

NCWIT TIPS FOR JOB DESCRIPTION ANALYSIS

TIP #1: AVOID EXTREME MODIFIERS

Avoid phrases like “best of the best,” “off the charts,” “world-class,” or “unparalleled.” Research shows that these kinds of terms tend to prevent women (as well as many men) from applying. Anyone who has been raised/socialized to downplay their expertise, or not “toot their own horn,” will be less likely to categorize themselves in these ways, even when they are very highly qualified. Suggested alternatives would be: “truly innovative”; “a genuine curiosity”; “highly respected”; “excellent, thoughtful, or perceptive [insert type of skills]”; “dedicated or committed to creative problem solving and getting things done.”



Also avoid words or phrases like “perfectionists” or “forever tinkering.” Highly-qualified talent that doesn’t self-identify this way — that sees themselves as having a broader set of valuable skills — can be dissuaded by this language. Suggested alternatives would be: “enjoys tinkering and teamwork to arrive at solutions to critical problems” (or any similar kind of combination that describes a broader set of applicable skills).

TIP #2: AVOID GENDER-SPECIFIC PRONOUNS (HE OR SHE)

It may seem obvious, but this kind of mistake is more common than you would think. Rephrase to avoid the need for these pronouns. If they must be used, be sure to strike a balance between masculine and feminine terms. Also look for more subtle cases, such as “manpower” or “chairman.”

TIP #3: IMPROVE BALANCE OF “MASCULINE/FEMININE” ASSOCIATED LANGUAGE

The goal is to achieve a balance of language (or if you are having trouble attracting a particular sex to particular jobs, you might want to weight the language slightly in that direction). In the examples below, we are not suggesting that one should never use words like “manage,” “resolves,” “analyzes,” but that an overuse of these words can be problematic. It’s also important to remember that in calling these “masculine” or “feminine” words, we are talking about historical associations, rather than saying that these things actually are masculine or feminine. In reality, we know that both men and women can be good at managing and analyzing or understanding and nurturing.

BEFORE	RECOMMENDATION
<i>Manages the successful resolution of client issues, including competing demands, sensitive situations, and conflicts with other groups.</i>	Thoughtfully works with the client to resolve issues, including competing demands, sensitive situations, and conflicts with other groups.
<i>Mobilizes team, establishing the tactical plans, projects and objectives needed to accomplish these goals and ensure their attainment.</i>	Mobilizes and encourages team, establishing the specific (or concrete, day-to-day) plans, projects and objectives needed...
<i>Proactively manages the talent in their area, establishing performance goals and objectives, providing ongoing constructive and formal performance feedback and establishing and implementing development plans.</i>	Proactively develops (or nurtures) the talent in their area; co-constructing performance goals, objectives and development plans, and providing ongoing constructive performance feedback.
<i>Manages and resolves the diverse perspectives of stakeholders.</i>	Is sensitive to (or understands) the diverse perspectives of stakeholders and works with them to resolve differences.