Job Descriptions: A Valuable Tool

A small business affords its employees the opportunity to “do it all.” Gaining diversified experience and developing an impressive resume are advantages of working in small offices. Yet, the small business employer should not let the employee’s status be completely undefined or all-encompassing. Developing a job description for every position outlining required qualifications, duties, regular and predictable attendance and physical requirements for every employee benefits both the employer and employee.

Best Practices

• A brief job description can serve as an icebreaker in the interviewing process. Job descriptions should be reviewed and updated prior to each new hire. Think ahead about how you want your practice to grow and write your descriptions to compliment that future. Responsibilities evolve over time. When evaluating a job description for a new hire, consider your current employees, how roles have changed and if duties are better suited for other positions. By reviewing it before the interview, the applicant will have something specific to discuss.

• In the “job requirements” section of the job description, be specific about expectations and ask if the employee can meet them. For example, “This position may require working beyond 5 p.m. Would you be able to meet that requirement?” or “Will you be able to perform the essential job duties listed with or without accommodation?” (i.e., Can a chairside assistant’s brace for carpal tunnel syndrome be accommodated to meet sterilization requirements?)

• A well-written job description clarifies who is responsible for each task in the practice and can guide initial training and helping management and employees agree on the expected outcomes of that training. When duties are clearly defined, a more harmonious relationship between individual staff and departments is fostered. When grievances or conflicts arise, a clear job description can improve communication.

• Without a job description, the requirements of a job can be ambiguous and open to debate by employer, employee, attorneys, doctors and government regulators. Just as a good description can be your best defense, a poor description can be your worst enemy. A well-written job description details the fundamental physical and mental requirements of a job. Many misconceptions occur at the time of hiring when expectations are formed in prospective employees’ minds. Once on the job, if the expectations do not materialize, the employee may start to believe that it is due to discrimination rather than a misunderstanding about the job and its benefits. Soon, the employee might seek a protected category with which to align and rationalize that he or she has been discriminated against.

• Include a caveat that states that job responsibilities and duties may change at any time during employment and that the employee may be asked to work on special projects or assist with other work as necessary for the operation of the office. State that the office reserves the right at any time, with or without notice, to alter or change job responsibilities, reassign or transfer job positions or assign additional job responsibilities.

• Employees benefit from knowing what is expected of them. Performance reviews are more meaningful for the employer and the employee if the employee’s performance can be measured by both objective and subjective standards of the reviewer. The objective evaluation measures whether the job duties are being performed, and the subjective evaluation measures how well the duties are being performed.
Additional Considerations

HIPAA
Federal law requires a HIPAA-covered entity to implement policies and procedures to ensure only authorized individuals use and disclose protected health information (PHI) that is necessary to carry out their job responsibilities. An employer required to comply with HIPAA must determine by job category or by individual whether access is permitted to clinical PHI, to financial and insurance PHI or to all PHI. An employer should include PHI access level on job descriptions or create a separate document that lists job categories or individuals with access level to PHI. For example, an office manager may need access to all PHI to perform her job functions and a dental assistant may only need access to clinical PHI to perform her job functions.

Reasonable Accommodation
Job descriptions allow employers to effectively manage a claim for disability (leave of absence or reasonable accommodation) or workers’ compensation. When an employee returns to work from disability leave (work related or not) a physician must determine whether that employee is physically capable to return to the job. Sending the physician the employee’s written job description that includes the essential functions and physical requirements of the job is the best way to determine whether the employee can perform the duties described with or without limitation, with or without accommodation and for what period. With job descriptions that detail the physical and mental requirements of a position, you can defend decisions regarding accommodation or termination.

Factors to consider when determining if a function is essential include:
• Does the position exist to perform that function?
• Can the function be distributed among other employees or is there a limited number of other employees available to perform the function?
• The degree of expertise or skill required to perform the function.
• The time spent performing the function.
• The consequences of excluding the function.

Sample Job Advertisements

Dental Assistant/Registered Dental Assistant/RDAEF

Caring Registered Dental Assistant Wanted
Our prevention-focused dental team is looking for a caring, enthusiastic and dependable dental assistant. The position is approximately 24 hours per week, Tuesday through Thursday, in _______. The successful candidate must be detail-oriented, learn quickly and enjoy working with patients of all ages. If you possess these qualities and are committed to excellence, please send your resume with cover letter by fax to 555.333.1111 or email dentalpractice@xxx.com.

Full-Time Dental Assistant Wanted
Full-time (four days a week) registered dental assistant needed for a very busy state-of-the-art (endodontic) office. We are looking for someone who is flexible, reliable, able to learn quickly and has a good disposition.

Excellent benefits including medical, dental, vision and disability insurance, vacation and sick leave, and 401(k) await the right applicant. Please call Cathy at 555.333.1111 or email your resume to dentalpractice@xxx.com.
New Practice Looking for Dental Assistant
Are you motivated and excited about patient care? We are a beautiful, brand-new GP dental office located in __________. We are seeking someone special to grow with our practice. We value our team and want our employees to enjoy coming to work. If you think you have something that sets you apart from the rest, please apply! We are waiting to hear from you.

Dental experience is required but hard-working new graduates and interns are welcome to apply. The position is part time with the potential to turn into full time as the practice grows.

Please submit your resume, cover letter and professional references via email to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

Orthodontic Assistant Wanted
Dr. ______ is offering a rare and exciting opportunity for the right person to join our team! We are a busy orthodontic practice serving the best families. We are an experienced and positive team that takes great pride in our high level of service. Dr.______ is a caring employer who offers a great compensation package. The terrific team member we are looking for needs to be outgoing and motivated with strong communication skills and previous experience. We care for our patients Monday-Friday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please email your resume attached as a Word document to dentalpractice@xxx.com or fax to 555.333.1111. To learn more about us, visit www.orthopractice.com.

Interviews are being scheduled, so send your resume today! We look forward to meeting you.

RDAEF Wanted
Fun and energetic dental office is looking for a motivated and skilled full-time dental assistant to join our team! We offer top wages and benefits. If you are a registered dental assistant in extended function and are eager to work hard and have fun, please call Cathy at 555.333.1111 or fax your resume to 555.333.2222. Only respond if you have expanded duties and previous dental experience.

Dental Hygienist
Create Your Own Schedule
Fast-paced office seeking full-time dental hygienist. If you are not a morning person, take our late shift or start early and pick up your kids from school. This fast-paced, growing practice is seeking a caring, enthusiastic hygienist to join our dental team. For more information, call Cathy at 555.333.1111 or email your resume to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

Dental Hygienist Wanted
_____ Dental Group is looking for an experienced hygienist to work four days/week in our state-of-the-art practice. Office is equipped with digital X-rays, digital charting and intraoral cameras. We offer exceptional pay + % of production and an impressive benefit package.

Inquiries call 555.333.1111 or email your resume to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

Personable Hygienist Wanted
We are a friendly family practice located in downtown __________ looking for a dental hygienist to care for our patients and grow with our practice. The position is full time (four days per week).

We offer great compensation and benefits. If you are looking for a fresh start and a promising environment, come join our team! Please call Cathy at 555.333.1111 or email your resume to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

Must be a licensed dental hygienist in the state of California with a great personality.
**Dental Hygienist**

State-of-the-art dental practice in ___________ seeking part-time hygienist. Must be familiar with taking digital radiographs. Previous experience with Dentrix is a plus. Great staff! Come join our team! Please email or fax resume with cover letter to 555.333.1111 or email to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

**Exceptional Dental Hygienist Wanted**

Excellent opportunity in an established cosmetic, full-service dental practice in _______. We are looking for a part-time (Tues and Thurs) 8 a.m.-5 p.m., self-motivated, energetic hygienist with a positive attitude, excellent clinical skills and the ability to sell dentistry. Qualities must include superb customer service skills, professionalism and a desire to excel. Computer literacy is important. If you truly believe patients are the most important part of the practice and want to deliver that Nordstrom’s touch, we would love to talk to you! Respond by email to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

**Front Office/Office Managers**

**Office Receptionist Needed**

Cosmetic and general dental practice in ___________ is seeking a full-time front office receptionist. Candidate must be experienced in scheduling and billing with a professional appearance and excellent phone skills. This is a great growth opportunity for the right candidate. Benefits available. Salary based on experience.

Contact Cathy at 555.333.1111 or email your resume to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

**Dental Front Office**

I am looking for a receptionist who has computer skills. You will greet patients, make charts, file charts, set up appointments and verify eligibility. Must be friendly, responsible, punctual and a team player. Familiarity with insurance billing will be a plus. This job has benefits, such as medical insurance, paid vacation and a retirement plan. Salary will depend on your experience. Bilingual is also a plus. Please email your resume to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

**Front Office Wanted**

Seeking front office person who aspires to bring happiness and energy to an office that is undergoing renovation and new technology integration. The position includes minor treatment-coordinator duties to ensure our patients have a positive dental experience.

The perfect candidate will have good computer skills with Microsoft Office, be proficient with email and internet and, most important, be familiar with _________ software system.

Contact Cathy at 555.333.1111 or email your resume to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

**Bilingual Front Office Wanted**

Looking for an energetic, responsible person with at least two years of experience in dental billing and front desk duties. Must be fluent in Spanish.

Brand-new office opening doors in the ________ area. Monday-Thursday and possibly some Saturdays. Must be available to start right away.

Excellent compensation and benefits. Please call Cathy for more information at 555.333.1111.
**Dental Practice Manager**

Our progressive dental office is seeking a motivated person for the position of practice manager. Office is new, paperless and state-of-the-art. Candidate must have excellent phone and people skills.

Candidate should be reliable, exhibit a high level of professionalism and a strong work ethic. Minimum of 2-3 years of dental front office experience required, including billing and knowledge of various insurances. Position is 24-28 hours per week.

If you are looking to be part of a great dental team focused on providing the best service and care to patients, please fax resume to 555.333.1111.

**Seeking Office Manager**

We are seeking a highly dependable, detail-oriented, well-organized individual who can work independently and supervise a staff of six employees. Must have dental and management experience.

Knowledge of __________ software and excellent written and communication skills are required. Familiarity with Quick Books is preferred but will train the right individual. Must be knowledgeable in insurance billing and collection procedures.

Email your resume and cover letter to dentalpractice@xxx.com.

**Associate Dentist**

**Practice Transition Opportunity**

Established GP practice in Cerritos with a unique opportunity for someone who desires to take the next step in his or her career to become a future practice owner. This person will initially work as an associate dentist to be able to build relationships with the patients and the team. The practice owner transition process will take between 3-5 years so a long-term commitment is necessary.

Practice owner is an active member within his community who values doing things the right way and providing quality dentistry to his patients.

The practice is seeking someone who is driven while having a compassionate nature. The practice sees and treats emergency patients on a daily basis so the associate must be available for those situations. This opportunity will start as part time but will eventually lead into a full-time schedule.

The ideal associate:

• Educates patients on their oral health needs in a compassionate manner.
• Desires to get involved within the community.
• Has the ability to build relationships quickly with the patients and team.
• Provides leadership to the team.

Minimum Requirements:

• Four years of clinical experience.
• Financially solvent to purchase a practice.
• Current California Dental Board License.
Future Practice Owner

Thriving practice has a great opportunity to hire an associate dentist for their general practice in _______. Practice owner(s) are well-regarded in the dental community. The practice has been established since _________, with a very loyal patient base.

The practice values a family–friendly environment, loyalty and honesty. Their mission is to help their patients achieve optimal oral health with integrity and compassion.

The practice owners are looking for someone to carry on the legacy that they have built and to take care of their team and patients. This opportunity is unique as their intention is to groom the associate as the future practice owner over the next couple of years.

This opportunity will be part time time initially on Mondays, Fridays and every other Thursday. Potential for 1-2 Saturdays a month.

The ideal associate:

• Willingness to be a teacher and educate patients on their oral health needs.
• Possess a strong sense of compassion.
• Patient-centric.
• Provide leadership and mentorship to the team.

Minimum Requirements:

• Minimum four years of clinical experience.
• Current California Dental Board License.
• CPR, DEA, NPI and malpractice insurance.