



A Step By Step Guide to Creating the Perfect Job Specification

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Creating the Perfect Job Specification

Creating a job specification that aligns with your business objectives is a must to avoid the impact of a bad hire in your business. Preparing the right specification will help you to screen and evaluate applicant CVs efficiently and help to structure your interviews accordingly.

Your job spec also helps the people who may consider applying to your vacancy. Being specific on what you require will enable prospective candidates to evaluate whether they are the right fit for your business. It can also be used to form the basis of an employment contract with your successful hire and an ongoing performance management tool.



One in three UK employees is in the wrong job according to the Office of National Statistics.

Key Elements of the Job Spec

When creating your job specification, include the following key elements:-

- Job title and department
- Key responsibilities and competencies of the role.
- Key aims of the role
- Basics of the job description
- Salary*

*Be clear on the maximum amount you are prepared to pay an outstanding candidate to avoid delays in the hiring process.

Job responsibilities

Your job responsibilities will form the basis of your job post so include all essential information here:-

- Who the role reports into
- Describe a typical working day or week
- What the job involves, what its purpose is
- Principal responsibilities
- Examples of projects the job holder will work on

Qualifications

- 'Must have' level of education and qualifications required for the post*.
- Minimum years of experience required.
- Minimum skills you require the successful candidate to be able to demonstrate.**
- Soft skills, such as organisational, creative, project management skills.
- Type of industry background preferred.
- Ideal job background.

*To expand your potential talent pool, you must evaluate your 'must have' versus 'desirable' skills carefully.

**Note where these skills are required in the job responsibilities.

Personal Character

- Describe your culture to help you to build a picture of your ideal candidate. Select three key words to measure job applicants against.
- What traits would help them to meet the performance objectives of the job?
- What are the traits of your most successful people in similar roles?
- Are there any other characteristics this post requires?

The Candidate Persona

In creating a job specification it is important to avoid vague phrases or words. If this is a new post, or difficult to fill, a candidate persona will help to create a more specific job specification and ultimately a successful job post.

A candidate persona is also used for businesses employing high numbers of people in identical job posts.

Creating Your Candidate Persona

A candidate persona is a template which details your perfect hire for a specific position, based on HR analytics from previous hiring processes (if available) and assumptions made by your business on the candidate's personal and professional experience.

Before creating your persona, consider the following:-

- Assess your high achievers. What are their shared strengths, experiences and career paths? This information will enable you to create a more accurate picture of the person you need.
- What sources historically provided your best candidates? Employee referrals, your existing talent pool, social media or niche job boards are all examples of channels that bring in the best hires to your recruitment funnel.

Next, provide more detail of the ideal candidate, for example:-

- Their ideal career path, personal background, cultural values, career aspirations and how they respond to challenges.
- What are their long term personal and professional goals?
- How do they spend their time outside work?
- What would prevent them from accepting a position with your company?
- What motivates them?
- What is their ideal work/life balance?
- What are they looking for in an employer?
- What goals have they met in their career so far?
- What do they hope to achieve in the next 12 months?

To prevent bias or non-compliance with discrimination and employment laws, demographic details must be excluded from your candidate persona.

When a thorough assessment of your ideal candidate is completed, your hiring strategy can be targeted around these details and communicated across online recruitment channels, such as your careers site, social media feeds, job postings and communication with your existing talent pool.

Additional Key Points



Your candidate persona should feed your job specification and address the issues that matter to top talent, for example, how your company provides the type of career development opportunities offered by your company.

Why create a candidate persona?

Once agreed with relevant stakeholders, your candidate persona can be used in the following ways:-

- To provide a template to improve the cultural fit of your hires.
- To offer a benchmark for initial screening of job applicants.
- To identify your most successful sources for future recruits.
- To enhance your candidate evaluation and final selection.
- To improve your job specification and overall hiring strategy.
- To reduce the risk of a bad hire and improve retention levels.

Your Job Spec Checklist

Checklist	Done
Is your job title a true reflection of the vacancy?	
Is it search engine friendly? <i>Tip: Avoid creative headlines which use words such as 'ninja', guru' or 'wizard'.</i>	
Are reporting lines clarified?	
Are 'dotted lines' to other working relationships identified? <i>Tip: Your candidates must know who their direct line manager will be.</i>	
Have you included all key duties and responsibilities in the role? <i>Tip: Information can be drawn from your job description. Prioritise duties and responsibilities according to how much time you expect the job holder to spend on each task which provides more detail for prospective candidates to meet your expectations.</i>	
Are your key skills separate from your competencies? <i>Tip: Skills are technical requirements such as a coding qualification. Competencies are 'soft' skills, including the ability to work well within a team.</i>	
Have you agreed a salary and benefits? <i>Tip: If you are testing the market and don't want to agree to a maximum salary, at least agree a salary range. Evaluate the job market to find out what you will need to pay to attract talented job applicants. Benefits can include flexible working, a company vehicle, bonuses, healthcare etc.</i>	