

# HIRING

# GEEKS THAT FIT



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# Hiring Geeks That Fit

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# 5 Develop Ads for Open Positions

“Oh, I’ll just let the HR people write the ad. They’ll know what to say.”—Hiring novice

Job descriptions help you screen candidates by making it easier for you to differentiate between the essential and desirable requirements for a particular job. A well-written ad helps a candidate screen him or herself in or out for the job. Develop an ad that helps the most appropriate candidates respond to you.

## 5.1 Use a job ad template

[Company name] is looking for a [job title].  
Main attractor:  
Deliverables and activities:  
Essential qualities, preferences, and skills:  
Contact information:

### Job Advertisement Template

Use a job ad template to organize the information you need to include in the ad. The main attractor is the selling point of the specific job. Then, list the opportunity to be described

by the ad—the activities the candidate will perform—and the essential qualities, preferences, and non-technical and technical skills. If you wrote a job analysis and a job description, you have those details ready to pull into the ad. Conclude with contact information.

When you write the ad this way, you will help candidates screen themselves. If they want a job with the selling point, the main attractor you've listed, then they'll keep reading. If they read on and determine that they possess the qualities, preferences, and skills described in the ad, and they want to perform the work, they'll send their résumé in response to the ad. Despite the screening your ad copy will provide, you'll probably still receive résumés that don't fit the open position, but you'll receive fewer of them. The only time truly unqualified candidates don't screen themselves out is during a down economy, when just about anyone who can draw a breath and is looking for a job will send you a résumé.

**Main attractor:** Define what will attract the kinds of people you want to hire. Consider corporate cultural-fit factors, and product and technology matches. Make the main attractor upbeat to draw candidates into the job. Every job has something that will attract potential candidates. It could be the job itself, the company, the technology, the people already in the group, or something else. Position what you think is most attractive to candidates at the start of the ad.

When the company is the main attractor, start with facts about the company as noted in your job analysis:

Dynamic start-up company seeks a senior software developer...

Established, profitable company seeks a talented support engineer...

If the job itself is the main attractor, you could start the ad with a question that implies a benefit. Be careful to avoid questions that candidates are likely to answer No to, however; they won't keep reading if they do not like the implied benefit. Examples of possible opening questions follow:

Tired of using the same old approach to testing?  
Create a test environment you can be proud of...

Ready to take on a bigger challenge than designing Web pages? Learn to craft and build dynamic new products...

With technology as the main attractor, you might start an ad with a reference to, say, wireless computing:

Ready for the challenge of supporting wireless computing?

If the main attractor is the wonderful group of people already on staff, start with that fact as the main attractor:

Come join an award-winning team of technical writers...

Make the main attractor specific. Simply naming generally available, subjective benefits will not be particularly effective. Try

to identify what is special about your job opening rather than just heralding a “great company,” “strong technology,” or “terrific people.” None of these three “benefits” will be particularly effective in grabbing the attention of a potential candidate. Make your main attractor specific and compelling so that it forces the candidate to notice your ad.

If you have more than one main attractor, you can create multiple ads, and see which ads bring in the best batch of résumés. You also can use more than one of the attractors in one ad. You even can put all the attractors into a single ad. When I have multiple main attractors, I usually write and post multiple ads, and see which ad brings me the greatest number of qualified candidates.

It’s worth spending time thinking about and describing your main attractor. The main attractor describes the opportunity for candidates—the “thing”—tangible or intangible—that differentiates your job from everyone else’s.



Highlight the main attractor so you can make the job a real opportunity for the right candidate.

Once you know what you want to start with, you can write the body of the ad.

**Deliverables and activities:** Use specifics from the job description template presented in [Write the Job Description](#) to build the middle of the ad. Describe the kind of work you want this person to be able to perform. Detail makes your environment real to