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# The Importance of Clear Job Descriptions

by **Andrea Cook**

**F**or the employee, the job description is a road map for their career with your practice. As early as the interview, it shows the candidate what is expected of them and specifies minimum levels of acceptable job performance. It also satisfies a very human need – employees are more comfortable, confident, and achieve a higher level of accomplishment when they know what their employers want and expect from them.

All too often, there is a misunderstanding of what a position entails and a well-prepared job description can help both sides share a mutual understanding. I have received many calls recently regarding training of orthodontic clinicians. Too many times I hear the statement, “She has been here more than a year and still isn’t fully trained.” My first question would be, was she given a clear description of her job and full training in all areas to fulfill that job description? If the answer is no, it then becomes an office failure. Hiring another new employee will most likely have the same result if they are not provided with this information.

New hires should be given a copy of their job description during the interview so they know what will be expected of them and if they are capable of performing the required duties, or if training will be necessary. We cannot expect a new employee to perform well and meet our needs if they are not given a clear definition of what their job looks like. If you don’t tell them what you’re looking for, how are they supposed to know? Current employees should be given a copy of their job description as part of a team meeting or during a performance evaluation to ensure everyone is on the same page, and to discuss areas of success and any areas for improvement.

One of the first steps in setting up a good training system to develop outstanding team members is a clear job description. Your trainer and clinical coordinator, if your office has one, need to know what the requirements are in each position so they can work with each team member to

develop their skills and grow in their careers. Yes, careers. Having careers as opposed to jobs will increase the longevity of our well-trained team members.

Job duties often change over time and an outdated job description may be of little benefit or could even be a detriment. It is important to include the following items when you prepare each job description:

- Position/Title
- Who the employee directly reports to
- Job summary
- Qualifications needed
- Education and experience required, if any
- Certificates, licenses, and registrations required, if any
- Physical requirements
- Work environment
- Include the phrase “and other duties as assigned” in the job description

One way of updating job descriptions is to ask your office manager or clinical coordinator to confirm the job description is up-to-date as part of the performance review process. You may also give employees a copy of their job description and ask them to give feedback. Review all job descriptions on a set schedule, such as during the annual performance review, to make sure it accurately reflects the employee’s current job responsibilities.

Job descriptions are an important element of the employment process. Any team member coming into your practice needs to have a clearly defined role and expectations to ensure their success. By following the tips listed above, you’re more likely to create a job description that will attract the right candidate.

In your career as an orthodontist you will undoubtedly

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have employees who will not meet the standards of the job. Writing a job description helps to confirm what is or is not getting done. In fact, writing job descriptions is one of the most effective employee communication tools you have as a manager to ensure that your employees know what is expected of them so they can meet and hopefully exceed your work expectations.

Job descriptions are the first step in developing your new all-star team. The next step is training them to meet your needs as outlined in their job description. I will be presenting a lecture on clinical training at the 2016 Users Group Meeting that will help you develop a system of training that will get your new team member trained as quickly as possible. I look forward to seeing you all in Las Vegas! ☺

## About the Author

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Andrea Cook is a clinical consultant and trainer for premier orthodontic offices across the country with more than 20 years experience chairside. She is presenting at the 2016 Users Group Meeting in Las Vegas.