



J. WHITE AND ASSOCIATES, LTD.

Helping Professional Practices Create and Sustain Growth

A NOTE ABOUT JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Done right, job descriptions can bring your practice structure and efficiency. Here's how to get the benefits, while avoiding most of the costs.

1. Job descriptions are the blueprint of your practice, telling each team member what, where, when, and why to do his/her task, and how that task fits into the bigger picture.
2. They clearly tell each team member what is expected, in terms of time spent, output, or other measures. In fact, when you do a performance appraisal, what you're really doing is reflecting how well the team member carried out the job description.
3. Well-written descriptions outline the relationships between departments and work groups. Without this clear definition of boundaries, there are likely to be "border disputes" over whose responsibility a particular task was, with either wasteful redundancy or tasks "falling through the cracks."
4. Job descriptions are key tools in hiring. They let candidates know exactly what the job will entail and provide a basis for deciding whether it fits the individual's skills, experience, and job preferences. If your recruitment ad isn't a marketing version of the job description, you're probably doing both the candidate and the practice a disservice.

And finally, your job descriptions help carry out the intent of laws such as Title VII, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and other federal and state statutes. To comply with these requirements, descriptions must separate essential from collateral functions, meet wage and hour and safety standards, and never contain illegal discriminatory language.

With all these positives, it's fair to ask why poorly written programs exist or, in some cases, no formal job description program at all.