

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Delineating Responsibilities: Crafting a Clear Job Description

When expectations are unclear, tensions between co-workers fester; “the grapevine” becomes the main source of workplace information and poor communication reigns supreme. This kind of situation can have even the most committed employees feeling lackluster about work and can chip away at your emotional well-being.

Great communication, on the other hand, can have amazing results. It can boost the health of your relationships and lift your spirit and outlook by helping you to:

- Get along better with management and senior staff
- Work more cohesively with colleagues
- Clarify individual and team goals and expectations
- Enhance your enjoyment of work and your career prospects

Clarifying Responsibilities

Steering clear of mix-ups regarding responsibilities begins with a good job description. Many job descriptions are outdated at best, and at worst, non-existent. In some instances, a special project can call for job descriptions specific to the tasks at hand.

Developing a Job Description

- Make clear the difference between essential functions and additional responsibilities
- When identifying job duties and responsibilities, focus on the function of the job, rather than the means used to achieve that function
- Use specific action verbs, such as "sorts mail" or "distributes mail", rather than "handles mail"
- Make sure all aspects of job responsibilities are covered, including:
    - Regular day-to-day functions as well as duties that occur at irregular intervals
    - Amount of human interaction required (in teaching, counselling, coaching, training, etc.)
    - Responsibility for maintaining records
    - Degree of accountability for human and material resources
    - Office machines or equipment that must be operated
    - Physical demands, emotional demands, and other unusual job-related demands

Once the job description has been developed, distribute copies to the jobholder, his or her supervisor, human resources staff and key co-workers, as necessary.

A well-outlined job description is an important tool for clarifying responsibilities. Time spent documenting the scope and breadth of the job in advance will pay valuable dividends toward the success of the person in the position and the organization as a whole.

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