IS IT TIME TO UPDATE YOUR JOB DESCRIPTIONS?

Evan MacClellan – Risk Control Consultant

Almost every organization has a mission, culture and goals. In the public sector, most often these include serving citizens at the highest professional level possible.

Hiring outstanding employees starts with finding and attracting great talent, then keeping it. Finding that great talent hinges on effectively communicating your entity's mission, culture and goals within well-prepared job descriptions.

The nuts and bolts of writing job descriptions haven't changed much over the years. They still need to have the basics: job title, description of duties, skills and competencies, required certifications and qualifications, physical requirements, hazards and environmental exposures, minimum educational requirements, etc.

Why not include the mission, culture and goals of your entity? Almost every position listed on internet-based job search sites starts out with a description of the company, its mission, culture and goals. Be proud of them and promote them, especially in your online hiring practices.

Updating your entity's job descriptions should be done every few years to keep up with changes in job duties and hours, changes in tools and equipment used, changes in organizational structure and changes in technology, which are constant.

Changes in technology happen at warp speed. Long gone are the days of having to log into a computer work station "at the office" to read and respond to emails or work on a project. Most of that can be done with a smartphone, in one's hand, outside of the office. So, if an employee is expected to get work done via smartphone or laptop from home or some other location, i.e. telecommuting, then that aspect of the job should be updated in the job description. Many companies are allowing their employees to work from home or work an alternative schedule.

Many employees' job duties morph over time. While you may be covered with the phrase, "other duties as assigned," if those "other duties" have become a fairly routine part of an employee's job, then it's time to consider putting those into the job description.

Writing and updating job descriptions doesn't have to be overwhelming. The internet is a comprehensive resource that has hundreds, if not thousands, of articles that provide guidelines on writing job descriptions. The following are a few websites with articles that are worth the read:

workable.com Writing Effective Job Descriptions: A Style Guide

recruitloop.com 5 Simple Steps to Writing a Concise Job Description

mashable.com HOW TO: Write A Standout Job Description