Designing Job Descriptions That Attract the Right Candidates

A Practical Framework to Improve Candidate Alignment from the First Interaction



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Executive Summary

This ebook provides a practical, solution-oriented approach to designing Job Descriptions that attract the right candidates from the first interaction.

In today's competitive talent landscape, organizations are increasingly challenged in securing the right talent, with nearly 7 in 10 companies reporting ongoing recruitment difficulties (SHRM, 2025). Notably, the challenge is not only a shortage of candidates, but also a lack of alignment between business needs, role expectations, and candidate capabilities.

At the same time, many organizations still lack structured and data-driven approaches to evaluate hiring quality, limiting their ability to improve recruitment effectiveness over time (SHRM Recruiting Benchmarking Report, 2025). This highlights the need for more intentional and systematic methods in how roles are defined and communicated.

This ebook addresses these challenges by repositioning Job Descriptions as strategic tools rather than administrative documents. Through a structured framework, it enables organizations to:

- **Attract the right candidates, not just increase application volume**
- **Improve alignment between role expectations and candidate profiles**
- **Enhance hiring efficiency through clearer and more effective Job Description design**

By combining role clarity, structured communication, and measurable standards, this guide offers a practical approach to improving candidate alignment and overall hiring outcomes.

- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), Talent Trends Report, 2025
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), Recruiting Benchmarking Report, 2025

A Practical Approach to Better Job Descriptions

Many Job Descriptions generate high application volume but low relevance. The core issue lies in the misalignment between:

Business needs **Role definition** **Market communication**

When these elements are not clearly aligned, Job Descriptions tend to become generic, overly broad, or inconsistent with the actual role. As a result, they attract a wide pool of applicants, but with **a low proportion** of candidates who are truly suitable.

This challenge is widely observed in practice. Research indicates that unclear or poorly defined job requirements are among the key factors leading to ineffective hiring and mismatched candidates (Society for Human Resource Management, 2025). Similarly, foundational work in job analysis emphasizes that without a clear understanding of the role and its requirements, organizations struggle to communicate expectations accurately and select the right candidates (Michael T. Brannick et al., Job and Work Analysis, 2007).

In many cases, Job Descriptions are written as a final administrative step—often based on outdated templates or incomplete input from hiring managers. This leads to several common issues:

- **Responsibilities described at a surface level, without clear outcomes**
- **Requirements that are either too broad or unrealistic**
- **Messaging that prioritizes attractiveness over accuracy**
- **A disconnect between the Job Description and the actual employee experience**

These gaps not only reduce candidate quality but also create downstream inefficiencies, including longer screening time, higher rejection rates, and increased risk of early attrition.

To address this challenge, Job Descriptions should be treated as **the output of a structured and intentional process**, rather than a **standalone document.**

Talent Alignment Framework

The Talent Alignment Framework provides a practical, step-by-step model to guide this process, ensuring that Job Descriptions are not only well-written, but also relevant, credible, and effective in attracting the right candidates.

A well-written Job Description starts long before the writing itself.

Stage 1: Business Needs

Define why the role exists and what business problem it solves. The focus is on outcomes, not headcount or workload distribution.

For example, instead of stating "We need a Marketing Executive", the requirement should be framed in business terms **such as increasing qualified leads by 30% within six months, improving customer retention, or expanding into a new market segment.**

This ensures the role is created to solve a measurable business challenge rather than fill an operational gap.

Stage 2: Role Design

Translate business needs into structured responsibilities and expected outputs. The role should be defined through impact, not task execution.

For example, instead of "support marketing activities", responsibilities should include **executing lead generation campaigns, optimizing conversion performance across channels, and reporting against defined KPIs.**

This shifts the role from activity-based execution to outcome-based accountability.

Stage 3: Candidate Definition

Define the profile required to successfully deliver the role, including experience, skills, and functional capabilities.

Instead of generic criteria such as "good communication skills", requirements should reflect job reality, **such as 1–2 years of performance marketing experience, hands-on use of Meta Ads or Google Ads, and ability to analyze campaign data.**

Must-have and nice-to-have criteria should be clearly separated to avoid over- or under-filtering candidates.

Convert the structured role into a clear and consistent Job Description. The focus is clarity, accuracy, and transparency.

Stage 4: Job Description Development

For example, replace vague statements like "dynamic working environment" with concrete context such as **team size, reporting structure, KPIs, and working scope**.

This helps candidates understand the role as it truly operates, not as it is generically described.

Entry-level roles perform better on high-volume job boards, **mid-level roles** on professional networks such as LinkedIn, and **niche roles** through referrals or specialized communities.

Messaging should also adapt by channel, with job boards focusing on clarity and keywords, while LinkedIn and niche platforms allow for more contextual positioning.

Stage 5: Market Delivery

Ensure the Job Description reaches the right audience through appropriate channels and messaging. Distribution strategy should reflect the type of role being hired.

A Job Description is not an isolated document. It is the final output of a structured alignment process between business needs, role design, candidate definition, and market communication.

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Writing High-Quality Job Descriptions

Once roles are clearly defined through the Talent Alignment Framework, the next step is translating that structure into a Job Description that is both accurate and effective in communicating with the market.

At this stage, the quality of writing becomes critical. Research shows that unclear or poorly written Job Descriptions are a key driver of misaligned applications and increased hiring inefficiencies (Society for Human Resource Management, 2025). In contrast, well-structured and specific Job Descriptions significantly improve candidate relevance and reduce time-to-hire.

To ensure consistency and effectiveness, organizations need a clear structural standard and a set of writing principles that guide how information is presented. The following section outlines these two components.

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Job Description Structure – Before vs After

Component	Key Principle	Before	After	Improvement Insight
Job Title	Signals role positioning and impacts searchability and candidate perception	Marketing Executive	Performance Marketing ExecutiveMarketing Executive (Digital Acquisition Focus)	Moves from a generic title to a function-specific role, improving clarity and early-stage candidate filtering
Job Purpose	Defines why the role exists in relation to business outcomes	Responsible for supporting marketing activities and campaigns	Drive qualified customer acquisition through performance marketing initiatives to support revenue growth	Shifts from activity-based description to business impact, improving alignment between hiring intent and candidate understanding
Responsibilities	Defines ownership and expected outputs, not tasks	Support marketing campaigns and coordinate with internal teams	Plan and execute performance marketing campaigns, optimize performance based on KPIs, and analyze data to improve ROI	Introduces accountability, measurable outcomes, and clearer performance expectations
Requirements	Focuses on signal-based criteria (experience, tools, capabilities) over generic traits	Good communication skills, able to work under pressure	Must-have: 1–2 years in performance marketing, hands-on with Meta Ads/Google Ads, ability to analyze dataNice-to-have: e-commerce experience, cross-channel exposure	Improves hiring precision by replacing subjective traits with role-relevant, measurable requirements
Compensation & Benefits	Communicates value proposition with clarity and credibility	Competitive salary and attractive benefits	Market-aligned salary, KPI-based bonus, structured learning and development support	Increases transparency and strengthens employer credibility
Team Context	Provides structural clarity on reporting lines and working environment	Dynamic and fast-paced working environment	Reports to Marketing Manager, works within a 6-person team including Content and Design functions	Replaces subjective description with concrete organizational context, reducing candidate uncertainty

Job Description Writing Principles

Principle	Definition	Risk if Missing	Example (Before → After)	Insight
Clarity	Ensures each statement is immediately understandable without interpretation or internal context.	Candidates interpret the role differently from hiring managers, leading to early misalignment.	**Unclear:** "Responsible for supporting marketing activities and driving engagement." **Clear:** "Responsible for planning and executing digital campaigns to increase website traffic and lead generation."	Removes ambiguity by clearly defining scope and expected outcomes.
Specificity	Ensures statements are concrete, measurable, and grounded in observable reality.	Attracts a broad but less relevant candidate pool due to lack of clear requirements.	**Non-specific:** "Good communication skills and ability to work in a dynamic environment." **Specific:** "Experience presenting campaign performance reports to cross-functional stakeholders and managing 3–5 concurrent digital campaigns per month."	Provides measurable context, enabling candidates to self-assess fit.
Accuracy	Ensures alignment between the Job Description and actual role responsibilities in practice.	Creates expectation gaps between hiring managers and new hires.	**Inaccurate:** "Responsible for managing full marketing strategy across all channels." **Accurate:** "Responsible for executing performance marketing campaigns and supporting strategy development under the guidance of the Marketing Manager."	Reflects realistic scope and avoids overstatement.
Relevance	Ensures all information directly contributes to understanding the role, expectations, or success criteria.	Irrelevant content weakens clarity and reduces candidate decision quality.	**Irrelevant:** "Fast-paced and dynamic working environment with strong company culture." **Relevant:** "Works within a 6-person marketing team, focusing on performance campaigns across Meta and Google Ads, reporting directly to the Marketing Manager."	Provides actionable context that supports informed decision-making.

EMPLOYER BRANDING

Employer Branding plays a critical role in shaping how candidates interpret and evaluate a Job Description. Even a well-written JD can lose effectiveness if it is not aligned with the organization's actual working experience and reputation in the market.

The primary objective at this stage is to ensure consistency between what is communicated and what candidates will experience once they join the organization. Misalignment between messaging and reality is one of the key drivers of early-stage candidate drop-off and long-term attrition.

A strong employer brand in the context of Job Descriptions is not built through promotional language, but through credibility, clarity, and consistency.





Key focus areas

- Ensuring that Job Description language reflects actual working conditions and team structure
- Avoiding over-promising in areas such as growth, culture, or career development
- Aligning tone and messaging with real employee experience

Recruitment Channels

Channel strategy should be defined by candidate profile:

- **Entry-level roles:** high-volume job boards and general platforms
- **Mid-level roles:** professional networks and targeted communities
- **Senior or niche roles:** referrals, industry-specific platforms, and direct sourcing

Effective channel strategy ensures that the right candidates not only see the Job Description but also engage with it in a meaningful way.

Content adaptation per channel

- The same Job Description should not be distributed identically across all platforms. Instead, messaging should be adapted based on channel behavior and candidate expectations:
- **Job boards:** concise, keyword-optimized, structured information
- **LinkedIn:** contextualized messaging with stronger employer branding elements
- **Niche communities:** more technical depth and role specificity

Before - After applying this approach to JD's

Component	Before	After	Improvement Insight
Job Title	Marketing Executive	Performance Marketing Executive (Digital Acquisition Focus)	From generic title → clear functional specialization and better candidate targeting
Job Purpose	Responsible for supporting marketing activities and campaigns	Drive qualified lead generation through performance marketing initiatives to support revenue growth	From task-based → outcome-based and business-aligned
Responsibilities	Support marketing campaigns and coordinate with internal teams	Plan and execute performance marketing campaigns, optimize conversion performance based on KPIs, and analyze campaign data to improve ROI	From vague tasks → ownership + measurable outcomes
Requirements	Good communication skills, able to work under pressure	1–2 years performance marketing experience, hands-on with Meta Ads/Google Ads, ability to analyze campaign data	From generic traits → role-relevant, measurable competencies
Compensation & Benefits	Competitive salary and attractive benefits	Market-aligned salary, performance-based bonus, structured learning & development support	From vague promise → structured value proposition
Team Context	Dynamic and fast-paced working environment	Reports to Marketing Manager, works in a 6-person team including Content and Design functions	From subjective description → clear organizational structure

Sample Job Description

HR & Administration Executive

JOB PURPOSE

This role exists to ensure smooth and compliant HR operations while maintaining an efficient administrative environment that supports daily business activities.

The position contributes to overall organizational effectiveness by maintaining accurate employee data, supporting core HR processes, and ensuring that office operations run consistently and without disruption

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The role focuses on three primary areas of contribution:

HR Operations

- Maintain and update employee records, contracts, and HR documentation to ensure accuracy and compliance.
- Support onboarding and offboarding processes, including documentation, coordination, and system updates.
- Assist in payroll preparation by consolidating attendance, leave, and employee data.

Recruitment Coordination

- Support recruitment activities through interview scheduling, candidate communication, and maintaining candidate records.
- Ensure a smooth coordination process between candidates and internal stakeholders.

Administration & Office Management

- Manage office supplies, vendor coordination, and administrative services.
- Ensure office facilities are operational and support internal meetings or company activities when required.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

Within the first 3–6 months, success in this role can be observed through:

- Accurate and well-maintained employee records
- Smooth execution of onboarding and offboarding processes
- Reliable HR data and reporting
- Stable and well-organized office operations

REQUIREMENTS

Must-have

- 1–2 years of experience in HR operations, HR administration, or administrative roles.
- Familiarity with employee documentation and data management.
- Strong attention to detail and organizational skills.

Nice-to-have

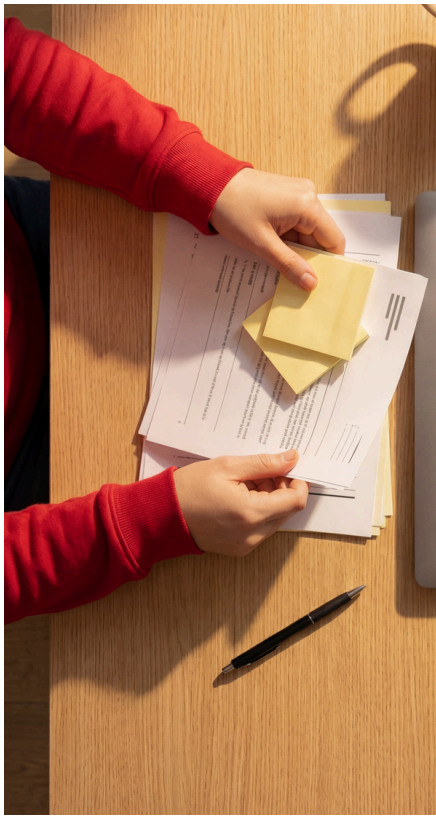
- Experience with HR systems or payroll coordination.
- Exposure to recruitment coordination processes.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

Compensation is aligned with market benchmarks based on experience and capability. The role includes standard statutory benefits and opportunities for development within broader HR functions.

TEAM CONTEXT

The role reports to the HR Manager and works closely with internal departments and external vendors. It operates within a structured environment where accuracy, coordination, and consistency are critical.



Conclusion

Job Descriptions are often treated as administrative outputs, but in practice, they play a critical role in shaping hiring outcomes. A poorly designed JD does not just reduce application quality, it signals a deeper misalignment between business needs, role definition, and market communication.

This ebook introduced a structured approach to address this challenge through three key elements: the Talent Alignment Framework to define roles from business needs, the JDQS to ensure content quality and consistency, and the Market Application layer to deliver the message effectively to the right audience.

When these elements are applied together, Job Descriptions move beyond static documents and become strategic tools that improve clarity, strengthen candidate trust, and increase hiring efficiency.

Effective hiring starts at the point of design. A well-structured Job Description aligns business needs, role expectations, and candidate understanding from the beginning, resulting not in more applications, but in more relevant and higher-quality candidates.

ABOUT US

Cadena is a leading provider of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) across Southeast Asia and a core member of the Humanica Group. Headquartered in Singapore with a strong operational hub in Vietnam, our team of approximately 120 experts in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi delivers specialized support and localized technology.

Our flagship platform, **Cadena HRM Series 5**, provides fully web-based, localized human resources, attendance and payroll solutions tailored to the intricate labor laws and business practices of Southeast Asia. We are enabling multinational companies and big local corporations to manage payroll compliance for multiple countries or entities through a single, unified login.



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