

BLOG

Duties and Responsibilities: Stop Hiring to Job Descriptions

In short, hire, or don't hire, the whole person.

Sensei Labs October 5, 2017



Sensei Labs is going through a period of expansion, and lately I have been spending a lot of time searching for great people to join the team and help us grow to the next level. Along the way, a question has been reoccurring in interviews that, I think, speaks to something fundamental about how hiring gets done. And, I think it's something that needs to change. I'll get to that question in a second.

Unless you work at a massive corporation and have the ability to hire people dedicated only to the most granular facets of any task at hand, you'll find that the people you work with wear many hats. This is a good thing. Not only does more cross-functional work breed better communication and understanding, it makes people happier to be able to change gears once in a while.

Simply put, variety is the spice of life.

Here at Sensei Labs, and our parent company Klick, we have often asked people what they want their job title to be, and then we go with it. That's because a title (when it matters at all) is better when it expresses the flavour of what you do rather than the maximum level of authority or seniority you have

been deemed to be worthy of. It's not that there's no need for hierarchy in the business place, but there is a difference between the buck having to stop somewhere, and saying "hierarchy is our most important attribute and your title must indicate that."

"THE ONLY CONSTANT IS CHANGE."

For example, compare "Senior Systems Analyst Level III" with "Technical Explorer." Sometimes titles are just meant to allow that person to do and be whoever they need to, to get the job done. And, what that job is can change constantly. "Well that's crazy!" you say — you can't have people constantly doing different things, it would lead to chaos. But the long-understood reality is that the only constant is change. If your company is not actively accepting and promoting this idea, you are in trouble.

Now back to the question, which is: **"In the job description, it says X, can you explain that?"** The reality is that any company worth their salt should always be looking for great candidates for hire, and should always have some active job ads running. But these ads are like hanging out a general Help Wanted sign. Once I am in a dialog with a candidate, any pre-conceived ideas on my end about the role go out the window. At that point, I am listening to hear about their experience, their interests, their passion, and I'm thinking about how they could make us better. That's it. No thought of job descriptions. If they are going to add value and are an exciting hire, I make it work.

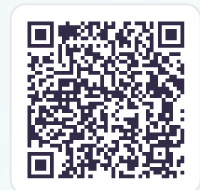
No matter who you hire, you always get more in one area and less in another than the job description demanded. You can figure out how to back-fill any gaps later — because you are going to have to do this anyway, regardless of how rigorous you think your hiring process is. I usually end up spending some time in the interview explaining to the candidate that they should ignore the job description, which can sometimes be met with incredulity. **And I feel like once we get to that place, it's a bit of a breakthrough, and we can really have a frank and open discussion.**

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