



VETERINARY BUSINESS ADVISORS, INC.  
*Counsel for the Veterinary Profession*

**Job Descriptions**  
**Why do I need to Write Them?©**

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Drafting job descriptions requires time, effort and creativity. The focus needs to be on what the job requirements are to support your Practice's current needs and long-term objectives. Without a job description, it is not possible for an individual to properly commit to or be held accountable for the position's role and responsibilities. The tendency when having to create a job description is to under-estimate the strategic nature of the role, ignore the necessary competencies to perform the responsibilities and be too detailed with operating instructions (which should be in either a standard operating procedures or operational manual).

Job descriptions are required for recruitment, enable you to distinguish positions, delineate tasks and determine pay levels. Without them, your best efforts to staff, develop and evaluate performance are without direction. And your ability to defend against complaints regarding pay, performance, promotion and discrimination are disadvantaged.

Be bold, empower your employees to write their own job descriptions but not without first providing them in-depth training on:

- What is a Job Description
  - Includes information regarding the general nature of the work to be performed, specific responsibilities and duties and the employee characteristics required to perform the job.
    - A duty is what the person in the job will actually do while qualifications are the skills, attributes, or credentials a person needs to perform each duty successfully (success criteria competencies – critical for recruiting). Clarify the actual duties and responsibilities before you start thinking about what special attributes or competencies will be needed by the person who will be fulfilling those responsibilities.
  - Focuses on outcomes and accountabilities and are used to manage performance. Have reasonable expectations, the job must be doable.
- Value of Job Descriptions
  - Clarifies who is responsible for what within your Practice by defining relationships between individuals. By accomplishing this, job descriptions can be used to settle grievances, minimize conflicts, and improve communications.
  - Enables the employee to assess the relative importance of everything he/she is accountable for, provides a sense of where the job fits in to the Practice as a whole and how the position supports the Practice's overall goals.

- Provides information about the knowledge, training, education, and skills needed to perform each job. They prevent misunderstandings for employees by clarifying what they need to know, accomplish and prioritize regarding their jobs.
- Helps management analyze and improve the Practice's organizational structure. Reveals whether all Practice responsibilities are adequately covered and where responsibilities should be reallocated to achieve a better balance.
- Limits legal exposure to issues such as equal opportunity and discrimination laws.
- Job Analysis
  - A data-gathering process including examination/interpretation of the data to determine what the employee actually does on the job, the required qualifications needed to perform those duties and the context in which the work is performed
  - It is an evaluation of the job, not the person doing the job.
  - Includes a thorough understanding of the essential functions of the job, a list of all duties and responsibilities, a percentage of time spent for each group of tasks, the job's relative importance in comparison with other jobs, the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) needed to perform the job, and the conditions under which the work is completed.
- Job Design
  - Communicate what to consider when focusing on job design. Create teamwork in a smart way, so employees want to be on that team and be thoughtful in assembling it. Understand how individuals react to how their job is designed by looking at social characteristics of work (such as, interdependence, frequent feedback, autonomy, a socially supportive work environment, communicating with people outside of the Practice, etc) to reap the benefits of greater job/work/organizational satisfaction, increased performance, less exhaustion/stress and reduced turnover intentions.

Annually, in tandem with your performance evaluation cycle, you should be reviewing your job descriptions for accuracy and updating them especially if the Practice is dynamic, going through some business transformation and roles/procedures are changing rapidly. It is more than just a static document and reference point.

Once your job description is completed, you are ready to craft a job posting that dazzles an ideal candidate by highlighting your Practice's strengths and the position's attractiveness. Describe your Practice's culture, reputation, growth, benefits package, advancement opportunities and even location. Write your job posting as a performance profile, informing candidates of expectations and what kind of attitude you want in a new hire as well.

Think of your job descriptions and job postings as advertising copy that you have created as an opportunity to highlight what is great about your Practice, to raise your Practice's profile in the industry and to attract your next high achiever.