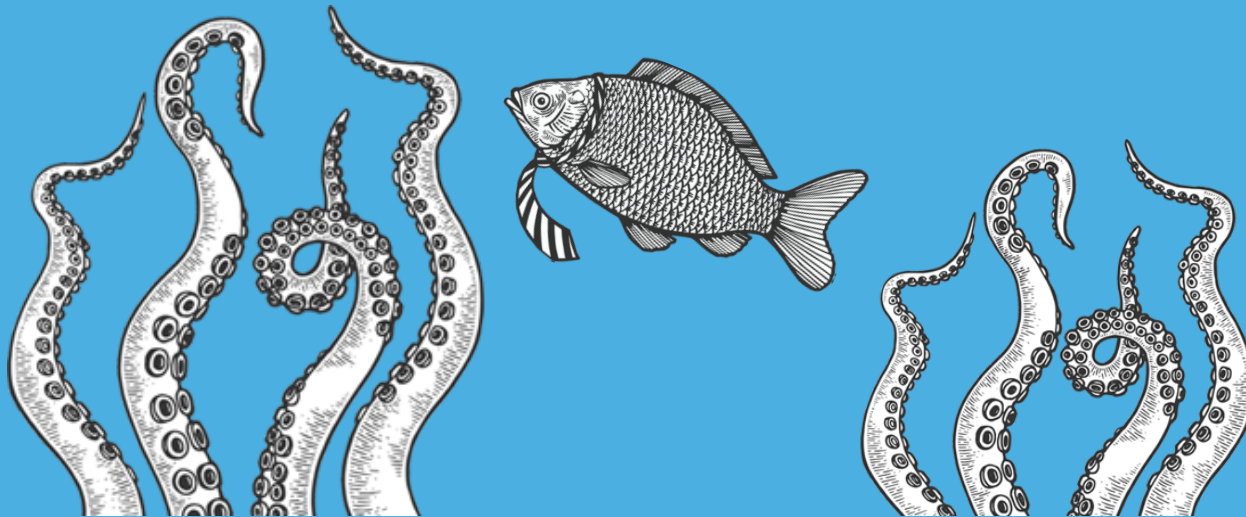


# How to: Write an appealing Job Specification

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Writing an appealing job specification is a critical part of any recruitment campaign. As recruiters, we are always encouraging candidates to invest time into their CV's to help to showcase their talent, the same needs to apply when writing your job specification. Crafting an appealing job specification takes more than simply writing down a list of the role's activities and candidate qualifiers. Written correctly, it will showcase your business and create a strong level of appeal that will attract the right calibre of candidates to apply to your role. Mastering the balance between providing enough detail to create that appeal and keeping it concise enough not to bore the reader is a difficult task. Here are our tips on how to write an appealing job specification.

## ***#1 Choosing the right Job Title***

Choosing the right Job Title is a small but very significant aspect of writing your job specification, it is after all the "Headline" to the whole document, it needs to shout the right message to catch the readers attention. Consider it to be your hook, the first thing that people read and therefore it needs to catch the eye and entice the applicant to want to read further.



- Be specific, a targeted job title will always attract a more relevant application than purely generic ones.
- Always ensure you use clear job titles and talk in a language that the applicant will understand.
- Be careful not to use abbreviations that only someone in your organisation or sector would understand. For example, if you advertise for an "XYZ Management Accountant", is anyone likely to know what the XYZ refers to.
- Creativity can help your job spec stand out but don't make it so abstruse that you miss out on potentially great candidates by bemusing them as to what the actual job is.

## ***#2 It's time to showcase your organisation***

Your job specification is a great opportunity to sell your business to the reader, after all there's no-one better to promote it than you. Every job specification should include an opening paragraph describing your business, worded in such a way to create appeal. Why is it so great to work there?, What sort of culture do you promote?, Do you promote personal and professional development?.



For one lucky applicant, this will be the start of a journey that leads to them becoming a new member of your team. Sharing some insights into your business and positive news stories will help ensure you start engaging them at this early stage. One of the most comprehensive recruitment briefs I ever received from a client started their job specification with a “Welcome to Us” section. It offered the reader a short snapshot about their business, telling them about their organisation’s journey and successes to date. Most of you will have an “About Us” section within your web pages. so why not adopt a similar pitch into your job specification. If it’s an Accounting professional you are recruiting for, add in some statistics about the business, we all know accountants love numbers, you’ll have them hooked from the first read.

### ***#3 Summarise the role***

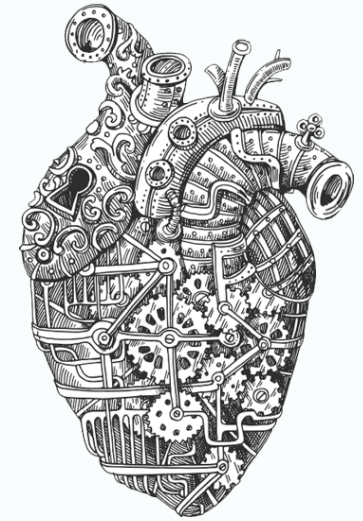
As well as selling the organisation and culture, you also need to pay as much attention to selling the role. Always ensure you offer the reader a short, concise overview of the opportunity. It should be no more than a couple of paragraphs describing the outline of the role and how it integrates into the wider business too. “Business Partnering” forms a large part of most roles these days, especially in finance. Offering the candidate an insight into the importance of the role and how it interacts with other teams across the business can help create appeal.

- Once you have written this section, take a step back and think, would this role appeal to me if I were looking for a new challenge?.
- If you have colleagues who undertake the role now, or if you are promoting someone into a higher role from this position, get them involved in writing this section. After all, there is no one better to describe the role than the person who has been doing it.
- Sell the opportunity, if it's arisen due to an internal promotion then tell the reader. For many the opportunity to enhance their professional career is a very appealing factor, if they know there is likely to be opportunities to develop further, they may be more likely to apply.

## ***#4 Outline what's at the heart of the role***

You need to open this section with a short but strong and engaging overview of the opportunity. Tell the reader what types of responsibilities they can expect to get involved in and what accountability they would have in the position. Avoid an endless list of bullet points about the role, lists that go on can be difficult to absorb by the reader. Paint a picture as to how does their job responsibilities tie into the overall business strategy?

It's important to be specific, don't use "Wooley" generic terms when writing this section. Inform the reader what their day to day tasks would be including reporting lines and structure and if applicable detail of their team reports too. Don't omit to include anything here that may cause someone to withdraw from the process further down the line if they were to discover it. For example, if the role requires frequent travel to another office location, then be sure to include it. The last thing you want is to allocate an hour of your time to interview someone if the role involves something they cannot commit to.

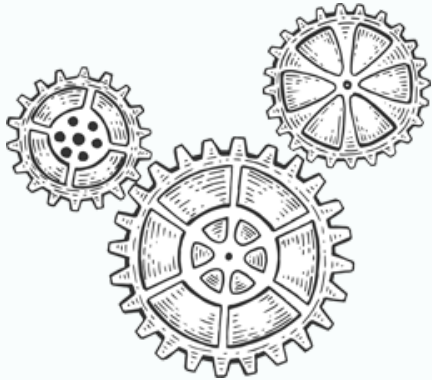


## ***#5 Skills and Qualifications***

In this section ensure you specify exactly what skills and qualifications you are looking for the applicant to be able to bring to the table. Within the qualifications section, it's important to keep it relevant and not to introduce unnecessary bias. If for example, you would prefer a CIMA qualified but know that an ACCA would be just as capable of carrying out the tasks required, then don't prejudice the ACCA candidates by stating the applicants must be CIMA qualified to be considered.

Whilst it may be tempting to list every skill you require for your ideal hire here, the reality is you are going to be cutting down your audience by doing so. The key is to prioritise your importance here, perhaps adopt an "Essential" and "Desirable" section. Don't forget to list the softer skills required in this section too, highlighting skills such as communication and problem-solving can help the applicant build a better understanding of what it would take to succeed in the role.

## **#6 – Your competencies are the Cogs of your Organisation**



If your business has taken the time to define specific competencies then it's worth incorporating them into your job specification. They are a great way to help your applicants understand what is expected of them. For example, if you are recruiting for a Financial Controller, one of your competencies would likely be, "The ability to empower the team to achieve team goals". Highlighting this as a competency will help the reader to understand that managing and motivating their team will be a key part of their role. Competencies can also lead nicely into your interview process and be built into the structure of your questioning. They help to emphasise what's important to your business and provide the candidate with a good understanding of what's expected of them.

## **#7 – Package, Perks and benefits**

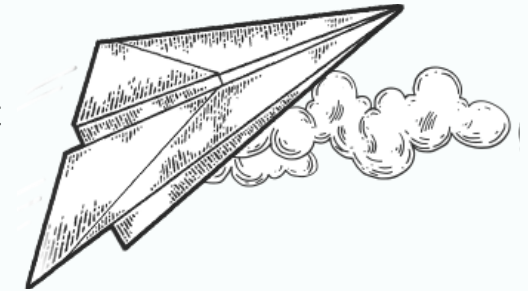
Whilst most applicants are keen to hear about your culture and career opportunities, let's not kid ourselves, the salary and benefits are just as important. A recent study taken out since the outbreak of Coronavirus reported that Flexible working schemes and options to work from home rank as the top two most desirable benefits that candidates are looking for. Whilst your organisation may not be in a position to offer these particular perks it is vital to promote the ones you do. This section can really help the applicant understand what's in it for them.

- Don't over-promise, over-inflating what you offer to attract more applications will only come back to bite you. For example, if you are an organisation who work on salary bandings, state the bandings clearly on your role spec.
- If you offer a bonus scheme of 10%, don't over-inflate it to 20%, always paint a realistic picture of what the successful applicant can expect to achieve.
- This is also a great section to promote the culture of the business, ensure you include details about opportunities for personal and professional development and any career enhancement opportunities your organisation can offer. Include also any examples of team building days or exercises you may run, I once worked with a client who took his team on an Alpaca trek....It sold it to me...I'm in!



## **#8 – Outline how to apply and what to expect**

Ok, so you've sold the company, told them all about your expectations for the role, listed what you need from them and highlighted your flexible working scheme and the amazing team building days....what next?. Where do we go from here?. Don't finish your job specification without outlining how to apply and what the interview process will be.



Map out the recruitment journey that the applicant can expect to take. Would the first meeting be with the Line Manager and HR, followed by a meet with the CFO at 2nd and a short Excel test?. Outlining your interview process in your Job Specification demonstrates you have a clear plan and helps portray a high level of professionalism. If possible, it's also good to inject some kind of urgency in the process at this stage too. If applicants are aware of deadlines, they are more likely to take positive action to apply, rather than delaying applying to the weekend.

### ***And finally...a few words of caution***

- **Avoid using too many superlatives** or over the top language throughout your role specification. Remember asking for a "World-Class Finance Manager", may put off those who are more than capable of doing the role but wouldn't blow their own trumpet in that way.
- Be realistic. Don't go overboard with your expectations, you have to keep a realistic view of what you can expect for the role. Remember you want to attract as wide a pool as talent as possible, not to be reviewing just one CV due to very unrealistic expectations.
- Don't use negative language/phrases. Using phrases like "Candidates without 10 years' experience of working in Management Accounting will not be considered", can often send out a negative message and do nothing for promoting your brand as an employer of choice.

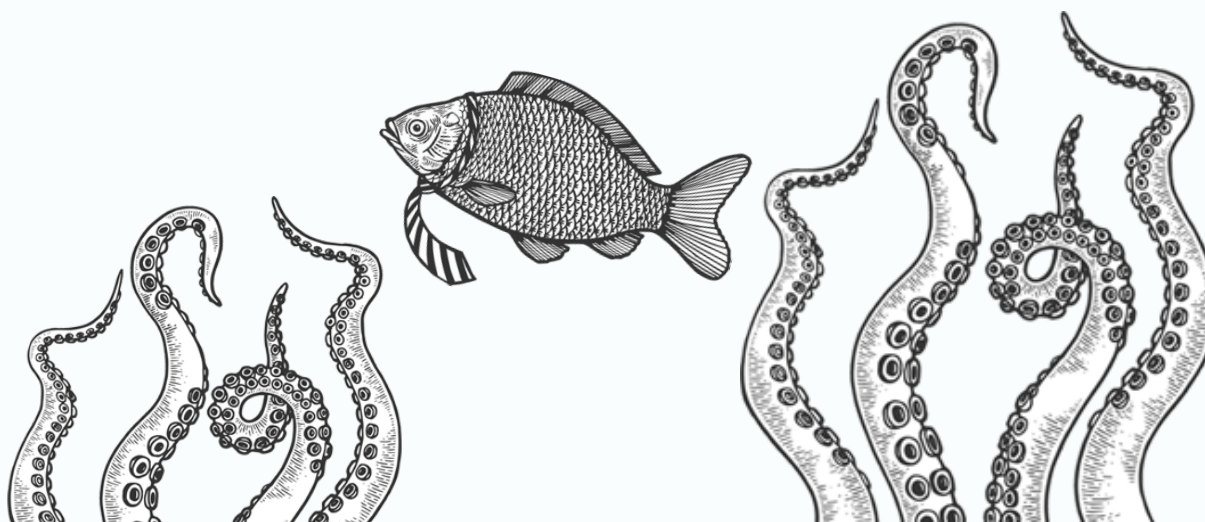
- **Be careful not to discriminate.** We must ensure we are not allowing any bias to creep in when writing a job specification. Whether conscious or unconscious bias, it can be damaging to our brand and can ultimately result in missing out on the best person for the role. You can read an article I wrote on Unconscious Bias in recruitment [here](#). Asking for a Finance Manager with 10 years experience could discriminate against someone who has less but just as capable of doing the role. Be careful not to include any gender-specific language throughout your job specification too.

Never underestimate the impact that a professionally drafted job specification can have on the recruitment process. Crafting something that is informative and appealing takes time but it is always time well spent. Ultimately, it can often play a pivotal role in helping you to make a successful appointment first time, every time.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this guide or require help constructing a role specification for a pending piece of recruitment, please do not hesitate to [get in touch](#).

Thanks for taking the time to read our article.

David





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*"David at Bespoke has been invaluable in helping us source exceptional finance professionals. David's personal approach of listening and fully understanding the role brief, business culture and growth opportunities with our roles has enabled him to consistently deliver a shortlist of candidates - all of whom we have interviewed. This is quite unique in my experience that all candidates fit the brief and it has meant that we have contacted David for an immediate resource, once again he delivered. Professional, knowledgeable and honest with integrity. I am very happy to recommend David and Bespoke Recruitment - **HR/Operations Manager***

*David placed me in a job around 6 years ago and I found his compassion and complete understanding of who I was and what the company was looking for to be phenomenal. He was engaging from start to finish. He did not look at me as a number to churn through and gain business from but an actual person. After this I used David's expertise to put forward candidates for roles in the companies I work for. He has placed a number of accountants and more recently some more diverse roles for me and I can hand on heart say they have been the perfect fit. Not only does he look for the right credentials but how the individual will fit into different companies to match their company work ethos. Honestly could not recommend David highly enough. Professional, personable and perfect.*

**- Financial Controller**