

BASEBALL & BUSINESS

A job description serves many important functions. It lets employees know what their roles and responsibilities and what their expectations are within the organization. When done effectively it ties the employee's general tasks, responsibilities, organizational relationships and competencies together. It also serves as a guide for the company to obtain the necessary and desired skills when hiring new employees. Detailed and effective job descriptions can make or break your business. Is this an overstatement? Think of it this way:

It is a beautiful spring day and the team is ready to play baseball. Someone goes into the dugout and mixes up the player's gloves. The players are the best that money can buy, but the gloves are randomly handed out and the players have to play their position based on the glove they receive. You may have the right-fielder pitching, first base in the outfield and the pitcher at second. How will the game go?

With professional athletes, chances are the ball will still get from the mound to the catcher. The ball will be hit and thrown however mistakes will be made. Less effective pitching will mean more walks, giving up more hits and runs. Randomly selected defensive positioning will increase the number of throwing errors and passed balls. In the short term, the players can function, but efficiency and effectiveness is seriously compromised.

How successful will this team be in the long run? As the year goes along and more games are played, the team might seem competitive, even winning occasionally when the players eventually improve and their success grows in their assigned positions simply through practice and their professionalism as athletes. However the players will never reach their full potential because they are not playing the position they are most skilled at and have spent thousands of hours training for. Over time their frustration will grow and they will become disenfranchised as they are not achieving their true potential.

If people on your business team are not in the "right" position, like the baseball team your business will still run, talented people will still function. But your company will never reach its full potential. Your star employees will still succeed and generate revenue. Just like the baseball team, skilled batters still bat and produce runs regardless of the positions they play on the field. However the engagement level of your employees will plummet while frustration levels sky rocket and ultimately this will result in your company losing money when employee frustration turns to apathy.

What areas of your business will be impacted first? More than likely the cost will be felt the greatest in administration and operations, the areas of your business that control costs and ultimately influence profits. Just like the baseball team, the greatest cost will be in preventing the other team from scoring. Your team will hit and run but having people function in the wrong job will affect the defense the most; the cost of running the business such as accounts payable, accounts receivable and the ability to fend off the competition. Administrative functions will also suffer if employees are sent

to work without clear expectations and knowledge of their job or the expertise to match it. The cost of running the business will increase, there will be more down time, less efficiency, more waste.

How would you know if this is affecting you? You are likely experiencing or have experienced some of the following frustrations:

- Declining profits or no profits
- Rising costs
- Increased staff turnover, team members are quitting and you are unsuccessful at retaining newly hired employees long term
- Lost sales and poor customer service

As you send your employees to work without knowledge of their job expectations and the expertise to match it, your business will find it extremely difficult to be reasonably profitable, let alone excel and be in the top 10% of your industry and to stand out against the competition. There will be no job satisfaction and no vision for the future with everyone is bogged down, struggling with their job function.

What can you do about it? There are four things you can do about it:

- 1) Identify the key roles in your organization. On a baseball team this is likely the pitcher, the catcher and maybe a middle infielder, such as the short stop or second basemen. Who is it in your organization? More than likely the three most important roles are the people in charge of Sales, Operations and Accounting.
- 2) Define those roles and expectations, job descriptions.
- 3) Assess your team and determine if you have the best people filling the key roles. If you don't have the best people on your team in the most important jobs, start training or consider hiring the talent and skill you require.
- 4) Empower the people in these positions to excel at their jobs and hire the best possible people you can find to fill them. Help them understand their jobs and quantify what success for them in your organization means.

Back to the baseball analogy. What if the pitcher gets the right glove and begins to play the correct position? The other eight players on the field are still in the wrong positions, but at least now you have a pitcher on the mound. This team would function as well, probably better than the first team. But the struggles will continue. How would the team perform if the pitcher, catcher and middle infielder all played their correct positions? You would have 1/3 of the baseball team playing to their strengths, skills and knowledge. The improved results on the field will be felt first by an increased defense, i.e. decreased run production by the other team. Secondly the rest of your team will feel an increase in self confidence.

At the very least if all you did as a business owner is determine which positions within your organization were the pitcher, catcher and middle infielder and you hire and train the best people for that job your profits will start to increase almost immediately, just like on the field. The other team would score less, dramatically increasing your team's chance of winning.

If you are the owner of an organization like the one we described here, nobody playing to their strengths, lack of skills or knowledgeable employees and the scoreboard indicates losses where profits should be, you are likely asking yourself the following questions...

What am I supposed to do?

Who can I ask for help?

The first thing you can do is start assessing your own team. In business and in sports to have a winning team you need 7 things, see list below and a more detailed explanation of each at the end of the article.

1. Strong leadership
2. Common goal
3. A clear understanding by all to the Rules of the Game
4. Action plan
5. Support risk taking
6. 100% involvement and inclusion
7. A great coach

If your team does not have these seven items detailed out, start working on them. Set aside two hours per week and one topic per week to work through. If that doesn't work please call our office and we would be happy to brainstorm with you a detailed action plan that gets you profitable. So please stop being unprofitable, you and your team deserve better, call today, 403.260.9015.

1. Strong leadership
 - This is the business owner and his management team.
 - Leadership with detailed objectives that feed into the larger objective for the company will inspire success with direction and purpose. This will keep employees engaged and enthusiastic as they are part of a larger effort that goes beyond just their job function.
 - Leadership with detailed objectives that feed into the company's strategic plan will inspire success with direction and purpose. Employees will be engaged and enthusiastic when they are part of the big picture, and when they understand how their position affects the business as a whole.
2. Common goal
 - When the leader knows what the goal is and the steps to get there, job descriptions will naturally follow. Each description will contribute to achieving the overall goal. Match the right person to the right job description and you will have a winning combination to reach your game-winning goal.
3. A clear understanding by all to the Rules of the Game
 - Job descriptions that clarify the roles and responsibilities of the employee who is in the position that best matches their interests and talents give the business the best possible chance of short term and long term success.
4. Action plan
 - Job descriptions that align with functions of the organization, the game being played and the metrics being measured.
5. Support risk taking
 - Then you need to have the right employees in the correct positions, aligned with their skills and knowledge. If you have the wrong employees, i.e. football players not baseball players, don't hesitate to get rid of them and recruit the right ones.
6. 100% involvement and inclusion
 - Skilled, knowledgeable employees are necessary. They don't need to be the best that money can buy, however they need to be willing to learn and work hard. Top notch employees who are engaged will take your business places you never could on your own.
7. A great coach
 - A coach who can see larger picture and who is in a position to get the last 20% of performance out of you and your team.