Applied
Smarter, Fairer, Easier Job Adverts

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The science behind poor job adverts

Words matter, and the way they are used in job adverts can affect who applies to a role. This can be a big issue if you want to have the best talent no matter of their background and be a more inclusive organisation. The research in this area can be divided into 3 main areas:

1) Specific types of words can stop female candidates from applying

Competency, leadership and driven are stereotypically masculine words that can deter women from applying to a job. And the opposite does not occur: stereotypically feminine words don’t deter men from applying to a job.

2) Job adverts can also trigger some candidates’ risk and ambiguity aversion and stop them from applying

For example, job ads that don’t inform candidates about the number of candidates that have applied attract fewer female candidates than job applications that do inform the number of applicants.

3) The number of requisites in a job ad are a factor that may also stop some groups from applying

Evidence shows that men apply to jobs when they meet 60% of the conditions of the job advert, while women only apply if they meet 100% of the job conditions.
Examples of good and bad job ads

Below is an example of a poor job ad which falls into a few of the pitfalls (masculine coded, hard to read, long, endless list of requirements), compared to one that follows the best practices as per the research:

Room for improvement...

- stereotypically masculine words
- corporate cliché

Are you an ambitious researcher who can think outside the box?

Use behavioural science and predictive analytics as a decision tool to drive a forward-looking analysis of scenarios, response effectiveness, and critical correlations that can anticipate events. Better interpretation of the drivers of human behaviour, whether existing and relying on expert knowledge or internally developed, can help build a robust, flexible and dynamic strategy. The objective for enhanced analytics and research is not to predict events, but to help companies develop more meaningful actions, and increase awareness of their leverage in preventing or managing undesired outcomes.

- Skills
  - Specific technical skills we are looking include:
    - Have at least 5 years experience
    - Demonstrate a knowledge of all psychological models of behaviour,
    - Generate and test hypotheses about human behaviour using all the available tools,
    - Show relevant evidence of good research and analytical skills,
    - Have knowledge of qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques,
    - Ability to assess the validity of conclusions drawn from data,
    - Be the best communicator of complex ideas,
    - Use IT software including PowerPoint, Word, Excel, electronic diaries, internet.
    - Ability to read, speak and write coherently in English, Spanish, German, French, Mandarin.
    - Demonstrable interest in how data and behavioural science can be used to change every one’s world.
    - Making presentations in an engaging manner, using photoshop, illustrator, and all the design tools.
    - Ability to quickly become researcher leader.
    - Ability to influence and work in teams, and with people from other disciplines.
    - Ability to handle multiple concurrent assignments in a timely manner.
    - Evidence of a history of proactivity and initiative.

A wishlist

... getting there

Are you researcher willing to understand behaviour and promote social change?

If you know how to model and predict behaviour, you can help us work with different organisations to prevent unwanted social outcomes. Using the correct tools will let us define cost-effective actions that promote social change in different contexts.

- Skills
  - Specific technical skills we are looking include:
    - Generate and test hypotheses about human behaviour using relevant tools.
    - Have knowledge of qualitative and quantitative techniques.
    - Ability to assess the validity of conclusions drawn from data.
    - Be able to communicate complex ideas.
    - Ability to influence and work in teams, and with people from other disciplines.
    - Ability to handle multiple concurrent assignments in a timely manner.

Focused on core skills

word count: 787
no jargon
no corporate clichés
does not ask for years of experience

word count: 1978
The best practices

So based on the research, here’s a checklist of the things to do to make your job ad as accessible as possible:

- Before starting the job ad, explicitly list out the skills/requirements actually needed to do the job.
- Keep the word count between 300 and 800 words.
- Keep the mandated requirements to a minimum.
- Include all information that is important for setting the right expectations (salary, location, flexible working etc.).
- Minimise the use of gendered language. Preferably make it neutrally worded or skewed slightly feminine.
- Test the readability of the job ad to ensure it is equal to the level required for the role.
- Try not to specify the number of years of experience as this can rule out qualified older or younger applicants.
- Consider removing educational requirements (e.g. MBA) if not actually required to do the job.
- Consider removing ‘nice-to-haves’ as some applicants will interpret these as requirements and not apply.
- Remove acronyms as they add ambiguity and can be a sign that you do not belong and should not apply.
- Ensure your equal opportunity policy and flexible working options are clearly mentioned.
Applied is a recruitment platform that gives you world leading behavioural science to **remove bias** and **improve predictive validity** in hiring. It’s the first tech spin out of the UK’s Behavioural Insights Team and was developed in partnership with Harvard Professor Iris Bohnet.

The platform makes hiring **smart**, **fair**, and **easy**, using research and analytics to ensure you hire the best person for the job, irrespective of their background.

[Get a demo](#) of the Applied Text Analysis Tool and test out your job ads today.