The Data-Driven Guide to Better Job Ads

Over the years, we've worked with and reached out to a wide range of companies - meaning we've seen millions of job ads. Along the way, we've teamed up with experts to learn what really works. But since we're a data-driven company, we don't just go by expert opinion - we want to see the numbers behind the advice. So we looked for solid research or ran our own studies to find out what actually makes a difference.

This guide is based on one of those studies, where we explored how various best practices in job ad writing impact the number of applicants.

We looked at 1,276 job ads across five companies and analyzed how different elements affected performance, including:

- Employer Value Proposition (EVP)
- Pay transparency
- Clear task and skill descriptions
- Use of clichés and jargon
- Length of the job ad
- Job title clarity and jargon
- Unique Selling Points (USPs)
- Inclusivity (age, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, neurodiversity)

Methodology

To ensure a fair and meaningful analysis, we only compared similar job ads with each other. We grouped job ads by company, seniority, department, and country to ensure comparisons happened within similar contexts.

Within each group (same company, seniority, department, and country), we split the job ads based on the selected feature - for example, whether the job ad contained an EVP or not.

To ensure reliability, we kept groups where both feature categories had at least three job ads each. This prevents small or unrepresentative groups from skewing the results.

For each valid group, we calculated the average number of applicants for each category of the feature. Next, we computed the percentage difference in applicants between the two feature categories.

Finally, we averaged these percentage differences across all valid groups to estimate the overall impact of the feature on applicant count.

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Employer Value Proposition in Your Job Ads

Including an Employer Value Proposition (EVP) in a job ad can make a big difference. In our analysis, job ads that included an EVP received 36.1% more applicants on average.

- Number of ads with EVP: 146
- Number of ads without EVP: 150

So, what exactly is an EVP?
It's the unique mix of benefits, values, and experiences a company offers its employees. Think of it as the answer to: "Why should someone want to work here instead of somewhere else?"
A job ad is often a candidate's very first impression of your company - making it the perfect place to introduce your EVP. When done right, it can make your ad stand out and attract candidates who are a better match, faster.

Common EVP mistakes

Not all EVPs work equally well. Here are a few reasons why some fall flat:

- They sound generic or similar to competitors.
- They highlight the wrong things (e.g., perks that don't really matter to your audience).
- They overpromise and underdeliver - leading to disillusionment once someone joins.

That's why it's important to build your EVP thoughtfully. It should reflect your company's real strengths, values, and culture - not just what sounds good.

What makes a strong EVP?

Gartner outlines four principles of an effective EVP:

1. Speak to both candidates and current employees: A strong EVP doesn't just help you hire - it also helps you keep great people. Make sure it resonates internally too.
2. Be authentic and aligned with your company's values: Don't try to be something you're not. Candidates are quick to spot fluff or contradictions.
3. Stay relevant and adaptable: As your business and your employees' expectations evolve, your EVP should too. Keep it fresh and aligned with your broader strategy.
4. Stand out from the competition: Highlight what makes your workplace genuinely different. It could be your mission, culture, flexibility, or growth opportunities.

The human deal: Why emotional connection matters

Today, the most compelling EVPs go beyond listing salary, benefits, or career development. They tap into the whole person - their values, needs, and well-being.
This more human-centered approach, sometimes called "the human deal," is about building an emotional connection. For example, offering flexible work options, mental health support, or family benefits isn't just practical - it shows you care about what matters to your people.

What You Can Do

Want to improve your job ads with a stronger EVP? Here are a few tips:

- Audit your current job ads – Are you clearly communicating what makes your company special?
- Talk to the employees – Ask what they value most about working with the company. Use their words in your messaging.
- Keep it real – Don't oversell. Candidates value honesty more than hype.
- Make it personal – Move beyond generic perks. Highlight what will matter to the person reading the ad.
- Revisit and refine regularly – As your company and workforce evolve, your EVP should too.

Pay Transparency in Your Job Ads

Mentioning salary in a job ad works. In our study, ads that included salary details got 16.3% more applicants on average.

- Number of ads with pay transparency: 93
- Number of ads without pay transparency: 130

Beyond boosting applicant numbers, pay transparency is becoming a legal requirement. By June 7, 2026, all EU member states must implement the Pay Transparency Directive. This means job seekers must be given clear information about starting pay or salary ranges - based on objective, gender-neutral criteria.
But the impact of sharing salary info goes deeper than compliance or applicant volume.

Why salary transparency matters

A salary isn't just a number - it reflects how much a company values its people. When you publish pay info in a job ad, you're not just being helpful - you're signaling fairness, accountability, and trust.
Candidates are already researching salaries. In fact, 75% of employees prepare for pay conversations using methods like: researching similar roles online, comparing offers to past compensation, and asking peers in the industry

So if they're going to find out anyway, why not lead with it - and make a good impression from the start?

What You Can Do

Want to make your job ads stronger and more trustworthy? Here's how to approach pay transparency:

- Start including salary ranges in your job ads - even if it's just a pilot for certain roles or regions.
- Keep the range realistic - don't use overly wide bands that feel like placeholders.
- Make sure your internal compensation practices are consistent - transparency starts from within.
- Use clear language - say "€XX,000–€YY,000/year" rather than vague phrases like "market rate or "competitive salary".

Job Titles and Jargon in Titles

Job titles matter - a lot more than you might think. In our data, avoiding jargon in the job title led to a 23% increase in applicants. Also, keeping the title short (between 1 and 6 words) increased applicant numbers by 7.3%.

- Jobs with title jargon: 160
- Jobs without title jargon: 153
- Jobs with concise titles: 50
- Jobs with longer titles: 109

A job title might seem like a small detail, but it can make or break your job post's visibility - and its appeal. Whether you're getting buried in job board results or just not connecting with the right people, your title might be the reason why.

Why job titles can hurt (or help)

1) Avoid getting red-flagged on job boards

Ever posted a job and gotten no traction? Some titles trigger red flags on platforms like LinkedIn or Indeed. If they seem spammy, misleading, or overly flashy, the job board might down-rank them.

Tip: Stick to clear, straightforward titles. Ditch the gimmicks like "Rockstar," "Wizard," or "Guru" - they might be fun, but they can hurt your reach.

2) Be search-friendly

Job titles aren't just for humans - they're for algorithms too. Think of them like headlines: if they don't match what people are searching for, they won't show up. A job titled "Senior Software Engineer" will show up in way more searches than "Code Ninja" or "Developer III."

Tip: Use common, recognizable job titles and add in key skills when relevant. For example, "Python Backend Engineer" works better than just "Software Developer" if you're targeting a specific talent pool.

3) Set the right expectations

Job title inflation - like calling an entry-level position a "Senior Manager" - might seem like it would attract more applicants, but it usually backfires. Candidates get confused, mismatched, or feel misled when they learn the role doesn't match the title. That's not a good look for your brand.

Tip: Be honest about the role's level. Don't add fluff to make it sound more important than it is. You'll attract better-matched applicants and create a smoother candidate experience.

What You Can Do

Want your job titles to work harder for you? Here's how to get it right:

- Keep it short – Aim for 1 to 6 words. That's enough to be clear without losing attention.
- Avoid buzzwords and jargon – Use real titles that candidates actually search for.
- Be accurate – Match the title to the actual level and scope of the role.
- Use searchable keywords – Include tech stacks, tools, or focus areas if relevant.
- Test and adjust – If a title isn't performing, try a variation and track the difference.

Length of Your Job Ads

Keeping the length between 300 and 650 words led to a 13.6% increase in applicants in our data.

- Jobs between 300–650 words: 144
- Jobs outside that range: 104

A job ad isn't the same as a job description - and this is where many companies get it wrong. While a job description covers every task and responsibility in detail, a job ad is more like a marketing pitch. It's your chance to grab attention, generate interest, and drive action.

Why length matters

When people are job hunting, they're often browsing dozens (or even hundreds) of posts in one sitting. If your ad is too long, too dense, or just too much - it's likely to be skipped.

You want to give candidates just enough information to understand the core of the role and decide if it's relevant to them - without overwhelming them.

Tips for getting the length right

1) Keep it focused

Stick to the essentials: what the job is, what success looks like, what kind of team is it, and why someone should care. Save the deep dive for later in the hiring process.

2) Use bullet points

Break up longer sections with bullets for easy reading - especially when listing tasks, qualifications, or benefits. People scan, not read.

3) Be real, not salesy

Yes, you want to attract top talent - but don't oversell. Make the role sound exciting and accurate. Overpromising can lead to higher dropouts later or poor-fit hires.

4) Test and adjust

Try A/B testing different versions of your job ads and track response rates. What works for a software role might not work for sales. Let the data guide you.

What You Can Do

- Aim for a sweet spot of 300–650 words
- Use bullet points for key sections
- Focus on clarity, not fluff
- Avoid the "job description trap" - this is an ad, not a legal document
- Experiment with different formats and lengths to see what resonates

Unique Selling Point in Your Job Ads

Including a Unique Selling Point (USP) in your job ad leads to a 20.2% increase in applicants on average.

- Jobs with a USP: 216
- Jobs without a USP: 197

It's not just candidates who need to sell themselves - employers have to pitch, too.

For many roles, candidates are often choosing between multiple offers. To stand out, your job ad needs more than just a list of responsibilities. It needs a clear reason why someone should want to work for you - that's your USP.

Why a USP matters

Your Unique Selling Point is what makes your company your company. Maybe it's the tight-knit team, the exciting challenges, the real opportunities for growth, or your mission-driven culture. Whatever it is, your USP helps you cut through the noise and attract people who'll thrive in your environment.
A strong USP also helps build a consistent employer brand - one that sticks with candidates even if they don't apply right away.

What You Can Do

To make your USP really land:

- Keep it short and punchy – Don't bury it in fluff.
- Be specific – Generalities like "great culture" don't mean much unless you explain what makes it great.
- Speak to the candidate's point of view – What will they gain from working with you?
- Think emotional and practical value – Go beyond perks. Tap into meaning, purpose, or team vibe.

Avoiding Clichés in Your Job Ads

Avoiding clichés in a job ad leads to a 32.8% increase in applicants on average.

- Jobs with clichés: 90
- Jobs without clichés: 178

We've all seen them: job ads looking for "rockstars," "self-starters," or someone ready to "hit the ground running." These phrases might feel like shorthand for what you're after, but in reality, they can be confusing, vague, and off-putting to candidates.

Why clichés are a problem

At its core, a job ad is your way of showing candidates who you are, what you're hiring for, and why someone should care. But clichés get in the way of that clarity. They can mean different things to different people - or worse, mean nothing at all.

Candidates - for example, some of those who are neurodivergent or from another culture - may struggle to interpret abstract or metaphorical language like "wear many hats" or "bring your A game." Instead of encouraging them to apply, it creates friction and uncertainty.

Also, most people are reading your job ad on a job board or aggregator - not your beautiful careers page. That means the words in your posting are often their first and only impression of your company. If those words are generic or vague, that impression probably will be too.

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What You Can Do

- Cut the buzzwords: Leave out phrases like “team player,” “fast-paced environment,” “proven track record,” “dynamic,” and “go-getter.” These don’t tell candidates anything specific.
- Say what you really mean: Instead of “team player,” explain what teamwork looks like in your org -“You’ll collaborate daily with designers and developers to ship new features.”
- Skip some soft skills (for now): You can assess things like communication and enthusiasm later during interviews. Don’t clutter your ad with vague character traits.
- Use plain, specific language: Focus on the responsibilities, expectations, and value the candidate will bring to the team.

Well-defined Skill Descriptions in Your Job Ads

Having 3 to 5 well-defined skill descriptions in a job ad leads to an 18.3% increase in applicants on average.

- Jobs with 3–5 well-defined skills: 84
- Jobs with more or fewer than that: 164

Why it matters

When a job ad includes too many vague or unnecessary requirements, it often turns great candidates away. Instead of showing them a clear path into the role, it overwhelms or confuses them - especially if they don’t tick every box.

By narrowing your focus to just the essentials, you invite a broader pool of qualified applicants, including those with potential and transferable skills. A tighter, more thoughtful skill section helps the right candidates see themselves in the role and feel encouraged to apply.

What You Can Do

- Stick to 3–5 core skills: This range keeps your ad focused and digestible.
- Prioritize must-haves: What’s essential for success in the role?
- Avoid overloading: Leave out anything that can be learned on the job.
- Think beyond checklists: Ask yourself - could someone with related experience succeed here?

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Use this formula for writing skill descriptions

When describing a task or skill, get specific. Use this structure:

- **What needs to be done**
- **How it's done**
- **Who the candidate will interact with**
- **How many (tasks, clients, volume)**
- **What success looks like**

Example:
"Manage and deliver monthly financial reports (What) using [specific software] (How) for department heads (Who), covering budgets for 5 key projects (How many), ensuring 100% accuracy and meeting deadlines (Success criteria)."

Inclusivity in Your Job Ads

Inclusive language in job ads isn't just the right thing to do - it also drives more applications. When candidates feel seen, they're more likely to hit "apply." Language that excludes or unintentionally alienates can discourage entire demographics from considering your role, even if they're a great fit.

Across five key dimensions - age, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, and neurodiversity - we found (again) that job ads scoring high in inclusivity consistently attract significantly more applicants.

The impact of inclusive language

Inclusivity Type	Increase in Applicants	High-Scoring Job Ads	Low-Scoring Job Ads
Gender Inclusivity	+52.1%	85	283
Ethnicity Inclusivity	+49.0%	59	233
Age Inclusivity	+47.2%	56	254
Physical Ability	+31.2%	52	231
Neurodiversity	+19.8%	51	226

Why it matters

When you write a job ad, you're not just outlining responsibilities - you're communicating your company's values. Candidates don't read job posts in a vacuum; they're reading between the lines to figure out if they'll be a fit.

Phrases like "digital native," "must be energetic," or "fast-paced rockstar" might seem harmless, but they can subtly signal exclusion to older workers, neurodivergent individuals, or people with physical disabilities. These words often unintentionally tell people, "This job isn't for you."

Even when we don't mean to, our word choices can reinforce stereotypes or bias. And while it's nearly impossible for any one person to catch every nuance, tools like Develop Diverse make it easy to spot and replace exclusionary language - ensuring your ads are attracting a wider and more diverse pool of qualified candidates.

What You Can Do

- Audit your language: Be intentional with every phrase. Avoid words that suggest bias toward age, gender, ability, ethnicity, or neurotypical behavior.
- Get help from software: Tools like Develop Diverse help identify exclusionary language and suggest inclusive alternatives. It's fast, easy, and much more effective than trying to catch everything yourself.
- Think broad, not niche: Avoid terms that assume a certain background, physical ability, or cultural reference point.

Final Thoughts

Every word in your job ad matters. From the title to the tone, the structure to the language - small changes can have a big impact on who sees your ad and who decides to apply. By making data-driven adjustments, you're not just optimizing for more applicants, but for the right ones, too.

Throughout this report, we've been transparent about the scope, methodology, and data behind our findings - so you understand what they're based on. We also recognize the study's limitations and acknowledge that many factors can influence the number of applicants.

But one thing is clear: following best practices has an impact - from implementing an EVP and clear skill descriptions to avoiding vague titles and exclusionary language.

This is just the beginning. We'll continue developing and expanding this research as we move forward.