

Job Descriptions

Our main contact regarding job descriptions was John Trost, one of the department managers at San Luis Obispo's Barnes & Noble. When we asked him about the store's job descriptions—if they had them, if he knew what they were, and if he knew where they were—he responded positively. He told us that job descriptions are given to district HR representatives from the corporate offices in New York. The HR Representatives then have multiple meetings with district managers, who then turn hand it down to local store managers to implement job descriptions during orientation and training. Job descriptions are used in annual reviews for employees are conducted by regional, store, and department managers. We then asked him to describe his job as Department Manager to see if his own understanding of his position reflected his job description. He stated: "...Concentrate on merchandising and work downstairs, check in to see what's going on, see if merchandise has been merchandised, see if the store is clean, see if displays are full, and replace planner schedule."

His description almost perfectly matched the corporate job description, provided to the public on the B&N corporate website. The corporate job description for a Department Manager states:

"The Department Manager runs a section of a store (Books, Café, Music, and Receiving), managing merchandising and operations and keeping track of sales, returns and inventory. The Department Manager is part of the store's

management team, involved with hiring, training, developing, evaluating and supervising store staff.”

We trust that John Trost fully comprehends what his tasks and responsibilities are. After our discussion with John, we spoke to different lead booksellers (a lower-entry position) to ask them about their understanding of their position and compared it to the corporate description as well. They stated that they had to know their section of the store really well, take inventory using a handheld, barcode scanner, clean up after customers, merchandise their sections, but most importantly to provide great customer service. Whereas the corporate job description for a lead bookseller states: “Leads are the experts in their assigned sections, and are a key resource to booksellers and customers alike. Leads monitor in-store inventories and manage work assignments.” To our understanding, lead booksellers know their position as it relates to the store’s needs; however, it is visible to see that corporate job descriptions needs to be updated to fully reflect what thir duties are.

Suggested Improvements

We discovered that most employees were not formally given their job descriptions. Instead they are posted on the corporate website for the employee to visit. This is a vital factor that needs to be assessed as employees should be given a full description of what their tasks and responsibilities are, rather than

just being told by a manager throughout orientation and training. A shocking fact brought to our attention was that job descriptions have been flat for the past six years. A job analysis needs to be conducted as a top priority for this store and they must also consider a job redesign throughout the process. A job redesign must involve all levels of management along with interviews with specific employees regarding their positions. Another issue that we noted throughout our discussion with John was the relationship between district managers/HR representatives with local retail stores. Regional and district managers visit only once a year for employee reviews. The number of visits should increase to every financial quarter. This would create a stronger relationship between both local and corporate entities of Barnes & Noble and increase productivity among their workforce.