

# Draft the perfect job specification

## Increase applicant numbers with a behavioural job description

As we all know drafting a job description is the first step on the road to recruiting someone to the role. The number and type of applicants you receive will depend very much on the quality of the description. A normal specification typically sets out a job's goals, responsibilities and duties, experience and educational requirements. However, a vital element is often missed: how that person will perform in the role. All duties translate into behaviours and it is people's behaviour at work that will ultimately determine their success or failure.

Recruiting someone is, ultimately, about buying behaviour. If you set out in the description what it is you want to buy, then both you and the candidate know exactly where you stand. So, what do you need to think about in your behavioural job description?

If you need a sales person how do you want them to sell? Do you need them to be assertive, goal oriented, confident, driven and independent? Or do you want them to be persuasive, friendly, positive and communicative? The type of behaviour you buy will depend on the type of sales person you get. An assertive, goal oriented individual will work well if faced with the prospect of cold calling whereas a more friendly, persuasive style could work better servicing existing clients. The behavioural difference is reflected in established descriptions of sales people as 'hunters' and 'harvesters'.

Let's take 'communication' as an example. Many job adverts stipulate that they want a 'good communicator' but what does this mean? How do you want a successful candidate to communicate? If it's about face-to-face communication then the employee will need to be friendly, outgoing and persuasive. Do you want someone who communicates best through writing? If so they might need to be more careful, systematic and accurate, depending on the level of detail needed. If by communication you really mean 'instruct and tell' then that will require someone who is quite forceful, direct and assertive, someone who won't take no for an answer. As you can see, each style of communication requires very different behaviours. If what you want is someone who is friendly and outgoing but what you 'buy' is someone who is assertive and direct then they are not going to work out in the job.

In a similar way when a job description stipulates that the successful candidate will be managing people, what kind of manager does he or she need to be? Are you looking for a carrot or a stick approach? Have you looked at the behaviour of the team they will be managing? How do these people prefer to work? You need a manager who will be able to manage the team so that they will respond positively.

We all work in a particular way, we all behave in a certain style. A mask displayed at an interview – saying things you think the interviewer wants to hear, acting tough or sensitive - will only last for so long. By adding a behavioural element to a job description you are making clear from the outset how you want the job to be done and the candidate knows what is expected of them.

The behaviour you are buying from a candidate is just as important as their skills and CV, yet it is often overlooked at the early planning stage.

Look at the role you want them to perform and how you want them to carry out their duties and responsibilities. Be clear in your job description and your advert so that you, and the candidate, know where they stand. If you do this you will recruit the right person for the job.