

## Personal View: Let's rethink job descriptions



George Sample

"Candidate must have a four-year degree in whatever. Candidate's degree must come from a school that puts them in debt to the tune of five or six figures. Candidate must have two years of experience for the entry level version of this position (good luck, new graduates).

Candidate must have 10 years of experience for the professional level of the position (those with eight years of proven results need not apply). Candidate must be flexible, adaptable, innovative, hostile, mobile and agile."

How did we arrive here with job descriptions? To explore, let's walk through the genesis of a job description.

A business leader identifies that they need a person to achieve some part of the organization's strategic plan. The business leader works with human resources to outline the key responsibilities of the role, based on the outcomes the business leader desires the role to produce. They then work together to figure out what knowledge, skills and abilities a person would need to successfully execute the key responsibilities of the role.

The next part of this process is where it gets dicey. We attempt to match up each skill, ability or area of knowledge with how a person would acquire it. This part is difficult, because there are so many ways to gain the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to do a job well. Most organizations just default to "X" level college degree with "X" years of experience as a proxy for the minimum needed to the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities.

Due to this process, job descriptions often end up as an arbitrary hurdle for current employees. I have lost track of how many current employees are the perfect fit for a role but don't have the required degree. In many cases, they're

already doing the work! However, the title (and the corresponding pay raise) is unavailable to them due to the degree requirement.

Job qualifications are often an arbitrary hurdle for external candidates. If we're serious about hiring veterans, doing reentry programs, allowing stay-at-home parents to return to the workplace, and hiring seniors (age discrimination is super real), we need to rethink our reliance on job qualifications and actually leverage the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for each role as our decision-making criteria.

Job qualification requirements serve as a filter. Nothing more, nothing less. It is very true that if you don't have job qualification requirements on your posting, everyone and their cousin will apply for your position.

Removing job qualifications increases the work required for the hiring process, but the investment is worth the reward. The hiring process is the most determinative process for your company's success (or lack thereof). Shouldn't we invest the resources needed to properly evaluate the talent pool, and not arbitrarily shut out so much talent? When we shut the door on everyone who does not have a narrow scope of credentials, we shut the door on a wide array of talented people who would be able to do the job in question exceptionally well.

Look at the job descriptions for the positions in your area. If it is possible, and likely probable, for people to gain the knowledge, skill and ability to do the job without the "required qualifications" listed in the job description, it's time for you to have a discussion with your human resources department about removing those requirements.

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