ASCENT
elevate your business

The Iowa Center Women's Business Center
Iowa Center for Economic Success

Teleza Daniels
Program Director of The Iowa Center WBC
TJDaniels@theiowacenter.org

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Total Time : 120 minutes

Skills Gap

What skills are needed to take your company to the next level? Identify the gaps between where you are now and where you want to be with this tool. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to do to analyze the skills gap in your company.

- Perform a Skills Gap Analysis (tool)
    - Analyze areas where you may have a skills gap, and find effective ways to prioritize improvements in your organization.

CONCLUSION – Skills Gap

By doing a skills inventory, you will be able to make more-informed decisions on how to hire and retain the right people, grow your business, and make improvements to existing roles and policies.

- Perform a skills inventory, and then rate your missing needs from urgent to lowest priority. After you've done these two steps, you'll be ready to identify the gaps in areas such as leadership, human resources, operations, financial management, and marketing and sales, or feel free to add your own. Once you've completed your skills gap analysis, discuss and connect with other entrepreneurs to learn what solutions they've discovered by doing this activity.

To continue your exploration:

- [Small Business Employee Recruitment and Retention](#)
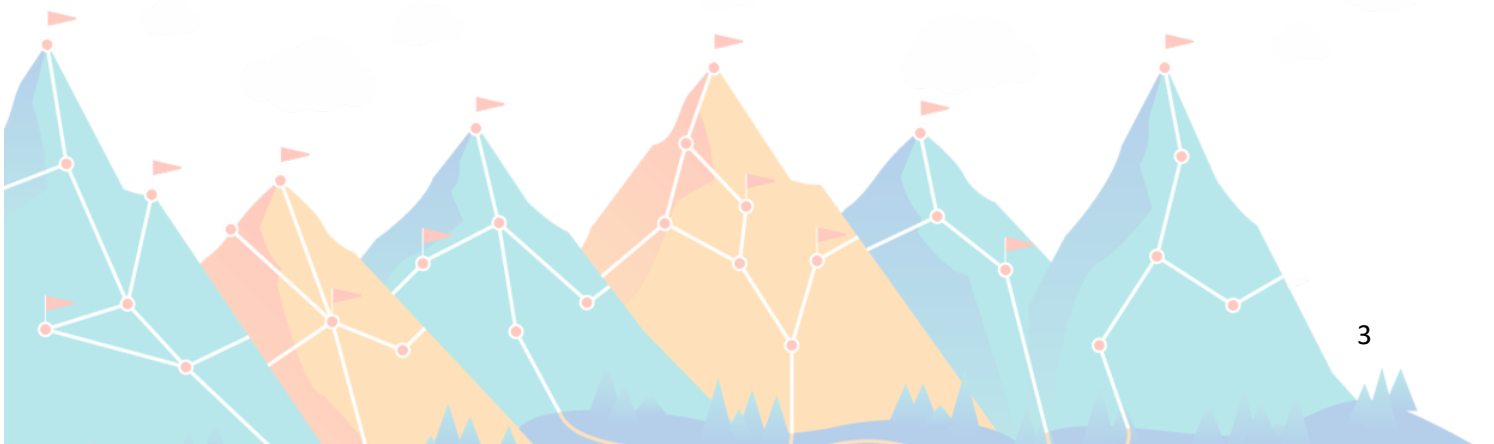
Ascent: Journey 3 – Your People

Job Description

After you've identified the gaps in your organization that need to be filled and are prepared to bring a new hire on board, you'll want to make sure your job description draws in the best talent. This tool will help you compile a first draft of your job description that includes helpful pointers on items such as the job title, skills needed and preferred, qualifications, education and working conditions. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to do to write strategic job descriptions.

- Practice Writing Job Descriptions (tool)
  - Write better job descriptions by using these best practices, specific guidelines, guiding questions and tips.

CONCLUSION – Job Descriptions

You now know the immediately implementable skills to help you better attract the necessary talent for your company.

- Craft effective job descriptions—showcase your company's culture, its values and mission statement, and the benefits and perks you offer, and communicate what success looks like in the position you're offering—to attract the best people!

To continue your exploration:

- Job Description Writer
- American Job Center Finder

Regular Employees vs. Contractors

What's the difference between employees and independent contractors? As you think through your business' hiring strategy, these classifications will be one essential point to keep in mind. Knowing the role that each type of worker can play in your business, as well as the laws surrounding them, can guide you in making the decision that will fit with your business' needs. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to know to distinguish between legal employment of regular employees (W-2) and contract employees (1099).

- Deciphering the Distinctions Between Employees and Contractors (Key Insights)
  - Read about why it's important to correctly classify the workers at your business.
- Untangling Working Classifications (Infographic)
  - Get the facts on three major tests used to make contractor vs. employee distinctions in the United States: the Economic Realities Test, the ABC Test, and the 20-Factor Test.

CONCLUSION – Regular Employees vs Contractors

You sorted out the differences between W-2 (regular employees) and 1099 (contract employees) worker classifications, both legally and in what this means for your business.

- To avoid facing legal issues, take the time to thoughtfully and accurately categorize the people that work at your business.

- Worker classifications will influence other business decisions you will make, such as which tax forms to fill out.
- Each federal law, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and tax laws, has its own criteria for employment status, so make decisions separately for each law.

To continue your exploration:
- [W-2 Tax Form](#)
- [1099-MISC Tax Form](#)
- [IRS (Circular E) Employer's Tax Guide for Use in 2019](#)
- [IRS Employer's Supplemental Tax Guide (Supplemental to Pub. 15, Employer's Tax Guide) for Use in 2019](#)
- [IRS Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits for Use in 2019](#)
- [Resources for Job Creators](#)
- [Independent Contractors IRS 20-Factor Test](#)
- [Fair Labor Standards Act Advisor - Are My Workers Employees?](#)
- [Fair Labor Standards Act Advisor - Independent Contractors](#)
- [Compliance Assistance - Wages and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)](#)

Recruitment Plan

In growing your business, you may discover that there are skill sets and job functions that are needed now more than ever before. To fill in these gaps, you'll probably consider recruiting. Start developing a solid recruiting strategy so that you can find the right talent for your growing business needs. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to do to design a recruitment plan.
- Design Your Recruitment Plan (Infographic)
  - Explore the steps for recruiting at your business, from figuring out what jobs are most needed to actively searching for the right people to fill those roles.

CONCLUSION – Recruitment Plan
Building a recruitment plan involves conducting a job analysis, creating a job posting, looking for candidates early and tailoring your process to target specific groups.
- Eighty-eight percent of hiring managers recommend looking for applicants that have done their research on your company and feel aligned with its mission and values. This increases your company's chances of engaging and retaining its employees.

To continue your exploration:
- [Hire Vets](#)
- [EEOC Recordkeeping Requirements](#)
- [Topgrading](#)

Leading Conversations

Conducting and facilitating conversations is an essential part of managing people. Whether you're hiring a new team member or resolving a conflict between two of your current employees, each step of the process involves a lot of planning, excellent communication skills, negotiations and a deep understanding of sensitive employment topics. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to do to develop the ability to lead conversations as part of professional development of employees.

- Interviewing Best Practices (Infographic)
  - Gain insights into the type of questions you should and shouldn't ask during an interview, interviewing etiquette, and when and how to use different interviewing types in the interviewing process.
- Effectively Negotiate Win-Win (tool)
  - Use this tool to help you understand the psychology behind negotiation and key techniques to use that will help you reach the goals you want.
- How Do I comply with EEO Laws? (Key Insights)
  - Use this as a guide into how to promote diversity in the workplace and be in the know about the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's discrimination laws and how they apply to your business.
- Plan Your Next Interview with This Quick Checklist (tool)
  - Use a checklist to help make the interviewing process go smoother.
- How to Handle Difficult Conversations (tool)
  - Craft a "collaborative" or "short and direct" approach to tough conversations with employees.

CONCLUSION- Leading Conversations

To streamline onboarding and employee development, think about when and how to conduct different types of conversations, what type of interview questions to ask and the ones not to ask, and how to negotiate in your dealings with employees, vendors and customers to find solutions that make both parties happy.

This fact helps you understand how important your social intelligence is in negotiations.

- The interviewing process can involve several phases, such as the preliminary phone interview, face-to-face interviews, and group or panel interviews. Having a checklist can help make the phone interview more effective in screening out candidates. When asking questions, remember to use the situation, task, action and results (S.T.A.R.) behavioral interviewing technique.
- Negotiations take preparation, practice and patience. "*Only eight per cent of decisions have to do with facts and all sorts of decisions, including corporate, are influenced by emotions.*" [Stuart Diamond] This fact helps you understand how important your social intelligence is in negotiations.
- Ignorance is not bliss! The employment laws set out by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) are necessary for every single employer to understand and to follow. There can be serious consequences for businesses that don't pay close

attention to bias in their advertising and realize it can negatively affect hiring. Understanding how to promote diversity in your business is key to its success.

- Every time you conduct an interview, whether it is a phone interview or a panel-style interview, it requires a slightly different set of requirements when planning. Being consistent helps. An interview checklist will ensure you don't forget any of the critical elements so you can focus on finding the best candidate for the job.
- You may feel an urge to avoid a difficult conversation at your business, but statistics show that giving feedback and addressing tensions are necessary and productive. Being unable to give negative feedback to underperforming employees is bad for the bottom line—costing businesses $6,000–$8,000 a day—and it can lead to turnover or lawsuits.

To continue your exploration:

- **U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Small Business Checklist**
- **What can't I ask when hiring?**
- **Information about accommodations, discrimination, and other topics**
- **Prohibited Employment Policies/Practices**
- **For more information about punitive damages**
- **Department of Labor - Equal Employment Opportunity**
- **The Civil Rights Center**

Salary Plan

An equitable salary plan protects your company and entices your employees. But how do you determine what are both appropriate and attractive salaries for your company? Use this tool to create a salary plan or update an existing plan in an easy step-by-step process. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to do to prepare a salary plan.

- Create Your Salary Plan (tool)
  - Develop or update a salary plan that will be a win-win for both you and your staff.

CONCLUSION – Salary Plan

You see how creating a salary plan doesn't have to be a complicated or intimidating process. Now, plan an organizational approach for salaries that fits your business' long-term compensation philosophy.

- Creating a compensation philosophy involves asking questions about your organization's salary packages such as:
  - Does the overall program hold up under scrutiny?
  - Is your compensation approach addressing the wage gap between women and men?
  - Do your employees regard the compensation program as fair?
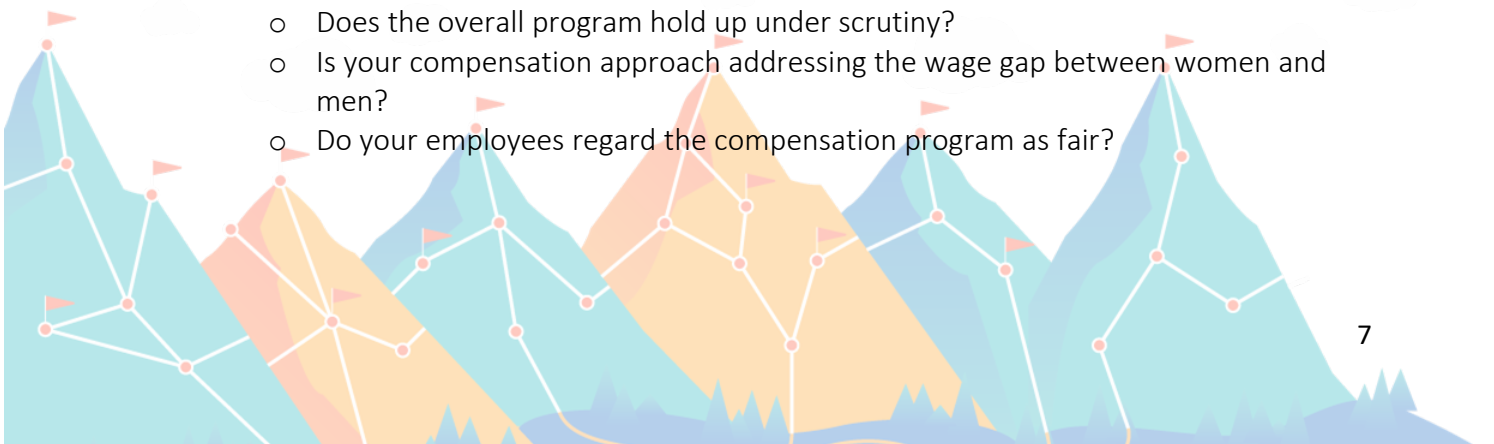
By collecting your current job descriptions, analyzing your current compensation programs with benchmarking, and conducting salary surveys, you'll be able to create a comprehensive compensation package that is backed by current data and industry standards.

To continue your exploration:
- U.S. Department of Labor State Labor Law
- Stanford University's Compensation Philosophy
- Employment & Earnings by Occupation
- O*Net
- Bureau of Labor Statistics

Benefits

What are creative and innovative ways to provide benefit packages to your employees? To make a workplace more desirable, many employers offer a combination of paid time off (PTO), having meals included, allowing their employees to telework/commute, having a bring your dog to work day, offering extended family leave policies, creating flex schedules and more! These activities and resources will guide you through the required and perk benefit options. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to do to assess benefit options (including healthcare, retirement, and family leave).
- Employee benefits (Infographic)
  - Evaluate the required and optional types of employee benefits and how much they will cost your company.
- Family Leave Benefit Options (Key Insights)
  - Explore your family leave benefits options.
- What Retirement benefits Should My Business Offer? (tool)
  - Use this tool to find out what kind of retirement plan is right for your company.

CONCLUSION – Benefits

Benefit options beyond salary entice prospective employees and retain current employees. Knowing creative benefit options can help you to recruit and retain employees.
- No matter the size of your business, some benefits are required by the law. These include:
  - Social security tax, workers compensation, disability insurance, leave benefits and unemployment insurance.
  - Some of the optional benefits include but aren't limited to: Health insurance, dental and vision packages, life insurance, retirement savings, paid time off (PTO), commuter benefits and paid holidays, just to name a few.
- This example from Geben Communication demonstrates how a company's core values can significantly guide family leave policies. *"Policies that offer more time for moms than dads reinforce the (antiquated) gender norm that says mothers are the primary caregivers, while dads' careers are more important."* [Quote from RewriteTheRules]

- Companies that have innovative benefits, especially in regard to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and assistance with student debt repayment, retain employees longer, and employees are more loyal.
- *"In the United States, 79 percent of millennials, 68 percent of Generation Xers, and 58 percent of total employees consider CSR when deciding where to work. Seventy percent said they would be more loyal to a company with a CSR program."* [Quote taken from SCORE's infographic on *Small Business Corporate Social Responsibility*]
- *"According to a 2017 study by American Student Assistance, 86 percent of employees stated they would commit to a company for five years or longer if they would help repay their student loans."* [from American Student Assistance]
- Second to health insurance, retirement benefits such as IRAs, 401Ks or more traditional pension plans are the second most popular form of benefits a business can offer.

To continue your exploration:
- [Association Health Plans (AHP)](#)
- [Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (COBRA)](#)
- [Executive Order Establishing Paid Sick Leave for Federal Contractors FA](#)
- [Employer's Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits](#)
- [Tax Cuts and Jobs Act: A Comparison for Businesses](#)
- [IRS | Employee Benefits](#)
- [State Family Medical Leave Act Laws](#)
- [United States Department of Labor's Small Business Retirement Savings Advisor](#)

Interested in understanding more about workplace safety and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, or OSHA? Explore the Health & Safety excursion next.

Health and Safety

Providing a healthy and safe workplace benefits both your employees and your business. By incorporating safety best practices from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), you will keep your employees safe and productive, while also potentially avoiding costly fines. Your employees are central to growing your business, so planning for safety is well worth the time it takes. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to know to integrate health and safety requirements into your business practices.
- Integrating Workplace Safety (Key Insights)
    - Delve into your safety responsibilities as a business owner, those of your employees, and the various resources available to you through OSHA.
- Understanding Health and Safety Requirements for your Business (Key Insights)
    - Familiarize yourself with the services OSHA offers to help businesses like yours comply with health and safety regulations.

CONCLUSION – Health and Safety

Now that you're familiar with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the many materials, programs and services they offer, you can ensure you're providing a safe work environment for employees. Whether it's removing workplace hazards, having the right safety equipment, or ensuring employees are properly trained on how to work safely, it's never too early to get your business up to OSHA standards.

- In addition to contributing to the well-being of your employees, becoming OSHA-compliant can have a positive impact on your bottom line. Integrating health and safety cuts down the costs of injury and illness by 20–40 percent.[1]
- Making and maintaining a checklist can help your business keep track of what health and safety areas in your company need the most improvement.

To continue your exploration:
- OSHA Compliance Assistance Quick Start
- OSHA $afety Pays
- Youth Worker Safety & Health
- Safety & Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP)
- OSHA On-Site Consultation Program
- OSHA Training Institute Education Centers
- OSHA Publications
- OSHA QuickTakes
- OSHA State Standards
- OSHA Compliance Assistance Specialists (CAS)
- OSHA Cooperative Programs
- OSHA Offices By State
- OSHA State Plans
- OSHA Small Business Handbook
- OSHA Help For Employers

Performance Development

Providing your employees with development opportunities and mechanisms to improve their performance is a key component of any business' growth plan. Review the steps to create an employee training plan. Join your peers in a discussion about company culture and how to incorporate it into your professional development offerings. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to do to evaluate the elements in a performance development plan.

- Your Employee Training Plan (tool)
  - o Discover the essential elements of any employee training plan.

CONCLUSION – Performance Development

As your business grows, so should your employees. They're your most valuable asset, so it's important to have a development plan in place for them.

- A comprehensive training plan always answers these questions:
    - *What type of training is needed?*
    - *Who needs the training?*
    - *When will the training take place?*
    - *Where will the training happen?*
    - *Who will conduct the training?*
    - *How much will the training cost?*
- Meet with other business owners who've been able to weave their business' culture and values into their employee development plan. Share your successes and challenges. Listen to theirs. See what you can learn and apply to your employee development plan.

Values and Culture

Your organizational culture is an expression of the ethos of your company: how you want your business to run, how you want to be seen, and how you want your staff to feel about their jobs. What is the unique culture of your organization? Building a strong company culture can help you find and retain great employees and make the right decisions as a business. This excursion within the Your People journey will guide you through what you need to do to evaluate organizational culture.

- Culture: Helping You Grow or Slowing You Down? (video)
    - Get a sense for what organizational culture can mean to your business.
- Understanding Organization Culture (Infographic)
    - Examine several factors that impact organizational culture.
- Building and Maintaining Successful Company Culture (Key Insights)
    - Uncover how you can build and maintain a robust company culture.

CONCLUSION – Values and Culture

Communicate and practice the values of your company daily to reinforce the company culture you are seeking. You as a leader can model these core values so that they shine in your organizational culture.

- Having a strong culture anchored in shared values can propel your business towards its growth goals.
- Your business's organizational culture may be influenced by its values, people, place/physical setting, practice/rituals, laws/regulations, organizational structure, and vendors and clients.
- "Whether you planned it or not, your company already has a culture." But this culture isn't set in stone—you can shape it with your actions as a small business owner/founder. Encourage positive behaviors and discourage harmful ones to preserve a culture that works.

To continue your exploration:
- Organizational Culture Resources

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