



# HOW TO WRITE A **SALES JOB DESCRIPTION**

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Writing a sales job description is one of the most important recruiting tasks sales hiring manager face. A sales job description is more than a simple advertising piece; the underlying goals are to attract qualified candidates and provide metrics for later performance reviews. A well written description narrows the candidate field while provoking the interest of candidates who have the requisite skills and qualifications for, not to mention interest in, your business.

### THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR MOST COMPANIES WRITING A SALES JOB DESCRIPTION IS:

- How can I attract the best sales people?
- What should I say about my company?
- How can I make my sales job description is better than my competitor's?

Since top salespeople avoid job descriptions that are too generic, a sales job description must outline the company, expectations, goals, and benefits for the successful candidate. Sales job descriptions also act as the baseline for measuring the successful candidate's performance. The description should be detailed enough to avoid disruptive misunderstandings about key responsibilities and provide protection to the employer in case of disagreement. The term "other duties as assigned" is the most common, and important, phrase included for this purpose.

These twin objectives are why a well written sales job description is so integral to an organization's recruiting efforts. The best sales jobs descriptions have four core components, and are created using a three step process: Identify your company's needs, write the four key areas of the description to attract and measure qualified candidates, and release the description using the channels best suited to your recruiting goals. This white paper will walk you through achieving these objectives, and set the stage for your company's recruiting success.

## IDENTIFY WHO YOU HAVE, **WHO YOU NEED TO ATTRACT**

## START WITH THE **DESCRIPTIONS FOR YOUR SALES TEAM**

YOUR SALES TEAM IS ONE OF THE BEST SOURCES FOR INFORMATION ON WHERE YOU ARE WITH YOUR RECRUITING EFFORTS AND WHERE YOU NEED TO BE.

To write a really well crafted sales job description, you first must determine what skills your sales team already has, which of these must be held by a successful candidate, and which new skills you need to attract. This involves researching the recruiting efforts of your organization and your competitors.

By looking at past job descriptions for your existing team, you can analyze how descriptions have changed over time and identify where your salespeople may be falling short. Areas where a significant number of salespeople are not meeting expectations indicate areas where the description could be strengthened, especially where you can include measurable skills or characteristics that were not highlighted in the past.

Setting up individual meetings with your existing salespeople, especially your top salespeople, to discuss how they perceive their key responsibilities and what skills they use on a regular basis can be incredibly helpful. You may walk away with deeper insights into your recruiting needs than any skills test could provide. This is especially true if you lack a sales recruitment strategy or if previous recruiting documentation is not available.





## LOOK AT THE COMPETITION'S DESCRIPTIONS

To adequately prepare a sales job description, hiring managers should take a deep look at how the competition recruits. Your competition is looking to attract the same highly qualified candidates you would like to hire, and knowing how you can improve your descriptions to make your offer more attractive to candidates is key to ensuring that top salespeople retain an interest in your firm.

- Use career sites and competitor websites to determine how others' job descriptions are written.
- Determine what skills and qualifications are different from what your firm is looking for. Could these be necessary or useful to your company?
- How can you make your description more appealing than theirs? This could be as simple as the layout or highlighting different skill sets than you've recruited for in the past.

## WRITING A SALES JOB DESCRIPTION

Sales people want to know three things from a sales job description: What are they expected to do; what qualifications, experience, and skills do they need to have; and what's in it for them? Your description must answer these questions, or your candidate pool will not include the most desirable candidates. This is because top candidates must not only be qualified for the position, but also interested in the position to apply.

## WHAT WILL THE SALES PERSON BE DOING?

THE SECTION THAT ANSWERS WHAT THE CANDIDATE WILL BE DOING FOR AN ORGANIZATION IS MOST COMMONLY HEADED AS “RESPONSIBILITIES”.

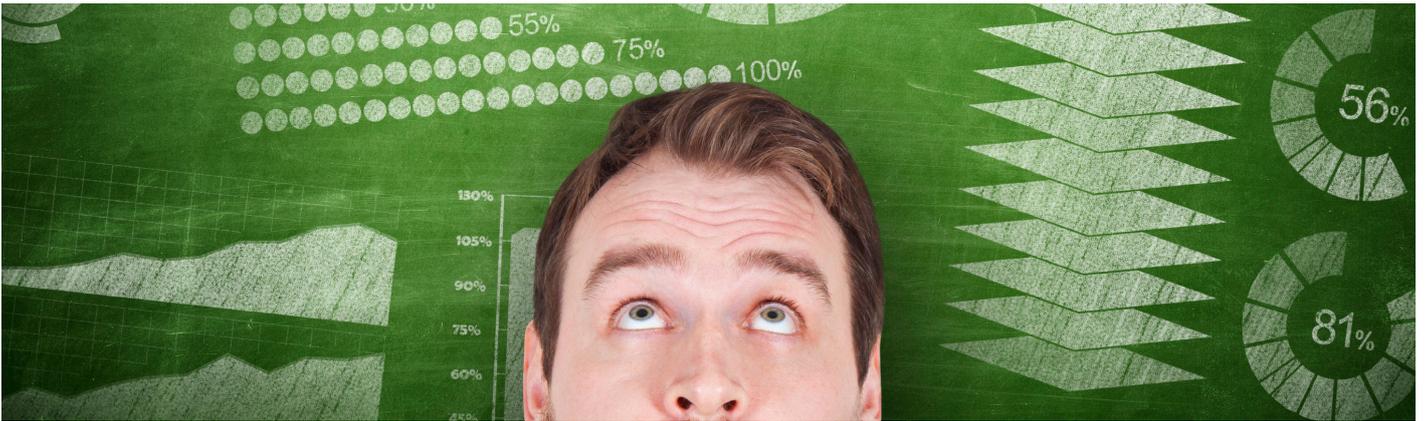
In order to increase candidate interest, all sales job descriptions start with an intriguing title, and most sales job descriptions start with an overview of the open position. Although these sections are the first that a candidate sees, it is usually easier for a hiring executive to write these sections after describing the specific activities and requirements of the position.

While selling is the primary responsibility in any sales position, further explaining supporting tasks can engage candidates. Discussing these tasks is another way to differentiate your organization’s open position, especially if these tasks point to increased responsibility. Possible examples include:

- Meets selling, prospecting quotas
- Develops client relationships
- Delivers accurate cost estimates
- Represents company at industry events
- Updates client portals through company software

## WHAT DOES THE SALES PERSON NEED TO HAVE?

The aptitudes a sales person must possess are traditionally divided into two sections, “Required Skills and Qualifications” and “Education and Experience”. These can be condensed into one section, i.e., “Requirements.” In a more fluid job market where desired traits might be negotiable, an increasing number of employers are creating an additional section for beneficial but not required attributes, such as “Desired Qualifications.”



## REQUIRED SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

In “Required Skills and Qualifications,” you should list all skills that the successful candidate must have. This makes the caliber of employee you are seeking evident, increasing your posting’s attractiveness to top candidates and encouraging those who are not qualified to self-select out of the process. Skills and qualifications you may want to list include:

- Proficient in Microsoft Office, other programs your sales people regularly use
- Strong track record in sales
- Understanding of marketing and sales concepts
- Presentation skills

## EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

The “Education and Experience” section adds another layer of qualifications. In this section, list all of the relevant education and experience that the successful candidate should have. If it would be a benefit for a candidate to have particular experience but not a requirement, list the benefit in “Desired Qualifications.” Education and experience requirements cover:

- Minimum degree levels and fields
- Certifications
- Years of experience
- Increase of responsibilities over career

## WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

The sections covering the benefits of your open position and your company can be the most important influence on a sales person's decision to apply with you. Top sales people already know what is expected for exemplary performance, need to get the sense that their work will be rewarded, and are unlikely to make a move if there is no clear advantage. The writing that goes into this portion of a job sales description can sway an undecided candidate.

## COMPENSATION

At this stage of the recruiting process, few companies release compensation ranges, much less an exact number. There are various reasons for not releasing a figure, but when a job description hints at the compensation potential, it does attract candidate interest. Without releasing figures, you can indicate whether compensation:

- Is competitive
- Is negotiable
- Includes periodic bonuses
- Can increase based on performance

## ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Do you offer expense paid trips, frequent commission payouts, or bonuses? In an "Additional Benefits" section, you can note anything related to compensation, insurance, or other benefits such as car, club, or home office allowances that would catch the attention of your ideal employee.

You can also note opportunities for continuing development and/or increasing responsibility. Do you intend to hire someone on the track to becoming a sales manager? There are few reasons not to indicate this potential in the job description; your organization will be more likely to find the right candidate if you do.

## COMPANY OVERVIEW

The “Company Overview” was once the introduction to a job description, but it is more frequently being included as a benefit. Since this is only an overview, you should be brief; between 100 and 250 words are usually sufficient. Avoid recapping highlights from what can be found on your website. Ask: What is your company’s reason for being? What does your company provide that others do not? Why are you looking to hire? The answers to these questions will lead to an intriguing company overview.

## BACK TO THE TOP

After writing the substance of the sales job description, you will be able to tailor the job description title and position overview. As a rule of thumb, organizations should not reuse a job description written by a competitor, or one that was used in the past that did not attract qualified candidates. Take into account the likely interests of your ideal candidate, because he or she will be reading these two components first.

## JOB DESCRIPTION TITLE

The job description title should be memorable and interesting. Think of it as a door to the job description; it will influence candidates to take the next steps. The title is typically 55 characters or less, and lists the actual title of the position followed by a short summary. When writing a sales job description, avoid terms like “unlimited potential,” which sales people have come to expect. Examples of good descriptions might be:

- Competitive Inside Sales Executive, Ontario
- Senior Sales Manager Needed for Growing IT Firm
- Entry-Level Sales Representative, Insurance/ Consulting

## JOB OVERVIEW

The “Job Overview” is often the hardest part of a sales job description to write. Your task is to give a comprehensive overview of the position without becoming repetitious with the information in other sections. The overview should include your organization’s name (or at least the industry), repeat the title of the open position, provide the general location, and give a broad overview of the position. You can also note opportunities for continuing development and/or increasing responsibility. Do you intend to hire someone on the track to becoming a sales manager? There are few reasons not to indicate this potential in the job description; your organization will be more likely to find the right candidate if you do.

The overview is a good place to include characteristics your organization is looking for that do not fit in other areas of the description; for example, general traits such as “self-motivated.” It is increasingly common to lead into the sales job description with terms like “If this sounds like you.”

Signal phrases are acceptable, but to receive the maximum attention from quality candidates, you should try to differentiate your description with less common lead-ins.



## RELEASING A SALES JOB DESCRIPTION

You could have the best sales job description in your industry and a competitive offer, but if the right candidates are not seeing it, the right candidates can't apply. Choosing the right avenues for releasing a sales job description is therefore critical to sourcing a well qualified and diverse candidate pool. Writing a full job description first to determine who your ideal sales candidates are will help you determine the right avenues to use. Options include:

- Traditional candidate-oriented career sites
- Industry specific print media
- Localized print media, such as newspapers
- Campus recruiting for recent graduates
- Job fairs for available job seekers

Once you have the full job description, you can also work on tailoring it to these different recruiting outlets. Different media may have different requirements for word count, formatting, and other aspects of your sales job description. However, by starting with a comprehensive description, you can avoid constant re-writes that are not only time consuming, but may unintentionally be sending different messages to candidates.



## RELEASING A SALES JOB DESCRIPTION

EVEN IF YOUR ORGANIZATION IS NOT HIRING RIGHT NOW, **IT'S A GOOD IDEA TO MAKE IT A PRIORITY** TO START A COMPREHENSIVE RECRUITING STRATEGY WITH A JOB DESCRIPTION IN HAND FOR THE TIME WHEN YOU ARE READY TO HIRE. **THE RIGHT CANDIDATE COULD KNOCK ON YOUR DOOR TOMORROW.**

One of the most important recruiting channels, and the one that can help your company navigate all others, is an experienced sales recruiting agency. A sales recruiting agency will assign a recruiter to your organization dedicated to fully understanding and fulfilling your staffing needs, both short and long term. An experienced sales recruiting agency:

- Knows which platforms and media are successful for recruiting in your industry
- Can give unbiased input on the job description and how it matches candidate expectations and your company's needs
- Can help you negotiate on advertising rates—and with the candidate

In short, a sales recruiting agency can walk you through every step of the recruiting process. This is not only a cost effective solution, but a solution that provides significant time savings and results in higher quality candidate pools. Your firm can also reach a greater number of qualified sales reps looking for new opportunities through a sales recruiting agency, since many of the best qualified sales reps use sales recruiters exclusively to find new positions.

With the economy on the rebound, more top sales candidates are looking to make career changes with better compensation, benefits, and advancement packages. You have an opportunity to recruit the best of the best for your firm, as long as your sales job description is up to the task.

## SALES RECRUITERS HELPING COMPANIES GROW REVENUE

**SalesForce Search** is a sales recruiting company which specializes in the recruitment and placement of sales professionals. We work in nearly every industry sector from financial services to pharmaceuticals and believe our Hiring Process can help you find the right sales person for your organization. Sales is the most critical component of every organization and hiring great salespeople is challenging. We help companies save time and money by finding the right sales person quickly and ensuring your organization hits their sales targets.

To start your search for your  
next great sales professional today,



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