

Directorate General Human Resources

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UPDATABLE

Contact persons:



Using gender neutral language in vacancy notices

Research shows¹ that the combination of certain words used in job descriptions hold women back from applying for positions for which they are qualified and suitable. Empirical studies on the effect of gender wording in vacancy notices found out that the combination of words used on job descriptions could influence the job seekers' behaviour: while women tend to spot gender bias in job postings, men are not sensitive to the language used in job advertisements. Since the Executive Board wishes to attract more female talent, DG/HR advises avoiding the combination of gender biased phrasing in job advertisements, and replacing them with alternative gender neutral expressions².

Gender biased words

We are looking for an **ambitious** Head of Section who will also **lead** XX related projects. The ideal candidate is a **determined leader** who **constantly follows up on work progress** of the team members and is **confident** working on **tough** assignments.

Alternative gender-neutral words

We are looking for a **committed** Head of Section who will also be **responsible** for XX related projects. The ideal candidate is a **dedicated manager** who **follows and fosters team progress**, and is **comfortable** working on **challenging** assignments.

¹ <http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/static/documents/Gaucher-Friesen-Kay-JPSP-Gendered-Wording-in-Job-ads.pdf>

² <http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>

Gender biased words to be avoided	Alternative gender neutral words to be used
Drives change	→ Fosters/supports/creates change
The applicant should submit his application by ...	→ A. The applicant should submit his / her application by ... B. Applicants should submit their applications by ...
Chairman, chairwomen	→ Chair of ...
Master (noun)	→ Expert (noun)
Is action-oriented	→ Takes initiative
Is result-driven / focused on results	→ Is proactive / goal-oriented/result-oriented/delivers high-quality results
Gets to the root of the problem quickly in order to determine areas of development	→ Gets to the origin of the problem quickly in order to identify areas of development
Uses rigorous logic to analyse markets in order to determine appropriate strategies	→ Looks for patterns and analogies when analysing markets in order to establish appropriate strategies
Positively impacts / models	→ Positively shapes
Ambitious senior manager who is accountable for ...	→ Committed senior manager who is responsible for ...
Directs/leads teams or project groups	→ Manages/guides teams or project groups
Ensures accurate task control	→ Follows and evaluates task progress
Consistently tracks / monitors team members' progress	→ Follows and fosters team members' progress <i>(please note that this recommendation refers to social interactions only; on the contrary, when monitoring a process or a task, the expression on the left side would be ok, i.e. tracks / monitors data)</i>
Persuades others	→ Convinces, inspires and motivates others / Communicates with others in a convincing and credible way

Asks intrusive questions	→	Asks concrete / specific questions
Has strong communication and influencing skills	→	Is a convincing communicator able to engage others
Speaks up	→	Takes the initiative in a discussion
Brings up uncomfortable issues	→	Handles sensitive issues
Has breakthrough ideas / thinking	→	Has innovative ideas / thinking
Ensures compliance with the organisational goals	→	Acts in compliance with the organisational goals
Builds capability of staff members	→	Develops others / fosters talent
Builds coalitions	→	Builds partnerships / relations
Customer impact	→	Customer orientation
Uses expertise and knowledge from others	→	Takes into account other's views / knowledge / expertise
Leverages from the diversity of experiences ...	→	Makes best use of ...
Masters (verb)	→	Learns, succeeds at, overcomes, expands his / her knowledge