

# THE HR CONNECTION

## Church, Engle & Associates

Recruitment Specialists & Human Resource Services

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*"April Snows"  
The Round Church,  
Richmond, Vermont*

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**Quote of the Day:**  
"April is a promise that  
May is bound to keep."  
~Hal Borland

## Performance-Based Job Descriptions

Job Descriptions - the Human Resource staple that is pulled out and dusted off whenever a position becomes vacant. We use them to describe the duties of a vacant position when creating a job posting, writing an ad, or interviewing a candidate. Employees are expected to carry out the functions listed in their job descriptions and are evaluated on how well they perform in their role based on those descriptions, and yet, many employees have not seen their job description in years, if at all.

Many of our clients are concerned about this disconnect between job descriptions and performance evaluations. They are concerned that their job descriptions do not accurately or completely reflect the responsibilities of the positions and have no tie-in to their organization's mission, goals, outcomes or standards of behavior and the evaluation of employees.

They ask us if there is a better way to tie these elements of performance and the performance evaluation to the job description. We think there is. A performance-based job description/evaluation provides that link by creating a document that includes the position accountabilities, a detailed list of duties, important organizational elements and standards, a description of the reporting and working relationships, and a breakdown of the physical demands of the position. In this format, the description serves as the foundation for the performance review and as a goal setting document. Therefore, both managers and employees have a vested interest in keeping the job description accurate and up-to-date and it becomes truly a working document.

The performance-based job description should define performance expectations and specify what must be accomplished to achieve a successful evaluation. How can employees do their job effectively without this guidance? Job descriptions that are up-to-date and well defined generate more accountability. They define the scope of work, what's expected of the employee, and what skills and competencies are required. A well written job description is a road map that indicates where an employee needs to go now, how to get there, and where s/he should head in the future.

Performance-based job descriptions are a natural fit as the basis for performance evaluations. Why is it so important to relate position descriptions to performance? As we said, when employees are first interviewed or hired, the job description is offered as an explanation of what is expected. After that, the employee usually never sees the job description again. Correctly written, the performance-based job description becomes the evaluation tool, allowing a review of performance expectations based on the defined accountabilities and duties of a position. Performance evaluations are a key component in developing a strategy for improved performance and goal setting. If you hire and then don't train, or if you see during a review that the employee is not meeting the expectations and not fulfilling the goals, then it becomes at least as much your responsibility as the employee's to correct these problems. And where there are shortfalls, a plan for accomplishment can be developed. Any employee shortcomings identified during the performance evaluation will become part of a mutual plan for accomplishment. (continued)

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*Crocus  
Middlebury, VT*

#### Fast Facts:

#### All H-1B Immigration Visas Gone on First Day.

On the first day that applications were accepted, the number of petitions from companies applying for visas for highly skilled immigrants exceeded the government cap by nearly 100,000. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced Tuesday, April 3, 2007.

USCIS says that it received 150,000 applications for 65,000 H-1B visa slots on Monday, April 2, when the process officially began. In several weeks, the agency will dole out visas using a computer lottery to randomly select companies that filed petitions by April 3.

The H-1B cap was hit in record time. Two years ago it occurred in August, and last year the limit was reached in May.

#### Continued from page 1- **Performance-Based Job Descriptions**

As we all know, updating job descriptions can be a time consuming and frustrating task. When you are ready to tackle implementing performance-based job descriptions, it will be a big job that will require an organizational commitment. However, the benefit of having current and accurate job descriptions will exceed the effort expended. Your employee's job description will become a more useful document and can include the following elements: Position Summary, Reporting Relationship, Authority to Act, Working Relationships/Contacts, Accountabilities and Tasks and Staffing and Budget responsibilities. Additionally you will want Position Requirements to include: Education, Experience, Knowledge, Skills, and Career Advancement within field possibilities, Physical Demands/Working Conditions, and Additional Information.

With all this information in a Performance-Based Job Description, you will be rewarded with the advantages of a well defined and updated document that is useful for job evaluations, an opportunity to have managers and employees work together to develop the descriptions with employee buy-in into the system, a document in which all players have a vested interest, a valuable recruitment, screening, and selection tool, and a direct connection between the job description and the evaluation process which allows you to directly link performance to your organizations standards and mission.

#### **Employee Negativity**

Employee negativity can cause managers hours of frustration and sleepless nights trying to figure out how to deal with the situation. It causes morale and teamwork problems and in the end, a negative impact on productivity. A study by international consultant Towers Perrin and behavioral researchers Gang & Gang, surveyed a randomly selected group of 1,100 employees and 300 senior Human Resources executives working for mid-sized and large-sized companies in the United States and Canada. Participants were asked to describe their feelings about their current work experience. They identified five significant reasons for workplace negativity.

- Excessive workload.
- Concerns about the management's ability to lead.
- Concerns about the future-especially about job and retirement security.
- A lack of challenge/boredom on the job.
- The lack of recognition and pay for the effort and contribution employees provide.

While you may not be able to solve all these problems in your workplace you may be able to eliminate some and decrease the negativity in your workplace.

- Keep up on the workload and offer assistance as possible; employees love it when a manager pitches in to assist them when they are working hard.
- Provide lots of recognition. While managers think they are providing lots of recognition, usually they are not. Thank employees for their work on a regular basis.
- Seek input on how to make their work better and let them know what you can and can not do. Talk to everyone and listen closely for valid concerns and ask for solutions to those concerns.
- After seeking input and making changes don't be afraid to counsel those who continue to display negative behavior.

