

# **Recruiting more women:** **Gender neutral job adverts**



Job Posting Analysis

## 1. Introduction

In making choices about which jobs are interesting and worth pursuing, candidates look at job descriptions in order to find a match between their self-image and the job-image. This process is influenced by candidates' gender, social class, education and fields of interest.

In other words, the language used in job adverts can either encourage or discourage certain segments of the population.

Recent research revealed that 60% of businesses showed significant male bias in the wording of their job adverts. This research was based on a study by academics Gaucher, Friesen and Kay, which found that job descriptions with more masculine wording were less likely to appeal to female applicants.

It wasn't that female candidates assumed they weren't up to the job, the research found. Rather they – consciously or unconsciously – were less likely to feel they would belong at such an employer, and didn't want to work for a company whose first impression was one of being biased in favour of men.

Because the content and the language used in a job advert is so important to the likeliness of diverse candidates applying for the job, this has been an area in which research has extensively examined how exactly language influences the attractiveness of a text to both women and men.

Is so-called male and female language really meaningful in a time in which many want to move away from binary definitions of gender?

Adrian Love, recruitment director for the UK and Ireland at Accenture, certainly feels male and female language is still a 'thing'. He points to Accenture figures showing an increase in female job applicants from 34% to 50% since 2014, thanks in part to the de-biasing of job specs. "The impact has been very positive. But there are no silver bullets here. It has to be part of a wider inclusion and diversity programme," he says.

Similar observations from Richard Marr, co-founder and chief technology officer of Applied, reporting that the tool has helped trigger an estimated 10% to 15% swing towards female candidates. (HR Magazine UK, De-biasing language in job adverts, Sarah Ronan, JUNE 26, 2019)

In this Guide to Gender Neutral Job Adverts, we offer you a summary and recommendations based on research, with practical tips, do's and don'ts, and a checklist to review your job adverts.

## 2. Conclusions from research

### a) *Stemsters Research, Flanders, 2015*

Key conclusion of the research:

10 to 20 % of the intention by women to respond to a job opening can be explained by the language used in the job description.

The Stemsters research identified 3 mechanisms that positively influence the image of STEM jobs towards women:

- Make women and men visible in the job title leads to an increase of +10% interest of women
- Take into the account the gender connotation of words and use a balanced set of words leads to a +20% interest of women when 'female' characteristics are used
- Describe 'male' characteristics as behaviour leads to an increase of +15% interest of women

Table 1: Feminine & masculine characteristics (Source: Stemster Research, Vlaanderen (2015))

| <b>Vrouwelijk</b> | <b>Neutraal</b> | <b>Mannelijk</b>  |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Aangenaam         | Alert           | Academisch        |
| Aantrekkelijk     | Authentiek      | Actief            |
| Afhankelijk       | Belangrijk      | Actueel           |
| Begripvol         | Beter           | Ambitieuus        |
| Behulpzaam        | Betrouwbaar     | Analytisch        |
| Beleefd           | Boeiend         | Assertief         |
| Bereidwillig      | Collectief      | Autonoom          |
| Betrokken         | Collegiaal      | Avontuurlijk      |
| Biologisch        | Confidentieel   | Burgerlijk        |
| Bruisend          | Consequent      | Chemisch          |
| Communicatief     | Coöperatief     | Commercieel       |
| Complex           | Correct         | Competent         |
| Creatief          | Democratisch    | Competitief       |
| Cultureel         | Discreet        | Cruciaal          |
| Ecologisch        | Divers          | Deskundig         |
| Emancipatorisch   | Duurzaam        | Digitaal          |
| Emotioneel        | Dynamisch       | Direct            |
| Empatisch         | Eerlijk         | Doelgericht       |
| Enthousiast       | Effectief       | Doeltreffend      |
| Ethisch           | Efficiënt       | Dominant          |
| Familiaal         | Eigenzinnig     | Economisch        |
| Fascinerend       | Energiezuinig   | Elektronisch      |
| Gemeenschappelijk | Essentieel      | Energiek          |
| Gepassioneerd     | Farmaceutisch   | Ervaren           |
| Gevoelig          | Flexibel        | Fanatiek          |
| Gezellig          | Geëngageerd     | Financieel        |
| Gezond            | Gemotiveerd     | Fundamenteel      |
| Humaan            | Geneeskundig    | Gedreven          |
| Integer           | Goed            | Gespecialiseerd   |
| Jong              | Groeiend        | Groot             |
| Klantgericht      | Hedendaags      | Handig            |
| Klantvriendelijk  | Indirect        | Hiërarchisch      |
| Klein             | Inferieur       | Individualistisch |
| Liefdevol         | Intelligent     | Individueel       |
| Liefhebbend       | Intensief       | Industrieel       |
| Luisterbereid     | Interactief     | Ingenieur         |
| Medelevend        | Inzetbaar       | Innovatief        |
| Menselijk         | Klinisch        | Intellectueel     |

| <b>Vrouwelijk</b> | <b>Neutraal</b>  | <b>Mannelijk</b>   |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Milieuvriendelijk | Kritisch         | Internationaal     |
| Modern            | Leergierig       | Koud               |
| Multicultureel    | Loyaal           | Krachtig           |
| Nauwgezet         | Maatschappelijk  | Mannelijk          |
| Nauwkeurig        | Medisch          | Mobiel             |
| Nieuwsgierig      | Nieuw            | Nationaal          |
| Onderdanig        | Nuttig           | Onafhankelijk      |
| Ondersteunend     | Oprecht          | Ondernemend        |
| Open              | Organisatorisch  | Oud                |
| Ordelijk          | Passief          | Praktijkgericht    |
| Pedagogisch       | Praktisch        | Professioneel      |
| Perfect           | Preventief       | Resultaatgericht   |
| Persoonlijk       | Proactief        | Ruw                |
| Psychologisch     | Rechtvaardig     | Scheikundig        |
| Respectvol        | Ruim             | Snel               |
| Sociaal           | Slim             | Solide             |
| Spontaan          | Specifiek        | Stabiel            |
| Toegeeflijk       | Stipt            | Sterk              |
| Uniek             | Toekomstgericht  | Stevig             |
| Veelzijdig        | Toekomstig       | Stressbestendig    |
| Verlegen          | Traditioneel     | Succesvol          |
| Verpleegkundig    | Uitdagend        | Superieur          |
| Verzorgd          | Uiteenlopend     | Technisch          |
| Verzorgend        | Uitstekend       | Technologisch      |
| Volgzaam          | Verantwoordelijk | Theoretisch        |
| Vriendelijk       | Vernieuwend      | Toepassingsgericht |
| Vrolijk           | Vertrouwelijk    | Toonaangevend      |
| Vrouwelijk        | Vlot             | Volhardend         |
| Warm              | Zelfredzaam      | Wetenschappelijk   |
| Zacht             | Zelfstandig      | Zelfsturend        |
| Zachtaardig       | Zelfvoorzienend  | Zelfzeker          |
| Zorgvuldig        |                  |                    |
| Zorgzaam          |                  |                    |
| Zwak              |                  |                    |

b) *“Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality.”; Gaucher, Friesen & Kay, American Psychological Association*

Key conclusion of the research:

Women find jobs with masculine worded job descriptions less appealing. Wording did not affect women’s perception of their ability to perform the job, only their perception of the job’s appeal and their level of belongingness.

Women’s style of communication is more communal, using more emotional and social words than men’s style of speech.

The researchers linguistically coded job descriptions found in a U.S. Department of Labor database that were predominately populated for masculine-themed words such as active, ambitious, analytical, competitive, dominate, challenging, confident, decisive, determined, independent, leader, objective, etc., as well as feminine-themed words such as committed, connected, cooperative, dependable, interpersonal, loyal, responsible, supportive, trust, etc.

The results confirmed that job descriptions for male-dominated jobs contained more masculine-themed words associated with male stereotypes than job descriptions from female-dominated jobs and vice versa.

Example of feminine and masculine-themed words used in an engineering job description:

### **Engineer Company Description:**

- **Feminine:** We are a community of engineers who have effective relationships with many satisfied clients. We are committed to understanding the engineer sector intimately.
- **Masculine:** We are a dominant engineering firm that boasts many leading clients. We are determined to stand apart from the competition.

## Engineer Qualifications:

- Feminine: Proficient oral and written communications skills. Collaborates well in a team environment. Sensitive to clients' needs, can develop warm client relationships.
- Masculine: Strong communication and influencing skills. Ability to perform individually in a competitive environment. Superior ability to satisfy customers and manage company's association with them.

## Engineer Responsibilities:

- Feminine: Provide general support to project team in a manner complimentary to the company. Help clients with construction activities.
- Masculine: Direct project groups to manage project progress and ensure accurate task control. Determine compliance with client's objectives.

Table 2. Masculine & Feminine coded words (Source, APA, 2011)

| <b>Masculine coded Words</b> | <b>Feminine coded words</b> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| active                       | agree                       |
| adventurous                  | affectionate                |
| aggress                      | child                       |
| ambition                     | cheer                       |
| analyse                      | collaborate                 |
| assertive                    | commit                      |
| athletic                     | communal                    |
| autonomy                     | compassion                  |
| battle                       | connect                     |
| boast                        | considerate                 |
| challenge                    | co-operate                  |
| champion                     | depend                      |
| competent                    | emotional                   |
| confident                    | empath                      |
| courageous                   | feel                        |
| decide                       | flatterable                 |
| decision                     | gentle                      |
| decisive                     | honest                      |
| defend                       | interpersonal               |
| determined                   | interdependent              |
| dominant                     | interpersonal               |
| driven                       | kind                        |
| fearless                     | kinship                     |
| fight                        | loyal                       |
| force                        | modesty                     |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| greedy<br>headstrong<br>hierarch<br>hostile<br>impulsive<br>independent<br>individual<br>intellect<br>lead<br>logic<br>objective<br>opinion<br>outspoken<br>persist<br>principle<br>reckless<br>self-confident<br>self-reliant<br>self-sufficient<br>stubborn<br>superior<br>unreasonable | nurturing<br>pleasant<br>polite<br>quiet<br>responsive<br>sensitive<br>submissive<br>support<br>sympathize<br>tender<br>together<br>trust<br>understand<br>warm<br>whine<br>enthusiasm<br>inclusive<br>yield<br>share<br>sharing |
|---|--|



- c) *Study of 77,000 Totaljobs job adverts highlights the use of gender-biased language (UK, November 2017)*

Key conclusion of the research:

Roles with requirement to 'lead', 'compete' and 'analyse' show male bias. Adverts wanting candidates to 'support' & 'understand' use female coded language. Social care, secretarial & vacancies for assistants show female-bias; science & management roles use masculine language.

This study looked at nearly 77,000 job descriptions posted to the Totaljobs jobsite over a six-week period. Academic research from The University of Waterloo and Duke University has shown that the use of certain words in job descriptions decreases the likelihood of applications from either male or female candidates.

The research looked at the industries, job roles and regions most using language that would prejudice against male or female applicants.

The study found that talent-hunters were using language that turns out to portray the idea of a traditional 'alpha male' when describing the characteristics they were looking for to fill vacancies. Workers were expected to 'lead', 'analyse', 'compete' and be 'confident', creating an image that may dissuade a number of applications from candidates who don't identify with this male-biased description.

The relative findings suggest that talent-hunters are unwittingly dissuading candidates for applying for certain jobs by using language unconsciously coded towards either male or female applicants.

### **Most Commonly Used Male-Biased Words in UK job Descriptions**

- Lead – 70,539 mentions
- Analyse – 35,339 mentions
- Competitive – 23,079 mentions
- Active – 20,041 mentions
- Confident – 13,841 mentions

## Most Commonly Used Female-Biased Words in UK job Descriptions

- Support – 83,095 mentions
- Responsible – 64,909 mentions
- Understanding – 29,638 mentions
- Dependable – 16,979 mentions
- Committed – 13,129 mentions

The study found that female-coded language becomes more embedded when certain service industries were analysed. For example, 62% of 299 cleaning roles listed used language biased towards female candidates. Whilst catering only has 52% female bias, the devil is in the detail. Roles for pub and bar staff are 89% female-coded, with food and beverage vacancies (82%) and housekeeping adverts (77%) not doing much better in their efforts to attract a diverse workforce.

The industries most likely to use male-biased language only served to highlight how the dated perception of the traditional alpha male still endures. Industries such as consulting (59% male bias / 32% female bias) sales (51% male bias / 35% female bias) and insurance (51% male bias / 34% female bias) were most likely to gear their search towards male candidates in the language that was used in the search for talent. These industries are doing the least to truly attract interested female candidates to come into the marketplace.

### 3. How to make job postings more attractive to women?

#### a) *Elements of the job adverts*

##### a. **Job title**

Make women more visible to get + 10% interest of women.

- Look for neutral forms of job titles
- Use the plural. E.g. “medewerkers gezocht”
- Use the activity instead of the person. E.g. “directie” instead of “directeur”
- Mention explicitly that you are looking for women and men, don’t systematically put “men” before “women” in the sentences
- When all of this is not possible: add “(m/f/x)”, but keep in mind that this reduced the readability of the text

When drafting a job one must choose between using a gender neutral job title or a male / female form of the title. The complexity of this choice lies in the fact that most job titles have a male connotation, even though these words are grammatically gender neutral. Examples of job titles that do not explicitly refer to men, but are seen as masculine are expert, director, researcher.

Be aware of the category of the job title:

- **Neutral terms:** terms that end in –kundige, -kracht, -hoofd (eg: diensthoofd, bediende, secretaresse becomes administratief medewerker)
- **Masculine terms:** terms that end in –heer, -man, -gast, -jongen or have a masculine connotation (eg: leerjongen, directeur).
- **Feminine terms:** terms that end in -vrouw or have a feminine connotation (eg: vroedvrouw, secretaresse).
- **Masculine terms that can become feminine:** by adding an “e” to the end or use an adjusted form (eg: consulent -> consulente, medewerker -> medewerkster). But don’t use parenthesis for the “e” or “s” because what is between parenthesis is less important. Rather use the following typography: consulent/consulente.

## **b. Overview of the job**

At the beginning of the job description, include a short but engaging overview of the job (1-4 sentences). This overview should include a description of the jobs' major function, how it contributes to larger company objectives, and why it is important or how it makes a difference to the company and/or society as a whole (e.g., how does this role contribute to making people's lives better, solving existing business or social problems).

## **c. Required Qualifications**

Don't list a qualification unless it is really required. "Nice to have" qualities are better left out.

*E.g. Bachelor of master is top! Relevante ervaring in een commerciële omgeving is net zo goed -> If only relevant experience is important, leave out the diploma requirements*

*E.g. En omdat je geregeld de baan op gaat, heb je ook een rijbewijs B. Maar voor ons gaat het vooral om wie je bent -> If a drivers liscence is necessary for the job, don't sugarcoat the importance of it*

Try to describe the key functions of the job in 5-7 bullets maximum. Most women tend to only apply for a job if they meet the majority of requirements. A long list of demands would indirectly exclude a number of potential female candidates that set the bar very high for themselves before making the decision to apply.

## **d. Description of Learning and Development Opportunities**

Mention how the role will grow, how you will make people better at their job, what is the support system within your organization that will give a new employee the feeling like they belong.

This is especially important for young female graduates but also millennials in general.

*E.g. Bij ons kan je rekenen op een uitzonderlijk aanbod opleidings- en ontwikkelingskansen*

*E.g. Notre offre: Un programme de formation qui vous permet de développer vos connaissances afin de devenir un banquier qualifié.*

## e. Equal Opportunity Statement

As the best talent out there often values inclusivity, adding an equal opportunity statement to your job postings can be great for attracting those who consider an inclusive and welcoming organizational culture important. As women, more often than men, have had bad experiences being excluded based on their gender, adding such statement can help convince them to apply for a job at your company.

Some examples of Equal Opportunity Statements are:

"At Google, we don't just accept difference—we celebrate it, we support it, and we thrive on it for the benefit of our employees, our products and our community. Google is proud to be an equal opportunity workplace and is an affirmative action employer. We are committed to equal employment opportunity regardless of race, color, ancestry, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, citizenship, marital status, disability, gender identity or Veteran status. We also consider qualified applicants regardless of criminal histories, consistent with legal requirements. See also Google's EEO Policy and EEO is the Law. If you have a disability or special need that requires accommodation, please let us know by completing this form."

"Our customers come from all walks of life and so do we. We hire great people from a wide variety of backgrounds, not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it makes our company stronger. If you share our values and our enthusiasm for small businesses, you will find a home at Gusto."

"Notre politique du personnel est axée sur la diversité et l'égalité des chances. Nous sélectionnons les candidat.e.s en fonction de leurs qualités, indépendamment de leur âge, leur sexe, leur origine, leur conviction, leur handicap, leur nationalité, etc."

Pay very close attention to the words you use in this statement. It can be tempting to use all the diversity-related words that are in fashion at the moment, but remember that you have to 'walk the talk'. Only write about equal opportunities you are certain your organization is actually giving to its (future) employees.

## b) *Content description*

### a. **Bring balance to the composition of professional skills**

Make sure you pay equal attention to the knowledge, skills and attitude you would like from a candidate.

Also balance out technical/ physical/ material and managerial aspects on the one hand, and the nurturing/ social/ human-centred/ support skills on the other hand.

### b. **Don't overvalue experience**

Often, the required experience is completely worked out in a job posting by listing all specific required experiences. It is better to not overvalue experience, for example by including something like "programming languages evolve quickly and the developer will need to invest time in learning new techniques and technologies". You could include a year range to indicate the required experience (e.g. 3-5 years) or just don't include any list whatsoever.

Furthermore, it seems that men and women are guided by different aspects of the requirements for a job. For example, women are quicker than men to apply for a position that emphasizes social skills, such as punctuality, communication skills and helpfulness. Assistance and guidance are central in these job descriptions. Job descriptions that focus on technical aspects and traditionally male characteristics (eg . knowledge, leadership skills, initiative) can discourage women candidates. A gender-neutral job is a job that takes stereotypical masculine and feminine attributes in balance. The use of "female" characteristics can lead to +20% interest of women.

### c. **Don't hire an individual but an addition to the team**

Try placing the described job in the broader context of your organization. Explaining in which team the candidate will end up and where that team is placed in the organization will help the candidate understand the organization better. Also mention if the team is new, or when it is founded to serve a particular challenge or urgent need within the organization.

Try mentioning the size of the team, as well as how interdependencies work (who will the new team member work with most, are there any contact with other team etc.)

**d. Mention the opportunities to create a work-life balance: use of flexible hours, working from home, child care, ...**

*E.g. "We are proud of our flexible working arrangements, and we will support you to build a successful career and deliver excellent client service without sacrificing your personal priorities. While our client-facing profession might require regular travel, and at times working at client sites, we are committed to help you achieve a work-life balance."*

*E.g. "Soucieux de l'équilibre privé/travail, la société vous offre un système d'heures ainsi que de jours de congé flexibles. Vous évoluerez au sein d'une entreprise familiale reconnue pour sa convivialité et son écoute."*

**e. Indicate in what circumstances the function will be executed, indicate the statute and the salary scale**

Give a short explanation on the circumstances in which the job will be executed. Indicate the statute, if the job is full-time (with or without options to work part-time), what salary scale applies etc.

*E.g. What we offer? A fantastic working environment. Based in La Hulpe, it is well connected. Parking is available, as is a regular shuttle service to main railway/metro stations in Brussels.*

**f. Use references to age**

As more often than men, women later in life go to work (again), age boundaries are mainly affecting them in a negative way. Being open towards applicants of all ages in the beginning of your selection process will create more equal opportunities and it will prevent women not applying due to a (perceived) age restriction. Also act cautiously when using terms that may imply a preference for a specific age category.

Some examples:

- 'Young and energetic' -> only use 'energetic'
- 'Junior' or 'senior' -> use this only as part of a job title
- 'Mature person wanted' -> 'applicants must demonstrate maturity'

A certain combination of words can also be a problem, even though the words on their own are fine to use. E.g. "Young-thinking", 'new wave' department is looking for energetic person with fresh, innovative ideas and who can connect with youth."

c) *Language*

**Do's**

a. Ensure a balance in characteristics (see Table 1) and especially verbs.

Examples:

| <b>Female</b>   | <b>Male</b>  |
|---|--|
| Playing a role<br>Supporting<br>Maintaining<br>Attributing to<br>Helping with | Guarding the quality<br>Identify needs<br>Ensuring continuity<br>Checking<br>Executing, performing |

b. Choose simple and direct language

The preference goes to short sentences and an economical use of verbs and adverbs.

E.g. "You perform administrative tasks" instead of "You should be able to perform administrative tasks".

c. Describe 'male' characteristics as behaviour

A personality trait or characteristic is considered something static that is hard to change or acquire.

Behaviour on the other hand can be learned. Describing characteristics as behaviour is therefore a simple trick to get +15% more interest from women.



Examples (*Stemster research. Adjectives tested for their gender connotation with n=3.721 representative panel*)

| Don't say   | Say   |
|---|---|
| You are assertive and diplomatic in your contacts at different levels, both internally and externally | You have the ability to work in an assertive and diplomatic style towards your contacts at different levels, both internally and externally |
| You are an excellent communicator, commercial and a team player                                       | You have an eye for communication, you look after the commercial interests of the company and enjoy working in a team                       |
| You are stress resilient  | You have the ability to show resilience in stressful situations   |
| You are competitive   | You can excel in a competitive environment  |
| You are entrepreneurial   | In this position it is important that you take initiative   |
| You are independent and autonomous  | You have the ability to manage your own tasks and work independently  |
| <u>You are</u> result driven and assertive  | You can apply a result driven and assertive style   |
| You are analytical  | You can systematically analyze problems   |
| You are specialized in communication, networking  | You are able to deal with a variety of problems in communication networks   |

**d. Use positive language**

**e. Apply a conversational tone**

**f. The purpose is to persuade people, not to scare them off**

**g. Use we-statements**

E.g. *Binnen dit verhaal zijn wij op zoek naar buitengewone Account Managers. We zoeken hierbij gemotiveerde personen die altijd als televerkoper gewerkt hebben en nu klaar zijn voor de volgende stap in hun carrière.*

E.g. *Nous recherchons actuellement des Account Managers d'exception. Nous recherchons des personnes motivées qui ont toujours travaillé comme télévendeur et qui sont maintenant prêtes pour la prochaine étape de leur carrière.*

## Dont's

### h. Do not use gendered pronouns in the job description

Although he/him/his are grammatically correct to use in generic terms, they give the text an unintentional masculine character. Slashes like "he/she" and "his/her" make the text difficult to read and are not recommended.

Replace the generic term by one of the following alternatives:

- Use plurals, e.g. The employees are expected to submit their form
- Use an article instead of 'his', e.g. the candidate should submit his form -> the candidate should submit the form
- Use 'je' or 'u' in Dutch, e.g. You have to submit the form
- Use 'vous' in French, e.g. Vous devez soumettre le formulaire
- Use passive voice, e.g. The form must be submitted

### i. Do not use masculine language

Some names or terms are directly associated with masculine characteristics. Try to avoid terms like 'ninja', 'rock star', 'work hard, play hard', 'superhero', 'hacker' ...

### j. Do not use corporate clichés

E.g. "buy-in", "best practices", "win-win", "leverage your expertise", "hit the ground running", "KPI's", SLA's etc.

### k. Do not use superlatives or extreme modifiers

E.g. 'Superior', 'world class', 'buitengewoon', 'top notch', 'excellent', 'les mieux', 'top employer'

This will turn off candidates that are more humble about their own qualities and prefer collaboration over competition.

## Writing job postings in French

The French language is especially tricky to gender neutralize. The recent movement of langage épïcène or l'écriture inclusive is looking for ways to make the French language more gender neutral and inclusive.

We have listed the most important things to watch out for, language wise, to avoid excluding female applicants while writing a job posting:

- Take into account that both masculine and feminine names exist for job titles, functions, grades and professions. E.g. 'professeure', 'présidente', 'agente', 'écrivaine', 'vendeuse' etc.

The difference between masculine and feminine versions can sometimes also be indicated by changing the definite article (la/le) as well as with 'e' as a suffix

- Appointing the feminine and masculine by using a double flexion, using the epicene form or the middle point is also possible. E.g. 'elles et ils partent', 'les élèves', 'les délégué·e·s de la classe' etc.

For job postings it is important to keep in mind the readability of the text, making it as simple as possible.

- Avoid using words that might indicate groups of the opposite sex, preferring one over the other. Instead try using a neutral term. E.g. 'droits humains' instead of 'droits de l'Homme'.

Gender neutralizing the French language is still an ongoing process and is much debated. More information on l'Écriture Inclusive can be found on this specialized website: <https://www.ecriture-inclusive.fr/>

### Sources used:

- National Center for Women and Information Technology: "Tips for writing better job ads"
- National Centre for Women and Information Technology: "Checklist for reducing unconscious bias in job descriptions/advertisements"
- Instituut voor Gelijkheid Vrouwen en Mannen: "De Genderchecklist"
- Beleidscel Diversiteit & Gender Ugent: "Aandachtspunten opstellen van vacatures"

#### 4. Additional elements to consider

##### a) *The usage of AI – Artificial Intelligence to eliminate gender bias*

Artificial Intelligence is booming and with its many applications, tools have already been developed to gender neutralize and un-bias job postings. Even though these technological improvements are great, do be cautious when choosing which application to use. When AI applications are fed biased information, they will produce biased outcome as well (Garbage in = garbage out). Furthermore, each application has a specific goal, possibilities as well as limitations.

E.g. Gender-decoder (free online tool) or Beapplied Text Analysis: only identify masculine-coded and feminine-coded words and compare the amount of masculine- and feminine coded words. Comparing the number of words in each category, these tools will decide how gender neutral your text is.

E.g. Textio Hire (a payed tool): a very complex analysis program that will analyse as well as help you improve any text you need during the hiring process. As it works with augmented writing, it can understand more nuance in the language that is used in a job posting. The program scores a text by benchmarking how it will appeal to people compared to similar texts. It also gives feedback on the ton of a text (more masculine or more feminine), and it provides you with refined suggestions for improvement of the language in a text.

We advise to do plenty of research before choosing an application and always check the outcome carefully using the checklist at the end of this document.

b) *Making the lay-out of your job posting: less bullet points will attract more women*

There is research that focuses on the lay-out of job postings and their attractiveness to men and women.

An important outcome for your job postings is that men tend to prefer bullet points while women tend to prefer a continuous text.

When bullet points are used, women tend to only apply when they meet the majority of requirements listed, while men will apply when they meet just a couple of the listed ones. Therefore, using too many bullet points will indirectly exclude a number of female potential candidates.

Of course you can use bullet points when you are targeting women with your job posting as well, but try to limit any list to 5-7 bullet points.

c) *Sharing job postings on social media*

While sharing a job posting on social media platforms, the exact same rules apply for language as in a regular job posting.

Make sure you use the neutral title of the job, even if it has more characters and pay attention to the use of gender neutral terms while writing a short description of the role or of the profile you are looking for. Add a hyperlink to the full job posting so that more information can be found easily. It can also be fun to include hashtags. As often they appear in the same colour as links, they do draw attention so use them wisely to highlight the key elements of your message. Don't overuse hashtags as this will make your post less appealing.

The ideal length of a post is 200 characters. If you have a hard time getting your message across in a short and simple sentence, you could use the Hemingway Editor (<http://www.hemingwayapp.com/>, for English only) to write in a more concise way.

Also beware of the image you use to grab people's attention. If you choose to picture people, try making them a good representation of your company's workforce. Don't single out the one minority person as this can create wrong expectations and can be seen as window dressing. If you use images of objects e.g. your office building etc., take a moment to reflect on what message this image brings across and make sure it appeals to both women and men.

d) *Legal framework of discriminatory language in Belgium*

“Discrimination is the unequal or unfair treatment of another person on the basis of their personal characteristics.” -UNIA

Since 2007, Belgium has installed several federal laws to prevent discrimination based on certain personal characteristics:

- **Gender Act:** sex
- **Antiracism Act:** nationality, national or ethnic origin, ‘race’, skin colour and cultural background (e.g. Jewish origin)
- **Antidiscrimination Act:** disability, religious or ideological beliefs, sexual orientation, age, wealth, civil status, political beliefs, trade union beliefs, health status, physical or genetic characteristics, birth, social background and language

(<https://www.unia.be/en/grounds-of-discrimination/discrimination-a-few-clarifications>)

The element of discrimination can pop-up in several steps of the recruitment process. While writing a job posting, it is important to not exclude any group of possible candidates based on a personal characteristic.

E.g. it is not allowed to write in a job posting that you are only looking for men, as this would be discrimination against women.

E.g. it is not allowed to write that candidates with a physical handicap are not allowed to apply, as there is a law on ‘reasonable accommodation’ stating that you have the obligation to try and make a job accessible to as many people as possible.

E.g. it is not allowed to write that you only accept applications from candidates that have a certain nationality, as this would be discriminating of all people with a different nationality.

The European Union has anti-discrimination legislation based on similar personal characteristics. They have been put into Directives since the year 2000 and are an important guideline for European member states to base their national legislation on. ([https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/know-your-rights/equality/non-discrimination\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/know-your-rights/equality/non-discrimination_en))

## 5. Additional elements to consider

### Job title

1) Make women and men visible in the job titles

Is the job title gender neutral?

Does the title mention F/M/X?

### Content

2) Is there an overview of the job?

3) Don't list a qualification unless it is really required, not if it is "nice to have".

### How much qualifications are required?

4) Don't overvalue experience, e.g. programming languages evolve quickly and the developer will need to invest time in learning new techniques and technologies

5) Mention how the role will grow, how you will make people better at their job. Are development opportunities mentioned?

6) What are the key elements that make the job attractive?

a) Don't hire an individual but an addition to the team. Is it clear from the job posting how the applicant would fit into the team?

7) Name the opportunities to create a work-life balance: flexible hours, working from home, child care,...

Are there opportunities mentioned?

Which ones:

8) Is there clarity on status/reporting lines and salary scale)?

9) Are there age boundaries used?

### Language

10) Are only male forms used like he/his/him?

11) Avoid masculine language ("ninja", "rock star", "work hard play hard", "superhero"...) Are there masculine descriptions used?

Are there masculine descriptions used?

Is there a balance between 'male' and 'female' adjectives?

Female:

Male:

Is there a balance between 'male' and 'female' verbs?

Female:

Male:

Is there a balance between technical/managerial skills and nurturing/social/human-centred skills?

Technical/managerial skills:

Nurturing/social/human-centred skills:

12) Describe 'male' characteristics as behaviour

13) Use positive language

Are there enough positive words used?

Positive words used:

14) Avoid corporate clichés

Are there corporate clichés used?

Which ones:

15) Avoid superlatives or extreme modifiers

Are there superlatives used?

Which ones:

16) Apply a conversational tone

17) Use we-statements

### End of the text

18) Is there a strong equal opportunity statement? Yes/No



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