

"Your staff are your most valuable resource..." Whether your company employs two people or two hundred, this key item should be at the top of every manager's priority list. Yet, keeping up to date with changing employment legislation - especially with added European Community Directives - becomes more complex and costly every day. In these Fact Sheets, we have tried to provide basic guidelines and ideas to help you adapt or improve your personnel procedures. Please remember the advice given is general and not intended to be legally definitive. The Fact Sheets on various employment and human resource matters can be accessed at www.aslrecruitment.co.uk/useful-resources

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

In its simplest form a job description would seem an ideal mechanism to demonstrate that management has thought through the job function in some detail and the employer and employee have an agreed written statement of what the job function entails. However, employers need to decide whether the job description is to form part of the interview process and/or to become part of the Contract of Employment. Employers need to be wary of producing excessively detailed or out of date descriptions that in a worst case scenario could give rise to a response of "...it's not my job because it's not in my job description...". On the other hand a wide job description may mean an employee is not redundant even if the job they usually do is redundant. Some more positive aspects of job descriptions may be:

- Clarification for the employee of exactly what the job entails.
- To assist in identifying additional skill training.
- To avoid discrimination in recruitment.
- To encourage more accurate recruitment.
- To assist in the appraisal/evaluation of the employee against specific criteria.
- To assist in employer/employee communication by both parties participating in a periodic review of the job description.

Employers may also consider the prospect of inviting an established employee to prepare the job description which can then be amended by agreement. This process can encourage a greater commitment and understanding from the employee.

Helpful Hints

1. Decide whether the job description is to form part of the contractual terms and if so whether it should be included with the application form for the job.
2. Attempt to use a standard format which can be amended for different functions.
3. Always ensure that you reserve the right to vary the duties and the job description and consider including mobility and flexibility if appropriate.
4. Resist the temptation to list a vast range of duties. Set out concise headings with a brief, realistic and clear description so that all parties can readily identify the main duties.
5. Management should regularly review job descriptions to match the requirements of the business.
6. Ensure that job descriptions are updated and discussed with the relevant employees, ideally as part of a periodic appraisal/evaluation. Remember that a variation in a job description must be agreed by the employee.
7. Only include qualifications which are a genuine requirement for the post.