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# Graphic Arts MONTHLY

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## **The Best Go Back to Basics; In any organization, nothing is more fundamental than an employee job description.**

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As an avid sports fan, I've followed teams and listened to their views on why they rise to the top or maintain consistently higher performance than their peers. Over time, some things seem to go in and out of fashion-emphasizing offense versus defense, for example, or pitching versus batting-for driving success. Occasionally, someone redefines an element of competition and wins, until someone else makes the necessary adjustment to combat the new initiative.

On the other hand, some things never seem to ever go out of style. Winning teams consistently talk about getting the fundamentals right, understanding the basics, doing what they do best and "not beating themselves." Flash and style points go only so far in sports, and in business, while basics and fundamental building blocks offer opportunity for growth and the stability on which to build success.

Within any organization, nothing is more basic than an employee job description. We all have heard many times: "Employees make the difference," or "Employees are the competitive advantage or secret weapon," or even "Employees determine the future." Technology is a great equalizer as anyone can buy and implement it, but employees are a differentiator that competitors cannot imitate. They are the living, thought-provoking, problem-solving, relationship-building asset that determines a firm's ultimate success or failure.

As valuable as employees are, most printers will readily admit that their workers' job descriptions are either out of date, not in place or no longer applicable to tasks that employees are actually doing. How can any manager expect employees to perform at optimal levels when there is not a sound system in place for managing the job-description process? Yet many printing company managers will evaluate employee performance, and fully expect staff to improve, without the benefit of an accurate job description.

**Update those job descriptions!**

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It is time to go back to basics. People will do what is expected of them, or go well above and beyond, only to the extent that they understand those baseline expectations. To properly hire people, evaluate their efforts, promote them or guide them in their daily efforts, job descriptions need to be accurate and current. This is fundamental to success. It is an operating device that will not change with time or with the latest management fad. Being the best begins with the basics. And a job description is about as basic as it gets.

Provide employees with the tools to know and understand their jobs. Clearly define company needs and expectations. Provide the tools to know and understand their jobs. Employees want to understand what is expected-their role in driving a company's success and how their performance will be measured and compared.

There are many excuses for putting this off. Business moves too fast, and there is no time. Today's production deadlines come first.

To put this issue in perspective, think of a company as a team sport. What would happen if the players didn't know their positions? In a word: chaos.

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