Writing an effective job advert

MyHiringBuddy

Why should you spend time constructing the perfect advert?

Unless your business has a queue outside the door of your company stacked full of high performers, perfectly suited to your business, bringing all necessary the skills and experiences that you need now and in the future, you need to take some positive steps to attract the right talent for your business.

So what? You may say. There are loads of people looking for a job, people will fall over themselves to apply, so it'll be easy.

WRONG! Here is the reality:

- You are unlikely to be the only company trying to hire the strongest talent
- Not everyone is sifting through job ads on a daily basis as they'll probably be too busy in their day jobs
- There is a very small window of opportunity when your job ad will have visibility in the market
- The average time someone will spend reviewing an ad is 8 seconds
- Believe it or not, not everyone knows how great a company yours is, what it's like to work there or why this career opportunity is so good
- Lots of people looking for work, means lots of applications, which means lots of time from you

In short, you are in competition, you've got a tiny window of opportunity to capture the attention of your target candidate, and you want to avoid spending time reviewing inappropriate profiles. Get it wrong and you'll waste time and money.

The benefits of writing good copy are:

- You increase the chances of the right candidates applying
- You spend less time reviewing unsuitable applications
- You will optimise the time and money you've spent on this process
- To build your company/employer brand/reputation
- Capitalise on the opportunity that most other companies don't write good job adverts!

Our 8-step guide to advert writing

The human brain is attracted to things it finds engaging and things it can understand. Advertising is a sales and marketing tool, so to write a good job advert you need to take the following steps

- Know which audience you're targeting
- Understand how to attract them
- Capture their attention quickly
- Nurture their interest
- Provide them understanding
- Give them a reason to take action

STEP 1: Define the target audience

- Take a fresh look at the job requirement to ensure it's still relevant

- Select the critical technical competencies you're looking for in someone's experience

- Agree the key behavioural capabilities that will bring success in the role

- Sense check these with relevant colleagues (hiring manager, peer group)

- Make sure you're being realistic in what you're looking for, unicorns don't exist!

STEP 2: Understand what will appeal to your target audience

- Talk to those doing the job – what do they like about the company and the job, what was the hook for them in the first place, where would they look for jobs.

- Define your employment proposition (EVP) – why do people join and stay at the business, what do they get from working there, what stands your business apart

- Consider what features will be most attractive to the profiles you're targeting, not what you find attractive necessarily (e.g. earnings, values, technical innovation, flexibility, career development etc)

- Give thought to where you advertise the role to ensure it's reaching the intended audience most effectively

STEP 3: Job Title

- Make sure the job title is one that people will easily recognise and can search on the site you're advertising on

- Repeat the job title 3-4 times during the course of the advert, this is more important that other SEO factors to help those searchability using keywords

STEP 4: Capture their attention quickly

- Creating an effective hook which will stimulate an almost immediate emotional response is the most important part of ad writing

- Create a headline, message, statement which represents your business or the opportunity

- Sometimes it may work well to pose a compelling or provocative question

- Make sure this message stands out and will be the first thing the reader will see

STEP 5: Nurture their interest with well presented information

- Nearly half of readers will only scan read the content of your advert, so structuring the information in a way to prominently feature the key points is critical

- Personal qualities or role purpose/responsibilities should be limited to 3-5 points each

- Use concise but punchy messaging to keep it relevant and interesting, rather than wordy paragraphs or long lists of bullet points

- Avoid jargon or overly complicated words

- Use links to your website/social media channels to free up space and enable them to find out more about company values, performance, culture, history etc.

- Maintain a consistent company tone/style if you have one

STEP 6: Generate their desire by showing what's in it for them

- Focus on the candidate perspective and concentrate on information that will appeal specifically to them

- Make the primary purpose of the role clear to understand

- Be specific about what you're looking for, so they can judge if they should apply or not, and you'll encourage quality over quantity of applications

- Make it interesting - why is the company or role a compelling option for this audience

- Present a vision of their future in the role, what does success look like, what impact can they have. A story can be more engaging than facts and figures

- Don't focus too much on describing your company (use hyperlinks) and position this a little lower on the page – remember it's about them, not you

- Give key facts about the role– location, hours/work arrangements, remuneration, notable benefits, required qualifications

- Personalise it – make references to 'you will' rather than 'the successful candidate will'

STEP 7: Convert interest to action

- Write to the individual, not the target market

- Give clear instructions on how to apply

- Make the application process straightforward

- Manage expectations on timescales/communication

- Make yourself accessible where possible

- Encourage them to investigate more about your business using links to engaging media channels (video content, careers site, social media)

STEP 8: Review the advert

- Check for spelling errors or grammatical mistakes

- Ensure the best use of language to avoid bias (see Diversity & Inclusion)

- Make sure the advert complies with legal local requirements (e.g. avoid discriminatory references)

- Check it's not boring – if you find it boring, the reader probably will as well!

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