



— From the Pen of —
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Writing the Job Description

At the beginning of your job description you need a job title. The job title should be as descriptive as possible of the work that is performed. Where are you involved with precedent and tradition and cannot make changes, use whatever terms the situation dictates. The title should describe as nearly as possible the work that is being filled or accomplished by this position. Then, you need the name of the individual involved. There are only two places where the specific individual is brought into play—at the top of the sheet and in the last point, training and development.

The other sections of this job description could apply to any individual. Next, write the date. This is important because after twelve months have elapsed, the job description is out of date! There are very few job descriptions that can go on for more than a year without alterations, because the environment changes, the capacities of the individual change, and the needs of the office change. The person managing has to keep this constantly in review. In more intricate, complex situations you may want to indicate the department or the division. For example, a person may be in the evangelism department, the church-planting department, or the radio department of a mission, or may be in the laboratory department of a hospital. This simply further breaks down and pinpoints where this person fits in the organization.

The job description consists of five parts:

- 1. The job summary.** The most difficult section to write, the job summary reflects the position on the organizational chart. The job summary is built into that total pyramid. There should be a short-range and long-range pyramid. The job summary places a person into the pyramid where he or she belongs and is aimed at accomplishing the goal of the total organization. The job summary puts in words the end result this position exists to accomplish. When you ask people for whom you are responsible to begin working on their own job descriptions, you may find that they do not know why they are there. This has to do with purpose, with objectives, with goals, with targets. You may discover that you have positions that exist without valid reason. If you take this matter seriously, you will find that there are people on the payroll involved in the activities that have no definitive, specific purpose. The job summary must be measurable, definitive and specific.

- 2. The job duties.** These are the activities necessary for the accomplishment of the above-mentioned end result. This is the easiest to write, particularly if persons just write down what they presently are doing. But that is not writing a job description. You have merely given a person a piece of paper to justify the continuation of his or her activities, and that may be bad. Do not tackle *duties* until you have settled the end result.

Once the end result is identified, list the activities that are necessary for the accomplishment of it. Here you begin to draw some very distinct lines between the various positions that exist in your organization and begin to eliminate overlap. This can help the function of an organization where a leader, while retaining an extremely sensitive team-consciousness and concept, recognizes "I'm praying for this person over here who is doing so and so, but that is his job and this is mine." The leader is concerned and is involved, available to help if needed. But that particular task belongs to someone else and the leader does not interfere. The manager is not going to make another person's decision. The manager has his or her own work to do.

- 3. Organizational relationships.** Here we are back to the organizational chart. Organizational relationships extend in four directions: up, down, and sideways in both directions. This should show a subordinate the exact relationship to a superior, the exact relationship to his or her subordinate, and the exact relationship to the people on either side. This works in a church where a Sunday school department leader realizes "I take my orders with respect to the operation of this Sunday school from So and So. I am responsible to oversee these people. I know there is another department functioning over here and this person has the same kind of authority and responsibility that I have." You do not have to pay a person a salary to do this. It works beautifully in a voluntary situation like a Sunday school or in a more complex situation like General Motors. The two key words are *to* and *for*. *Responsible to* shows superiors, *responsible for* designates subordinates.

It is important to note the difference between *staff* and *line* relationships. A staff relationship means service, information, consultation, and advice. This person or committee has no authority, does not issue any orders. In the chart, the broken line indicates a staff relationship over against a line relationship. In other words, this person or group serves in an advisory capacity rather than in an authoritative and decision-making role.

- 4. Qualifications.** This is what the person should ideally be and know in order to most effectively accomplish the job summary. If you omit the individual's name then you can write job descriptions for functions you eventually want accomplished in your organization, for which you neither have personnel nor money now. This helps tremendously. It is not a matter of who is available; it is a

matter of “here is what we want done. Where is the person that can best do it?” that makes a difference in filling positions in your church. Here is what we are trying to accomplish and what needs to be done in this position. Here are the qualifications. Where is this individual? Set your standard high but keep it realistic.

At this point specify the job description under the heading of Training and Development.

- 5. Training and development.** A person does not ever measure up fully to the qualifications the job requires. He or she needs self-development to better qualify. We are speaking here about skills and abilities, about learning to do better the job we have been called by God to do. That is self-development. If the key to training and development is that it must be specific, then training and development must project itself for no more than twelve months.

This person does not quite measure up. No one does. If someone does, revise your qualifications and get that person up higher. What training and development can we give to this individual to better qualify him or her? You do not unilaterally determine this and hand it to that person on a slip of paper as you go past one morning. This is a mutually agreed thing. Individuals will be harder on themselves than you would be if you let them be. Do not think of training and development as just going to school. Learning does occur without going to a university. There are other places to develop your skills, for example, one of our men needed development in a certain area. We did some research and found, as far as we were able to determine, the one man in America that knew more about this subject than any other man. We wrote to him and said, “If we send our man out, can he sit at your elbow for a couple of weeks and just watch what you do?” That is training and development.

Training and development says, “Mr. A is going to California. He is going to be an understudy with Mr. B from October 1 to October 15. It will cost us ‘X’ number of dollars.” That is training and development. It may include formal situations. Training and development does not necessarily mean going back to a formal study situation. That is not the kind of training and development most of us need. Sometimes we may need a Dale Carnegie course, or a rapid-reading course, or a course in public relations, or a course in some skill that relates to the type of work that we are doing. This training and development is specific. It is dated. It is to compensate for the person’s inadequacies as they are spelled out in the list of qualifications. I know this is work, but it will transform any operation you are in—if you will do it.