Inclusive Hiring in Tech: How to Write More Inclusive Job Descriptions

Jill Bender, Software Engineer
Why should you care?

• Innovation [1]
• Performance [2]
• The bottom-line [3]
• It’s the right thing to do

Why am I here?
Sue: There are no other women in those photos. None. That is freaky. Does not know women exist?

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The Problem

- Talent Pool and Recruitment
- Onboarding
- Networks and Social Capital
- Talent Reviews
- Senior Leadership
- Entering the Field and Social Norms
- Hiring Process
- Sponsorship
- Mentorship
- Opportunities and Stretch Assignments

Jill Bender
Effective Job Descriptions
What is the purpose of a job description?

• Encourage as many qualified candidates to apply as possible.
• **What can I do to ensure the qualified diverse candidates apply?**
Maintaining the status quo using language

• Job advertisements that use masculine wording are less appealing to women. [1]

[1] Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011)
Deliberately add language that appeals to women & underrepresented groups
Instead of stereotypically masculine words

**Before:**

- **Aggressive:**
  aggressive, tackle, relentless, ambitious, force, crushing/kicking, drive, whatever it takes, determined, capture

- **Dominating:**
  owning the, a master of, manage, dominant, stand apart, sets the standard, strong, superior, control, outstanding, proven

- **Competitive:**
  track record, expert, world-class, extremely, exceptional, competition, in the eyes of/in the face of

- **Terms that suggest a masculine culture:**
  hacker/guru/ninja/rockstar, foosball, ping-pong, references to alcohol, references to video games, 'work hard, play hard'

**After:**

- **Teamwork:**
  contribute, collaborate, teamwork, our team, growing team, with other, lasting relationship, effective relationships, partnering, teaching, interpersonal

- **Meaningful:**
  strive, more personal, will impact

- **Emotional awareness:**
  empathy, stories, creating, care, humility, engaging, more personal

- **Welcoming:**
  come join, be a part of, comfortable, welcome, embrace
Use friendly, welcoming language

Instead of urging, demanding, or challenging language

Before:
• “Change the world or go home”
• “There are very few opportunities in your career when you can work on a product that is industry changing. All eyes are on you, and the odds are stacked against you. Failure is just not an option.”
• “If you require constant, rigid process this is not the job for you.”

After:
• “Help us change the world”
• “Join us in working on a product that is industry changing. We are excited to create next generation of IoT applications that will change the world for the better.”
• “Our team values a friendly atmosphere with passion for improving engineering practices along with building excellent products”
Research by HP shows women applied to a job posting only if they met **90-100%** of the requirements.

Is that *REALLY* a requirement?

- Minimize Bullet Points – Seen as a “checklist”
- “Would I really not hire them if they didn’t have this?”

Remember...

90-100%
Use measurable criteria

Instead of hyperbolic language

Before:

• “Must demonstrate an **exceptional** understanding of a scalable systems, with **confident** foundation of services.”
• “Mega-strong communications, data synthesis, presentation, and leadership skills.”

After:

• remove bullet point, use paragraph form “**You will** work on scalable systems and services.”
• If it’s a requirement, make it measurable – Think checklist ✔ “Experience writing specs and presenting.”
What about the “Nice-to-haves”?

• “Nice-to-haves” are also perceived as requirements.
• If you want them, keep them privately, not published.
• If you just HAVE to leave them in the JD, put them in paragraph form.
Checklist

- Role description has clear, measurable requirements. Only non-negotiables are listed.
- (if they have to be present) nice-to-haves are limited and in paragraph form.
- Bullet points are limited to less than 30% of the document.
- Uses friendly welcoming language. Avoids aggressive and forceful language.
- Includes lots of “We” and “You” statements.
- Includes lots of verbs.
- Free of corporate clichés
- Includes positive phrases.
- Language includes deliberate terms that appeal to women and underrepresented groups
- Avoids describing the candidate in hyperbolic language, e.g. 'expert' or 'master'
- Draft is shared with a broad audience for feedback before publishing.
Helpful tools

- **Textio**
- **Hemingway App**
- **Visual Editor**
- **Watson Natural Language Understanding**
- **Gender Decoder for Job Ads**

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**Software Engineer**

Job listing for an Engineering role in an unknown location

The Internet of Things (IoT) is one of the hottest technology trends as new business and consumer scenarios are unlocked that rely on insights and control from devices of all sizes. In addition to device innovation that allows nearly ubiquitous reach, the cloud has enabled scenarios where it is routine to process petabytes of data and use advanced analytics (e.g., machine learning) to gain new insights. Microsoft Azure is an industry leader in IoT with the introduction of Azure IoT. Azure IoT is a comprehensive solution that spans devices, device management, gateways, advanced analytics, and command & control functionality. Azure IoT is already in production with millions of devices and trillions of messages a month already flowing.

The Azure IoT solutions team is looking for a highly motivated and talented engineer to design and deliver pre-configured solutions that enable customers to rapidly build IoT applications using Azure services. Candidates will enable massive scale, self-managing cloud applications that can be operated in public or private datacenters around the world, enable secure interconnection for millions of devices to and from the cloud, develop distributed systems capable of scaling to millions of transactions per second at sub-second latencies.

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Summary
(use the checklist)

1. Minimize bullets.
2. Language matters.
   Avoid stereotypically masculine words.
3. Circulate your JD broadly for review
Thank you

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Questions? Comments?
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To learn more:
National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT)
Women in Tech: The Facts
Additional Resources
Resources

• National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) Women in Tech: The Facts


• University of Michigan Advance Program Research and Guidelines:
  • [http://advance.umich.edu/researchreports.php](http://advance.umich.edu/researchreports.php)
Research:

- Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality. [Link](http://www.fortefoundation.org/site/DocServer/gendered_wording_JPSP.pdf?docID=16121)
- University of Michigan Study of groups: [Link](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287234332_The_influence_of_gender_stereotypes_on_role_adoption_in_student_teams)
Research:

- Scott Page, The difference: how the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools, societies, Princeton 2007