

Questions to consider when writing a church job description

Employees go to work with the intention of doing a good job, and knowing the specifics of their job helps them do just that. Ministries create systems to help manage employees, and the job description is part of that system. Employees must know what is expected of them and who to go to with questions or concerns. Job descriptions are essential tools that can help guide employee performance and dictate daily activities. Churches have limited resources, so it is important to only pay for salaries that support the overall strategy for achieving the mission. When creating a job description, a few questions should be answered to ensure that the job you are paying for truly supports the church's mission.

1. What is it that we are trying to accomplish? So, in other words, what is the purpose of having this position?
2. Why are we trying to accomplish this?
3. What are the specific job responsibilities?
4. Who is the best person to perform these duties?
5. Who is the best person to supervise this function?
6. What strategic objectives do these duties support?
7. How do these tasks get us closer to achieving our mission?

Answering these questions helps ensure the job is intentional and supports the organization's overall strategy.

Let's practice!

Let's go through an example. Let's say your church experiences some growth and managing your volunteers has become a function that you feel now needs a paid employee. You have met with the finance committee and have secured funding for this position, so you are cleared to hire. Your church has a core value of excellence and customer focus, and one of your strategies is to develop a strong volunteer base to help fulfill the mission. Considering this scenario, let's go through these seven questions and try to answer them.

1. What are we trying to accomplish?

We are trying to create an environment that provides processes and systems to support our volunteers and make them feel valued for their contributions.

2. Why are we trying to accomplish this?

We know the church cannot function without volunteers and recognize the importance of investing in our volunteer workforce.

3. Who is the best person to perform these duties?

Identify the necessary job skills for the position. This step will help pinpoint the best candidate for the position. For example, the job candidate should have:

- a servant's heart
- strong organizational and people skills
- experience in a volunteer role
- understand the mission and values of the organization
- technical skills should include strong computer skills
- proficient knowledge of Microsoft Office
- able to learn volunteer management software

4. Who is the best person to supervise this function?

Every church is structured differently, so determine the best person to manage this position.

Since volunteers fall under the responsibility of the (insert position title), this person should report to the (insert title). For instance, the Volunteer Coordinator might fall under the Business Administrator or the Executive Pastor.

5. What are the job responsibilities?

To answer this question, get a few people in the room who understand the need for this position and make a list of responsibilities that align with strategy.

- Create a process to recruit, schedule, and train new volunteers.
- Develop a volunteer application process.
- Create a volunteer training program.
- Develop a volunteer reward and recognition program.
- Develop a volunteer feedback process.
- Develop a volunteer review process.
- Create a volunteer file management system.

6. What strategic objectives do these duties support?

This position supports developing a strong volunteer base to support the mission.

7. How do these tasks get us closer to achieving our mission?

It requires many volunteers to achieve the mission, and this position will help manage those necessary volunteers.

Make job descriptions relevant

Managers must constantly review job descriptions to keep them relevant for the employee's role.

Take the following proactive steps to ensure that employees spend their time on those things that contribute to fulfilling the mission.

Update job descriptions annually

Job descriptions must stay current to ensure time spent doing the job contributes to the mission. To do this, review and update job descriptions at least annually. For instance, a great time to update a job description is during the annual performance appraisal process.

This update results from having a conversation between the manager and the employee about job responsibilities and how they support changing strategies. What may have been important a year ago may no longer be necessary for achieving the mission today.

Employees appreciate it when outdated tasks are removed from their job description – particularly when new tasks are added to support a changing strategy.

Observe what employees do every day

It's the manager's responsibility to know what employees do every day and ensure that what they spend their time on reflects their written job descriptions. I'm always amazed when I ask managers what their employees do every day to hear the response, "I don't really know." This response is often out of frustration. A good starting point to rectify this situation is asking employees to list everything they do.

This exercise will often shed some light on those things that rob employees of valuable time. Learn what those time wasters are and eliminate them.

Incorporate employee goals into the job description

Churches should have a mission strategy to steer day-to-day operations. You implement strategy with organizational and departmental goals.

Divide departmental goals among employees to spread the responsibilities for achieving goals and incorporate those responsibilities into daily job tasks.

Be good stewards of ministry resources

Churches are responsible for managing the resources that God has provided them – people, time, and money.

Taking these steps can ensure that resources are spent on salaries and that what employees spend their time doing legitimately contributes to fulfilling the church's mission!

When was the last time you updated your job descriptions?