Writing Results-Oriented Job Descriptions

When writing results-oriented job descriptions, the first thing to consider is that you need to identify and state the result to be accomplished. For example, the desired result might be “Maintain Company Directory.” Now, to do this properly you need to do the following:

1. First start with an action verb, then write the object of the action.

   “Job results are succinct statements, generally two or three words (occasionally four or five words). More words than that and you should review what you are trying to express to ensure clarity.”

2. Next, you need to write the connector word, for example – “by.”

3. Then write the duty performed in order to accomplish the result (it’s possible to have several duties for one result)

Distinguishing between Results and Duties in a Job Description

To distinguish between a result and a duty, try placing the job element both before and after the “by.” Then complete the sentence to see which order makes more sense. Remember, a result answers the question, Why are we doing this? A duty, on the other hand, answers the question, What must be done to produce the result?

For example, this might be: “updating files with additions, deletions, and changes” which is the “duties” while “entering data noted on personnel status change forms; retrieving the employee's data file; deleting information as noted in file; entering new data” may be the procedural part

Usually, you will find that duties turn out to be job procedures that rather belong in an operations manual than in a job description.

So, when you complete the job description:

“Maintains company BUSINESS directory by updating files with additions, deletions, and changes.”

The result describes what’s really important about the job. The telephone directory is the outcome produced by updating files, the product of the work. Updating files is how the directory is maintained.

Are Results Always Results and Duties Always Duties?

One job’s duty can be another job’s result. Therefore, whether a statement is a result or a duty depends on the job. Remember, a result answers the question, Why are we doing this? A duty answers the question, What must be done to produce the result?

Ensuring That the Result Is Correctly Identified

Identifying the result is the toughest part of writing a job description. Duties are more easily recognized than results because that is the way managers and workers have been taught to think about work. Understanding why a duty must be performed is not always so clear. Here’s a tip: Generally speaking, what you can see people doing is the duty.

Arranging Results and Duties

The results and duties statements are arranged in the job description to communicate expectations logically, in one of these three sequences:

1. Most important to least important
2. Most time spent to least time spent
3. In the order accomplished
Choosing the Correct Words for Job Results and Duties

Each word in a job description is important to help people understand and clarify job expectations. The correct verb differentiates responsibilities and authorities among jobs.

Should Job Standards Be Included in the Results and Duties Statements?

It is not necessary to use evaluative terms in results and duties statements. Do not add words that attempt to define how well the result is to be accomplished or how well the duty is to be performed.

Results and duties, as well as planning and appraisal criteria, are more easily understood when they are stated separately but linked in format.