

## WHY JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Would you accept a job offer without knowing your duties, your hours, who you report to or how your work would benefit the company? It's hard to imagine that anyone would. But look at a typical 'volunteer needed' announcement at your church. How much information does it give prospective volunteers? Probably not much. What if people ask for more details, will they feel pressured to sign up, even if all they want is some basic information?

A detailed job description shows value to the volunteer in that it provides many answers that will allow them to discern their passion for a role and determine if they have the necessary gifts and skills as well as time required, without having to search for information.

A job description is also a tool that serves many other purposes:

1. Gives clarity of what the church expects of a volunteer
2. Knowing the purpose and how the position fits into the ministry of the church is motivating for volunteers – how will they make a difference in this role?
3. It's a tool for inviting new volunteers to get involved in a ministry
4. It's a guide for interviewing and placing the right person in a position
5. Volunteers can see specifically what they've been asked to do, so they'll feel comfortable and confident in their role.
6. Expectations and accountability are laid out, reducing the likelihood of problems
7. Encourages communication, promoting honesty and openness
8. Provides a framework for conversation when performance issues occur
9. Getting the right person in the right position will increase the longevity of a volunteer's commitment
10. Job descriptions reinforce the health and heart of your church and tell the story of how your congregation serves Jesus Christ.

### SO WHAT IS A JOB DESCRIPTION?

A written job description is an organized summary of the duties, tasks, responsibilities, accountability, etc. involved in a ministry position. There needs to be clarity of any and all expectations for the volunteers, as they are more likely to leave when there is confusion over responsibilities.

A job description should include the following elements:

- Name of the position (ie: Pastoral Elder, Sr. High Youth Group Leader, etc.)
- Goal of the position. What is its purpose and how does it relate to the overall vision of the church?
- Who is the volunteer responsible to?
- Description of the ministry role and its responsibilities (including meetings)
- Time required to do the ministry role; how often it is done; length of commitment
- Training provided to build capacity of the volunteers
- Qualifications and special skills needed to do the ministry role
- Benefits participants receive when doing the ministry role

*Details for each of these elements can be found on the [Ministry Job Description template](#).*

Job descriptions should be reviewed annually to determine if any changes might be necessary. It would be helpful to include the date on the bottom of the page to keep track of the most current copy. People don't trust job descriptions if they're frequently found to be outdated.

### **CREATING JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

If there are no job descriptions written for any of the volunteer positions in your church, then writing one for each role can seem very daunting. There are a few ways you could accomplish this task without it "taking over your life" for a number of months.

One way is to begin with the writing of a job description for someone to take on this specific task. Are there people in your church who have experience in Human Resources or similar administrative positions, and have the passion and organizational skills for this kind of work? Then develop your first job description to engage volunteers to take on this task.

Another way is to ask the team leaders of each ministry program to write the job description for their own role and for those who serve with them. What better person to indicate the various tasks of a ministry than the person who is currently engaged in that role. Make sure to give your leaders notification that you will be asking this of them, give them a deadline date and follow up when necessary.

Are people hesitant because they don't have good writing skills? Is it possible then that the task be done through some kind of interview process, through a series of questions and answers with someone else putting the description together? When completed, it can be shared with the ministry leader to confirm that it's accurate.

Lastly, you may want to check with other churches to see what kind of job descriptions they have written for similar positions.

### **HOW TO USE JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

Once you've created your beautiful job descriptions it will only benefit your church if they are actually put to use. You will want to start by formatting all of them into a similar looking document. Place your church's name and logo at the top of the page (and date of last update on the bottom) and make it look as official as possible.

How will you now make these documents available? Will they be printed and made available at an information center so people know where to access them? Does your church have a website where members could have electronic access? How about providing all your ministry leaders with a few copies, so they can share them as they invite new volunteers to join their ministry programs? Keep in mind though that they need to be updated on a regular basis, and that both hard and electronic copies are revised. Another idea is to file all the descriptions in one place, hard copies in a binder and electronic copies in a computer file and cross compare them when necessary.

Finally, a good practice is to mention job descriptions whenever there is talk of serving, and making that a church-wide practice. Keep them in the forefront of people and in time it will become a standard practice to refer to them. Make sure too to always have copies available so people don't have to look elsewhere and become discouraged or lose their motivation.