



Job Descriptions, Why It Really Matters?

By Stacey McCreery, Founder and President, ROI Search Group

Perfect fit

You finally got approval to fill a vacant and much-needed position, but after months of applications you've yet to find the right candidate. Many of the applicants have years of experience—but not in the areas you need. Where is the disconnect?

The problem is often right in front of you: the job description. Many organizations use broad, standardized job descriptions. These job descriptions may either contain too little specific information to guide or interest candidates or they may include skills and qualifications that are irrelevant to a specific position while omitting those that matter most. You are not finding good candidates because they are not finding you.

Although job descriptions and postings are generally handled by Human Resources (HR), managers can still partner with that department to ensure that you are communicating the right message. With just a few adjustments you can reach a deeper pool of people that are perfect for the job.

Job codes

Even a quick scan of job sites can reveal any number of job descriptions that are either so broad it is difficult to picture the day-to-day work or where the job title does not match up with the description. That is often because organizations have a limited number of job codes and related job descriptions, says **Stacey McCreery, MBA**, founder and president of ROI Search Group in Fishers, Indiana.

Perhaps after a merger or during an HR system upgrade the organization discovered it had several thousand job codes. At a certain point, an organization can wind up with more job codes than it can manage, McCreery explains. Basic tasks such as developing pay scales and annual performance reviews can become extremely complicated. To solve this problem, the organization may choose to eliminate job codes until it brings the total down to a manageable number.

However, that can introduce recruitment problems, McCreery says. In revenue cycle, for example, jobs can be very specialized and may call for very different qualifications. A coding manager, a patient financial services (PFS) manager, and a revenue integrity manager are not interchangeable: a coding qualification may be required for a coding manager but not a PFS or revenue integrity manager. But with just one job code and description for a “revenue cycle manager” recruitment can be more difficult and time-consuming.

“It is challenging when we don't have the right job description out there,” McCreery says.

A new angle

If your organization's available job descriptions are not working, ask if you can edit a version for posting, McCreery recommends. Writing or editing a more specific job description rather than relying on the canned job description in the system leads to better outcomes, she adds.

But what goes into an effective job description? Many people have never written one and may not find it intuitive.

A job description is broken down into basic elements, according to [Indeed](#). Your organization's job descriptions may cover all the bases, but the information provided might not be specific or may no longer be accurate. Review the following to spot opportunities for improvement or updating:

- **Job title:** Is the job title correct and specific? If you are looking for a coding manager but the job has been posted as a revenue cycle manager, qualified candidates could pass it by. Alternatively, if the job title is overly specific, includes jargon, or titles that are not widely recognized by the industry, job seekers could be confused and stop reading, according to Indeed. The job title should be something people outside your organization will recognize and understand.
- **Job summary:** Are you making a winning pitch? The summary should offer an overview of the position and the organization. It should be clear and succinct and give job seekers an idea of what the job entails and what working for the organization is like. This is also an opportunity to ensure you're using thoughtful and inclusive language, a January 2021 [Forbes article](#) pointed out. Stick with universally understood terms, avoid jargon, and strike out terms that may be perceived as aggressive, gender specific, discriminatory, or imply bias.
- **Responsibilities and duties:** Do these truly match the job title? Perhaps you are looking for a revenue integrity manager, but the responsibilities and duties look like those of a PFS manager. This section should give candidates a better idea of the job's core responsibilities and how it fits in the organization.
- **Qualifications and skills:** Are you asking for the right things? If the job description is not specific, it may include credentials and other qualifications that are not relevant. Make sure this section is concise and focuses on what is truly important. Great candidates may give up if they see a long and overly detailed list of qualifications and skills.
"Think about what the qualifications are this person should have, credentials or years of experience," McCreery says. "Is it imperative that they have a degree, or do they need to have an advanced degree? What you might find is that revenue cycle manager job description says a bachelor's degree is required, but you're looking for another role and a bachelor's may not be required."
- **Salary and benefits:** Are you leaving out tangible benefits on an offer? Some organizations prefer not to include salary information but may include information such as medical benefits, paid time off, flexible working hours, remote work options, and other perks, McCreery says. Although HR should keep this section up to date, it is worth scanning to make sure that it is correct.

Winning the pitch

Although you may be limited in how much you can edit the job description itself, there are still opportunities. If your organization posts the job on a job search site or social media, such as LinkedIn, you may be able to help write the post's summary.

These summaries are typically short, but you can easily make them effective and eye-catching, McCreery says. Use the opportunity to highlight your needs and what your organization has to offer. Perhaps your top-rated rural facility is looking for a Health Information Management (HIM) expert—so let potential candidates know by saying just that. You are making clear what type of professional and qualifications you are looking for and telling them about the organization. If you have enough room, think of the five things that are most essential to success in the job—whether that's time-management or a background with a particular EHR—and try to work those in.

"What you're doing is being very transparent while attracting talent," McCreery says.



If the job is being posted on social media sites such LinkedIn or Twitter, do not hesitate to suggest hashtags, she adds. If you are looking for an analyst experienced with Cerner, try #Cerner, #analyst, and #revenuecycle. Avoid going too broad—#healthcare or #hospital will not be useful.

Take every opportunity to partner with HR, McCreery recommends. HR professionals are the experts in their domain, but they cannot be expected to know the nuances of each job. By providing them with context like a summary and suggested hashtag, you are helping to ensure that the recruitment process goes as well as possible.

Getting the word out

Do not overlook your best resource when recruiting: your current staff. The organization may post the job internally first, but by the time it is posted on an external site it will not be at the top of your staff's mind. It also creates frustration not knowing about an internal role and only seeing a posting on a public site.

"Send it out to the team because they may share it with someone who might apply who's at a different health system or is planning to move," McCreery says. "You never know who somebody might know. There are a lot of referrals that will come in that way."

Forward thinking

The next time your organization reviews and streamlines job codes, make sure you are part of the process, McCreery recommends. Generally, HR will clean up job codes when moving to a new system. You will likely hear about this well in advance, giving you enough time to reach out and ask how you can be involved in rewriting job descriptions or eliminating those that are truly redundant. Ask to learn how the system works and what limitations exist on the number of job codes and the contents of job descriptions.

"They may not know your area as well as you do so that's where there's the responsibility to have those open discussions. Tell them about the challenges if you have only one revenue cycle manager job description," McCreery says.

Explain that eliminating too many job codes will mean you will not be able to communicate the critical differences between distinct revenue cycle roles. Show how this will affect recruitment by increasing the length of time a vacant position may remain open. Tie that back to the financial impact of reduced productivity due to being short-staffed and the additional strain on existing staff.

Effective job descriptions are the first step in getting vacant positions filled fast. When you are reviewing or editing a job description or summary, try to see it from the candidate's perspective, McCreery recommends. Think of it as writing a cover letter to potential candidates. Does it give you enough information about the role and the organization, or is it too detailed and long? Is the language precise while being clear and accessible? Does it contain terms that are meaningful to the professionals you are seeking while avoiding jargon?

"We need to know what's important to us, but we also have to remember what's important to them," McCreery says. "What's going to move someone, even someone who isn't actively looking, to click on that link or to want more information?"



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