visit [www.hireelements.com](http://www.hireelements.com).*