



# The bottom line on why job descriptions matter

BY SHANNON PESTUN

**TODAY'S EMPLOYEES MUST BE NIMBLE ENOUGH** to respond to the ever-changing workplace. If you ask, professionals employed in the oil patch say they continually see changes in their day-to-day responsibilities.

According to Catherine Brownlee, president of Prominent Personnel, job description changes are increasingly prevalent in today's employment market. "Many employees find that they are not doing what they were hired to do, even one year after being hired," she says.

Take heed: Have you reviewed your job description lately? Whether you work in the field or in an office, a job description is a crucial document. Perhaps the most widely accepted reason this document matters so much is because a job description often functions as a benchmark used to define and measure employee performance.

Job descriptions serve as measurement tools because they help employers and employees know when an individual has met or exceeded the job requirements. In addition, they clarify roles and responsibilities and ultimately give employees a sense of ownership and accountability.

There's more. Not only do job descriptions act as a tool to measure performance, but they also help to limit the potential for employee-employer disputes. "A job description within the employment contract is a practical way to ensure that expectations of employee performance are understood by both parties," says James M. Kalyta, a lawyer at Miller Thomson LLP. When employers make expectations explicit, they reduce the likelihood of performance-related disputes with employees.

Whether you are a new hire or have been working for the same company for years, ask your manager for an up-to-date

job description. Ensure the terms of your position are fair and accurate. That means you have a clear definition of all duties and requirements outlined in your position description.

After all, come review time, that job description will have a major impact on your bottom line. ●

## ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE JOB DESCRIPTION

- Position and title
- Summary of job purpose
- Required job functions
- Clear reporting structure
- Physical demands of the positions
- The necessary skills required to perform the job functions

## WHY JOB DESCRIPTIONS MATTER

- Outlines employers' expectations for employees
- Provides a measure to evaluating job performance
- Highlights areas for further training and development
- Provides foundation for pay and promotions
- Guideline for discipline issues

Approximately 95 per cent of medium- and large-sized organizations use job descriptions to analyze and determine a job's value within the company.

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