



The Job Description Playbook: Inclusive, Skills-Based Listings

TECHPOINT

FOREWORD:

The Indiana Tech Talent Development Imperative

As our workforces prepare today for the dynamic economic landscapes of tomorrow, perhaps more than ever before it is clear that finding and retaining talent is job #1.

However, factors such as the pandemic-triggered Great Resignation, a wave of Baby Boomer retirements, and a poorly-timed college enrollment cliff are creating a perfect storm of talent demand and supply challenges for the tech workforce.

If we focus primarily on strategies to attract talent to Indiana, rather than also creating inclusive pathways to grow and nurture our own talent, then Indiana will find itself with an insufficient tech workforce—and unable to compete economically over time.

Based on TechPoint’s recent research with Fourth Economy and credible economic indicators, we’ve uncovered data that makes an Indiana tech talent imperative clear:

Indiana’s Tech Talent Imperative

- Become a **top 10 state** for net tech employment growth by 2030
- Achieve and sustain a **4% annual net job growth rate** (2x the current national rate)
- Inclusively **add 41,000+ tech workers** by 2030

Achieving a well-skilled tech workforce will require a focus on creating a more diverse, inclusive and supporting tech sector. Community work, new programs and cultural perspective shifts are required to modernize talent pathways and provide talent on-ramps for candidates from underrepresented groups.

A natural starting point is to ensure that job-ready individuals aren’t excluded by outdated job descriptions that are biased toward credentials rather than skills. This playbook offers guidance on how to write more inclusive, skills-based job descriptions. Let’s get started on this important work!



MAKING A BUSINESS CASE:

The Benefits of Taking a Skills-First Approach to Job Descriptions

Skills-first job pathways lead to better economic outcomes for everyone, and these pathways begin with rewriting job descriptions. Making a shift from degree requirements to a focus on competencies has a number of compelling benefits and will have a positive return on investment for your organization.

Better job performance

Skills-first hiring is 5x more predictive of a person's future performance than their education, and 2.5x better than their experience according to workforce-related [research](#).

More equity and inclusion in the workplace via an expanded talent pipeline

By expanding on-ramps to job qualification, a broader section of the population will be eligible to pursue robust careers—including more individuals from underrepresented groups and the two-thirds of the U.S. adult population that doesn't have a bachelor's degree.

Greater consumer confidence in your community impact

Consumers often engage with products and services that are produced by people with whom they identify. If you want to be successful across many groups and cultures, then employ individuals in family-sustaining positions from those same groups and cultures.

Faster time-to-fill and lower employee turnover

By removing unnecessary degree requirements, you can more quickly access a greater portion of the talent pool. These job seekers can still have the right skills to succeed perhaps due to military service or a coding bootcamp, for example. And, your inclusion efforts will positively impact your employee experience and retention.

5 Tips for Inclusive, Skills-Based Job Listings

Meeting Indiana's 2030 workforce imperative requires collaborative action on new programs, vital pathway alignment, and company culture work. The journey begins with the language used to attract future employees. As a person responsible for hiring, you can take these steps to improve your job listings and develop a diverse, skilled candidate pool:

- 1 Mind the education or credential required.**
Adopt standardized tech role pathways and make your job more accessible to the right level of talent.
- 2 Balance required vs. preferred job qualifications.**
When your qualification list is full of unnecessary requirements, you may deter candidates from underrepresented groups.
- 3 Choose language that isn't biased.**
Replace words in your job descriptions that may come off the wrong way to attract all to your opportunity.
- 4 Describe your inclusive hiring efforts.**
Make sure language and imagery used on your site is representative of your efforts.
- 5 Audit job descriptions regularly.**
Regularly review and rigorously evaluate jobs in collaboration with hiring managers.

How High are the Talent Growth Stakes for Indiana's Tech Sector?

Tech jobs offer high salaries, stability and solid advancement. The future outcome of tech sector and tech talent growth is crystal clear. For every 10,000 new tech workers added to the Indiana workforce, \$698 million in new annual wages are generated and \$56.9 million in state and local tax revenues are gained.

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Mind the Minimum Level of Education or Credential Required

Avoid inherited, inflated education and/or credential requirements.

Adopt standardized pathways for tech roles and align your requirements to these pathways. Use language that describes the novice skills necessary for success to make your jobs accessible to more individuals.

Differentiate between prerequisite vs. trainable credentials.

Consider which certifications, credentials and/or degrees are actually required to begin the job versus those that can be earned on the job.

Evaluate which credentials can be replaced by specific skills, instead.

Can a specific skill set sufficiently prepare one for success in the job instead of a costly credential that may have significant barriers to attainment?

Invite applicants to share equivalent experience examples.

Use job description language to invite job seekers to note alternative, degree-equivalent experience.

Replace branded software labels with general application names.

Rather than asking candidates to have certifications or specific years of experience in certain software platforms (e.g., Salesforce), instead note the type of software that is used in the job (e.g., customer relationship management - CRM).



RELATED RESOURCES:

Mind the Minimum Level of Education Required

Use Tools to Map Job Requirements to Skills

There are a variety of tools available online to assist employers in aligning skill requirements to various job titles. Check out some of the below examples to rethink your degree and credential requirements, and then review the before-and-after job description example later in this playbook for extra practice on how to edit your language.

Skillful Job Posting Generator

This free resource helps organizations to identify the skills and competencies required for a position, and then incorporate them into a job description. It guides users through a step-by-step process, auto-populating key fields to create a skills-based job listing.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Skills Engine

This organization is a technology innovation team building solutions to connect individuals, educators, and employers through a shared understanding of skills.

[LEARN MORE](#)

*O*NET*

O*NET is the primary source of occupational information in the United States. Valid, up-to-date data are essential to understanding the rapidly changing nature of work and how it impacts the workforce and U.S. economy.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Balance Required vs. Preferred Job Qualifications

List only the most important qualifications and keep your list relatively short.

When your qualification list is a mile-long and mostly full of required rather than preferred items, you risk candidates from underrepresented groups self-selecting out of the application process.

Rank job skills in order of importance and then edit your job description text.

By prioritizing which skills are truly required rather than preferred, it's easier to eliminate unimportant job text that's not representative of skills necessary for success.

Regularly meet with others to assess job qualifications.

When was the last time you had a focused conversation with the hiring manager and others in a specific role to determine if the qualifications listed were current and predictive of job success?

Highlight opportunities for up-skilling via on-the-job training.

As you examine the skills necessary for a position, rewrite inappropriately-required qualifications into on-the-job training benefits related to future potential skills, degree, and/or credential attainment.





Choose Language That Isn't Biased Toward a Particular Audience

Your “work hard, play hard” headline may turn some candidates off.

Job listing words like “competitive” or “tech native” may be limiting your applicant pool. Replace words that may come off as overly gendered, non-inclusive, youthful or ableist to attract all genders, ethnicities, generations, and individuals who may require reasonable accommodations.

Avoid complicated language in your job text.

Instead of being overly intellectual, use simpler content to clearly convey your opportunity and needs. This makes it easier for all job seekers to understand your role—including those who are job-ready but perhaps on the spectrum or affected by learning disabilities.

Don't include acronyms without explaining their meaning.

Especially in tech, job listings often contain an alphabet soup of obscure acronyms that can discourage industry newcomers from applying. Include the full meaning of terms such as API (application programming interface) or IP (internet protocol) within the description.

How has the Great Resignation Escalated the Indiana Imperative?

The Great Resignation and a wave of Baby Boomer retirements have jointly reduced the number of available tech workers. Microsoft's 2021 Work Trends Index found more than 40 percent of employees are considering a job change.

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RELATED RESOURCES:

Choose Language That Isn't Biased Toward a Particular Audience

Find and Remove Non-Inclusive Words

If you're used to recycling and updating the same job descriptions, it might be harder to spot words that aren't welcoming to some underrepresented groups—because you're so familiar with the “traditional” language for a role. Check your job listing content against one of the following tools to locate and eliminate biased job language.

Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology)

See Appendix A within the linked resource immediately below for a list of words coded as either masculine or feminine based on the research studies and work to replace these words with gender neutral options.

[**LEARN MORE**](#)

Gender Decoder

This free online tool was inspired by the research report mentioned immediately above and checks job descriptions for the mention of any masculine or feminine-coded words. After analyzing the relative balance between overly gendered words, it displays a result regarding the gender-coding of the job listing.

[**LEARN MORE**](#)

Optimize Job Description Bias With These SaaS Tools

- [Ongig](#)
- [Textio](#)
- [Datapeople](#)
- [TalVista](#)



Describe Your Efforts to Hire From an Inclusive Candidate Pool

Add an inclusivity statement to all job descriptions.

While it's important to have an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statement to comply with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), use this compliance task to add language to position your organization as an inclusivity-minded employer of choice, too.

List benefits that describe your organization's diversity, equity and inclusion activities.

Whether you have an internal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee or do regular unconscious bias training, list inclusivity-focused benefits to show that your organization prioritizes DEI.

Make sure language and imagery used on your site is representative of your efforts.

Be confident that the photographs and/or video you use on your career site is representative of the diverse population you employ and want to hire. When possible, include actual imagery of your workforce—as stock photography can sometimes fail to appear authentic.

Need help crafting a basic EEO statement?

[Check out these curated examples](#)...and then uplevel your statement to show your organization's focus on inclusivity.





Commit to Auditing Job Description Language Regularly

Review and rigorously evaluate jobs in collaboration with hiring managers.

Whether you work in HR or recruiting, serve as a hiring manager, or lead your own business, prioritize conducting focused feedback sessions with internal stakeholders involved in hiring. Use feedback to update job descriptions, and use tools to spot and remove biased or complex language.

Set a recurring reminder to make sure you don't lose track of the job audit process.

While it can be tempting to “set and forget” once you’ve written a new job description, schedule a reevaluation of existing job descriptions at a regular cadence to ensure that content is always clear, descriptive of the current job duties and free from bias.

Invite job candidates to offer feedback regarding your job descriptions.

While it may be obvious to involve internal teammates in job description development, consider the positive impact you might have on job seekers if you also authentically engage them in providing job listing feedback. Launch anonymous surveys to gather feedback and refine listings as problem areas surface. Then, share how you’ve used the feedback to improve outcomes for all.

How diverse is our tech workforce?

Our Tech Workforce Analysis shows that there is room for improvement in Indiana.

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Inclusive Job Description Audit: Before + After

Traditional, Credential-Focused Job Posting: IT Support Technician

JOB SUMMARY:

Position provides PC Maintenance, Help Desk Technical Support, LAN Support services and project work to support more efficient use of company resources and manpower.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Imaging workstations; setup workstations for new associates
- Maintains and repairs laptops, tablets, desktops, Macs, mobile devices, and other peripherals
- Documents, upgrades and replaces PC hardware and software systems
- Provides support to end users on a variety of technical issues through ServiceDesk ticketing system
- Provides user support for all applications
- Identifies, researches, and resolves technical problems within SLA
- Responds to telephone calls, email, and personnel requests for technical support
- First-level support for printers, copiers, and plotters

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Requires an Associate's Degree in related field, and 2 or more years related work experience in helpdesk environment
- Knowledge and experience with PCs, Servers, network hardware, and software
- Data cabling in switch closets
- Microsoft operating systems and Macs
- Microsoft Office 365 Administration
- Active Directory
- Azure Administration
- MDM / SCCM
- Microsoft Intune knowledge
- Personally motivated, aggressively goal-oriented focus
- Superior interpersonal skills, ability to work well with others
- Excellent oral and written communication skills
- Detail oriented organizational skills
- An ability to understand complex issues and learn quickly
- Professional appearance
- Microsoft certifications desired
- Requires valid driver's license

Inclusive Job Description Audit: Before + After

Skills-Focused Job Posting: IT Support Technician

Spell out the meaning of acronyms.

JOB SUMMARY:

Position provides PC (Personal Computer) Maintenance, Help Desk Technical Support, LAN (Local Area Network) Support services and project work to support more efficient use of company resources and manpower.

Use consistent and simple phrases to describe tasks.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

This role will be responsible for help desk functions including:

- Sets up workstations for new associates, including imaging workstations.
- Maintains and repairs laptops, tablets, desktops, Macs, mobile devices and other peripherals.
- Documents, upgrades, and replaces PC hardware and software systems.
- Provides support to end users on a variety of technical issues through ticketing system.
- Provides user support for all applications.
- Identifies, researches, and resolves technical problems within SLA (Service Level Agreement).
- Responds to telephone calls, email, and personnel requests for technical support.
- Provides first-level support for printers, copiers, and plotters.

Avoid brand names; focus on the application type instead.

REQUIRED SKILLS:

- **Infrastructure:** Knowledge and experience with PCs, Servers, network hardware, and software
- **IT/Hardware:** Assembles, configures, installs, maintains, and repairs computer and device hardware and IT systems. E.g., data cabling in switch closets.
- **Core Operating Systems:** Demonstrates familiarity with multiple operating systems (e.g., Microsoft and Mac).
- **Software Applications:** Installs, configures, and maintains a wide variety of software applications (e.g. Microsoft Office 365 / Azure / Intune).
- **General Networking Tools and Concepts:** Provides network support with commonly used tools/ devices, including: routers, switches, wireless, ethernet cabling, and firewalls; manages IP (Internet Protocol) addresses and runs cabling.
- **General Information Security:** Installs, configures, troubleshoots, tests, and maintains in a secure manner the portion of the IT environment under their responsibility (networks, communication, hardware, software, and other devices) to ensure confidentiality, integrity, and availability. E.g., Active Directory, MDM (Mobile Device Management), SCCM (System Center Configuration Manager).
- **Transportation:** Has a reliable means of transportation to various work sites.
- **Professionalism:** Demonstrates a professional appearance.
- **Problem Solving / Decision Making:** Has an ability to understand complex issues and learn quickly.
- **Communication:** Has excellent oral and written communication skills.

If a job doesn't require an individual to operate a company vehicle, then be inclusive of those without a license as long as they have an alternate means of transporting themselves.

PREFERRED SKILLS:

- **Product Knowledge:** Operating system certifications.
- **Teamwork:** Has superior interpersonal skills and the ability to work well with others.
- **Growth Mindset:** Is personally motivated with an aggressively goal-oriented focus.
- **Organization:** Possesses detail-oriented organizational skills.

Differentiate between required vs. preferred skills, organize skills into related groups, and remove requirements for degrees or credentials if equivalent experience or skillsets are sufficient.

Activate Your New Playbook

Skills-based hiring diversifies talent pools, accelerates the hiring process and increases the likelihood of retention. And, auditing your job descriptions to be more inclusive and competency-focused is the first step on the skills-based hiring pathway.

TechPoint is taking the lead to ensure that Indiana's tech community works together for this critical impact, and that we identify and address diversity gaps...but we can't do it alone. We need your partnership—including your commitment to participate in emergent talent pathway work and to share outcomes.

Together, with collaborative efforts from organizations like yours, we can achieve the imperative of developing 230,000 Indiana tech workers by the year 2030.

Get Involved

- [Contact TechPoint](#) to learn more about participating in our talent pathway development pilot program available to select, progressive employers.
- List your inclusivity-focused employment benefits in a dedicated company profile on our [Tech Directory](#).
- Post available jobs—with inclusive language, of course—to our [TechPoint Job Board](#).
- Attend and/or promote hiring events posted on our [Community Events Calendar](#).
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