



The Art of Writing Effective Job Postings for Small Businesses

One of the most common challenges for business owners and hiring managers in small companies is writing effective job postings. In many cases, writing new job postings is seldom done and every new job opening is somewhat unique based on the evolving needs of the business. Unlike large organizations that have highly specialized roles, most roles within smaller companies encompass a broad range of responsibilities and don't fall neatly into a specific category.

Writing a good, effective job description drives a strong response rate and is a form of art that requires creativity, salesmanship, and wordsmithing: three characteristics that don't always fall into the wheelhouse of a typical hiring manager.

When a position opens, you often find an extremely busy manager trying to hard shift from running their business to facing a blank document, attempting to write a job description from scratch. They might go out and find a similar job title on one of the job boards or search engines to use as a template that can then be customized, but even that can be very challenging as very few roles in small businesses are the same and certainly every company is unique.

A few of the common mistakes made when writing job postings:

- Over (or under) selling the company
- Providing too much detail about the job role
- Being unrealistic in developing the list of 'requirements'
- Being too technical or heavy in 'internal acronyms'
- Listing the pay rate without confirming that the pay is competitive within the market
- Posting a job with misspellings, grammatical errors, and/or formatting issues

Appealing To the Right Audience:

Candidates who look at your job have likely looked at dozens if not hundreds of other jobs as well. They often tend to be tired, frustrated, and full of anxiety. Many start with large companies that they assume are stable, pay well, and offer great benefits. If they don't recognize the name of the company, they will scan the posting looking for specific things they are interested in and if they don't see those items of interest quickly, they will move on to the next one.

As a result of candidates natural inclination to trust large companies and be somewhat leery of small companies, the approach to writing job postings for a large company is much different than it is for a small company. Large companies are already known and have established credibility.

Not only do they not need to worry so much about educating and informing potential applicants what they do, they can be very specific with the requirements they are looking for. They will more than likely generate a high volume of interest and applicants due to the established trust they have generated through expensive marketing efforts. It is assumed they are stable, pay well, provide training, and offer great benefits.

As a result, they can get away with listing 20 or 30 bullet points with specific levels of experience with various software platforms, job functions, etc.

For large companies, the job postings act almost as a natural filter to weed out "unqualified" candidates. If you don't have EVERYTHING we are looking for, don't bother applying. The last thing these companies want is hundreds of applicants that they are likely to generate with a loosely written job posting.

Appealing To the Right Audience

For small companies, the job posting should be treated like a Job ADVERTISEMENT versus a job description or job posting. Save presenting the specific tactical responsibilities of the role for the phone screen or even the interview process. For small companies, the job posting is a chance to market the company, tell potential candidates what they do and why they are such a great place to work. If you don't have any competitive differentials, implement them ASAP. You can't honestly market something that isn't true.

A few examples of "selling points" a small business should consider including in their company description (when they are true) are below:

- ▶ Well funded start up
- ▶ Explosive growth
- ▶ Ground floor opportunity
- ▶ Unlimited income potential
- ▶ Dynamic, fun casual environment
- ▶ Disruptive
- ▶ A seasoned team of experts
- ▶ Extremely happy clients
- ▶ Frequent company outings
- ▶ Family atmosphere
- ▶ Flexibility
- ▶ Work hard, play hard
- ▶ Great benefits
- ▶ Above market pay

Once you have the candidate excited about your company, proceed to selling the role and how important and exciting it is. For example, "as an Account Executive with ABC company, you will be on the front lines as the face and voice of the company. Your role will build relationships with our prospects and clients, earning their trust and advocating for their best interest as they take advantage of our differentiated suite of products and services".

When listing job requirements, list the absolute requirements, but focus mostly on the soft skills and character descriptions. A few examples of “requirements” a small business should consider including in their job postings are below:

- Highly talented, smart, aggressive professionals
- Ambitious individuals who want to learn and grow
- Hard-workers
- Self-starters
- Independent, trustworthy
- Possess a strong desire to make an impact
- Enjoy the satisfaction of attaining and exceeding goals
- Works well with others in a collaborative environment
- Good personality
- Willingness to embrace and appreciate diversity

Of course you need to include some actual hard skills, but again, it is all in the tone and verbiage. When possible, try to be more broad and less specific unless it is an absolute must have:

- Strong technical proficiency and a desire to learn new systems and software
- Proficient with Microsoft Office
- Above average skills with Excel
- Experience tracking sales activity within a CRM
- Good understanding of the Financial Services space

Summary and Tips:

- **Treat your job posting as a Company Advertisement:** As a small company with limited brand recognition the job posting truly is your company advertisement. You need to grab the attention of potential job applicants by marketing the strengths and differentiators of your company. Good candidates will have lots of options. Why should they come to work for your company? Tell them... but don't oversell them!
- **Keep it brief:** Long job postings are candidate killers. Your posting should be a couple of paragraphs and a handful of bullets. In this case, less is usually more. You want to peek their interest and encourage them to proceed with the submission of their resume to learn more. Don't give them too much information, using the job posting to filter out candidates. As a small company, it is hard enough to generate qualified applicants. Don't scare off the good candidates trying to screen out the bad ones.
- **Make it look good:** Be sure to take the extra time to read the posting one more time to correct any misspells, punctuation errors, or formatting errors. Don't overthink it and get too clever, but more importantly, don't make a bad first impression by rushing. Remember, it is a company advertisement designed to attract future rock stars!

