



IN THE KNOW with EMPO

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Insight Into HR News With EMPO! January 2006

In This Issue You'll Find:

- Importance of Job Descriptions
- Notification Of Workplace Injuries
- HealthPartners Orthodontic Discount



Is there a subject that you would like to know more about in a future newsletter? Please feel free to send me an email and let me know at lgoold@empocorp.com

The Importance of Job Descriptions

What is a job description?

Job descriptions are written statements that describe the duties, responsibilities, required qualifications, and reporting relationships of a particular job. Job descriptions are based on objective information obtained through job analysis, an understanding of the competencies and skills required to accomplish needed tasks, and the needs of the organization to produce work. Job descriptions clearly identify the responsibilities of a specific job. Job descriptions also include information about working conditions, tools, equipment used, knowledge and skills needed, and physical and cognitive requirements plus relationship with other positions.

Why should I write job descriptions for positions at my company?

Written job descriptions can improve your company's recruiting, hiring, compensation, performance evaluation, promotion, and training, and may help protect you from some types of legal action. Written job descriptions determine all the functions of a particular job and establish which of those functions are essential to the job.

How can job descriptions contribute to the company's recruiting, hiring, compensation, performance evaluation, promotion, and training?

Job descriptions clearly define the job you're trying to fill. When recruiting or screening candidates for an open position, you can compare the candidates' specific experience, education, and other qualifications to the position's requirements. Also, you can more accurately determine the compensation for that position.

Job descriptions set clear expectations for what the company expects from its employees. Employers need to make certain that employees clearly understand your expectations. This understanding starts with the job description.

The Importance of Job Descriptions, continued...

*Cherish your visions
and your dreams
as they are the
children of your
soul; the blueprints
of your ultimate
achievements.*

-Napoleon Hill



*Never give up then,
for that is just the
place and time that
the tide will turn.*

-Harriet Beecher Stow



*Every worthwhile
accomplishment
has a price tag
attached to it. The
question is always
whether you are
willing to pay the
price to attain it, in
hard work,
sacrifice, patience,
faith, and
endurance.*

-John C. Maxwell

Job descriptions provide a basis for measuring an employee's performance. How can you tell how well an employee is doing if you don't know exactly what he or she does? A written job description also explains the criteria you'll use for measuring performance.

Job descriptions also help determine training needs. A job description can pinpoint the skills a job requires; you can use that list of skills to determine areas in which an employee needs to improve to do the job more effectively.

How can job descriptions offer protection for certain types of legal action?

In today's world of lawsuit mania, there are at least two legal reasons why you need to have clearly articulated job descriptions.

The first legal reason is the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Many requirements of the ADA are determined or influenced by the essential functions of the job, which an employer can reasonably articulate in a job description.

In addition to being very precise about the actual job duties that have to be performed from a business or management standpoint, a job description today has to be very specific about the cognitive, physical, ergonomic, environmental and other requirements of the job to be able to comply with certain requirements of the ADA.

For example, if you're writing a job description for a sales position, you should include a specific description of the physical requirements of the job such as "must stand for significant periods of time without a break" or "must meet with customers outside under all weather conditions" or "must be able to travel by car for long distances from city to city."

If you aren't specific and meticulous in describing every important aspect of the job, then the ADA assumes that the employee can perform the actual job duties any way he/she wants to, regardless of whether or not it complies with company policy.

The second legal reason is conformity to the U.S. Department of Labor's Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in regards to employee classifications of "Exempt" and "Non-Exempt" and subsequent effects on overtime compensation. Having a clear job description may help a company defend classifying a particular position as exempt from overtime pay.

*For example, let's say the job description states "the employee's primary duty includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance." If this is in fact the case, then that part of the job description will help you document one of the **several requirements** to make the employee exempt from overtime pay.*

In Summary

The bottom line on job descriptions is that having a job description is not only an important management tool that can also help you comply with various legal requirements; in sum, it's essential!

By: Dan Baltzer



