Seven simple steps to sourcing super staff online

Are you a not-for-profit or social enterprise that's been puzzled by a less-than-fulsome response to a job ad? Over the last four years, EthicalJobs.com.au has advertised thousands of jobs for ethical employers around the country, so we've seen a lot of good ads, and a lot of bad ads (no naming names though!)

Having looked at so many ads, we've tried to distil the lessons we've learned about what makes a job ad work into just ~~seven~~ (okay, there's eight!) simple steps.

Are you ready?

1) Start with WHY

The first and most important step is to start with "Why".

People using EthicalJobs.com.au are looking for jobs that help make the world a better place. They want to know not just WHAT they'll be doing in the job, but WHY they would want to do the job. That is, what difference will the job make, and to whom?

The secret to getting potential applicants interested is to explain clearly how the role (and your organisation more broadly) contributes to a more just, more equitable or more sustainable world, and what sort of difference they could make in the role. Do this as early in the ad as possible – grab their attention rather than making them read through paragraphs of text to find out this key information.

As Simon Sinek suggests in this TED talk, "People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it. . . . If you hire people just because they can do a job, they'll work for your money; but if you hire people who believe what you believe, they'll work for you with blood, and sweat and tears."

2) Don't just paste the PD in – write a snappy, convincing ad

A job ad is not a position description – although some of the content may overlap. We still see some employers who paste a long PD into the main body of the ad – this makes an ad super-difficult to read, and can turn off potential applicants.

Instead, the idea of a job ad should be to whet job-seekers' appetites. Get them interested (or even excited!) about your organisation and the role, and tempt them to download a position description – or visit your website – to find out more about your organisation and the job.

Your ad should be short-ish, readable and attractive, and should "sell" the job to a prospective job-seeker. If you can't summarise the most exciting aspects of the role in one screen (or maybe a little more), chances are job-seekers will miss some of the most interesting or important parts of the job.

3) Use a descriptive job title – and spell out acronyms

Descriptive job titles attract more interest than generic "Case Manager" or "Outreach Worker" positions. Make sure your job title gives job-seekers at least some clue about how the job makes a difference – for instance, by including the focus of the job in the title.

A more descriptive title like "Community Outreach Worker" or "Case Manager – New Migrants" can make a significant difference to interest in a job, compared to the more bland alternatives.

And remember to spell out any of those well-worn acronyms. They might mean a lot to your organisation (and your funding bodies) but they're an instant turnoff for prospective candidates who might not be familiar with them. For example, "Personal Helpers and Mentors" sounds a lots better, and will generate more interest than "PHaMs". If in doubt, spell it out!

4) Use the summary to reveal the "heart" of the job

The 200 character summary that appears in search results on EthicalJobs.com.au is your first and best chance to attract a potential applicant's interest, and show them how your job and organisation are working for a better world.

Where appropriate to the role, using values-related keywords such as "humanitarian" and "community" in the summary can noticeably increase the number of click-throughs to a job ad.

5) It's not all about you

Have you ever been to a party or an event and met someone who bored you to tears because all they could talk about was themselves? Well, that's what your job ad might look like to a prospective applicant if all you talk about is your organisation – it's all you, you, you.

You obviously need to tell people about your organisation and the role, but your ad shouldn't be all about you. Probably the best way to focus on the applicant and resonate with them is to include a few specific sentences or a paragraph about the applicant you're looking for – the skills, attributes, experience and outlook you're hoping they'll have. Don't be afraid to use the word "you" instead of writing "the applicant" – it's much more personal.

6) Speling matters alot

Job-searching has more that a few comparisons with dating – both parties are looking for a good match that will last into the future. An important question in both situations is how much can you learn about a prospective employer/partner before the all-important interview/date?

Well, dating website OKCupid tried to find out, analysing the messages of 500,000 people using their site. They found that messages that contained spelling or grammar mistakes were significantly less likely to get a response. We reckon the same is true for job ads.

Whether in dating or job-searching, the lesson here is that first impressions last, so make sure you double or triple check your spelling and grammar before posting that job ad.

7) Always attach your position description to your ad

Don't force job-seekers to hunt around in the depths of your organisation's website to find a position description. Include a link to your organisation by all means, but uploading a position description as an attachment to the ad saves job-seekers precious time, and makes them more likely to investigate further.

8) Include clear application instructions: who, what, where, when

You'd be surprised how many organisations post an ad on EthicalJobs.com.au without full application instructions. Sometimes they've forgotten to include an email or postal address to send applications to. Other times they direct jobseekers to a position description on their website for application instructions – but forget to include application instructions in the position description!

At a minimum, make sure BOTH your ad AND your PD include clear instructions on:
*   **Who** to address the application to;
*   **Where** to send the application;
*   **What** should be included in the application;
*   **When** the application deadline is