

An orange graphic of a right-pointing arrow with a rounded tail, containing the text "toolkit for business".

**toolkit** for business

A background graphic consisting of a white grid pattern in the upper left and a blue dot pattern in the lower right, both fading into the blue background.

O\*NET at Work:  
**Writing Job Descriptions**

Describing jobs within an organization is a common task that can consume large amounts of time and resources. This example application demonstrates how human resource personnel can use O\*NET® to develop job descriptions faster, better, and cheaper.



## The Employer's Challenge

Vitality, Inc. is a mid-size professional services company with a growing information technology (IT) department. To better meet internal demand for technical support, the company needed to create several technical support or "help desk" positions, and to develop a new position description for computer support. Bob Garcia, the Human Resource (HR) Manager, turned to O\*NET information to help identify job requirements for computer support work.

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## Writing an Effective Job Description

Job descriptions provide information to guide many human resource applications. The amount of detail required depends on the intended use. The more detail provided, the greater the breadth and depth of human resource applications that may be addressed. The HR Manager determined that O\*NET information could provide a starting point for developing job descriptions more efficiently.

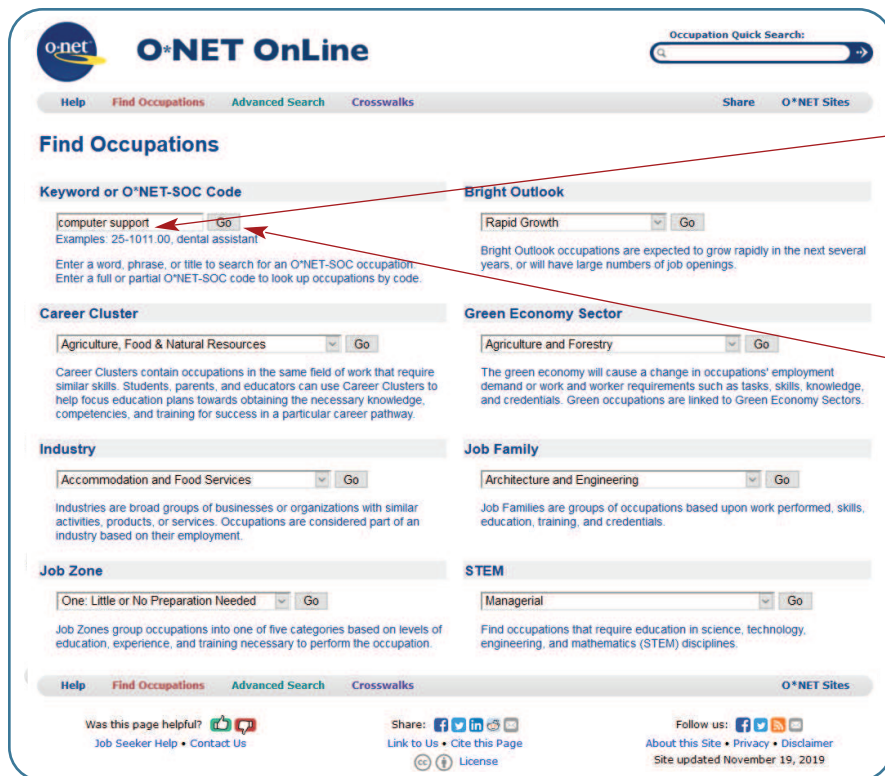
# Step 1: Identify Job Tasks, Responsibilities, and Work Context factors that will be part of the newly created positions.

The HR Manager accessed the internet and typed in <https://www.onetonline.org>. At the O\*NET OnLine home page, he selected **Find Occupations**. From the **Find Occupations** screen, he was able to access the database of information describing work for computer support occupations.

Using **Keyword search**, the HR Manager typed in "computer support" and clicked **GO**.

The first match listed on the resulting screen was "Computer User Support Specialists." The HR Manager selected this occupation and a *Summary Report* was displayed.

The HR Manager then selected *Custom reports*, which provides options for what information the user wants displayed on the occupation.

On the **Find Occupations** screen, the user typed "computer support" in the *Keyword search* box.

The user then clicked on the **Go** button.

**Custom Report for:**  
15-1151.00 - Computer User Support Specialists

Provide technical assistance to computer users. Answer questions or resolve computer problems for clients in person, or via telephone or electronically. May provide assistance concerning the use of computer hardware and software, including printing, installation, word processing, electronic mail, and operating systems.

Sample of reported job titles: Computer Specialist, Computer Support Specialist, Computer Technician, Desktop Support Technician, Help Desk Analyst, Help Desk Technician, Information Technology Specialist (IT Specialist), Network Technician, Support Specialist, Technical Support Specialist

View report: Summary Details Custom

Tasks Display 10 items scoring at least 50 on the Importance scale  
 Technology Skills Display 10 categories with up to 4 examples for each category  
 Tools Used Display 10 categories with up to 4 examples for each category  
 Knowledge Display 10 items scoring at least 50 on the Importance scale  
 Skills Display 10 items scoring at least 50 on the Importance scale  
 Abilities Display 10 items scoring at least 50 on the Importance scale  
 Work Activities Display 10 items scoring at least 50 on the Importance scale  
 Detailed Work Activities Display 10 items  
 Work Activities Outline  Show generalized work activities  
 Show intermediate work activities  
 Show detailed work activities  
 Show task statements  
 Work Context Display 10 items scoring at least 50 on the Context scale  
 Job Zone  
 Education  
 Credentials  
 Interests Display all items scoring at least 50 on the Occupational Interest scale  
 Work Styles Display 10 items scoring at least 50 on the Importance scale  
 Work Values Display all items scoring at least 50 on the Extent scale  
 Related Occupations  
 Crosswalk Display 10 items from the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP)  
 Wages & Employment  
 Job Openings  
 Additional Information Display 10 items

Go

Next, the HR Manager decided what information describing the work of Computer User Support Specialists he wanted to see.

The user selected the Tasks, Work Activities, and Work Context check boxes.

The user clicked Go to create the Custom Report.

For selected O\*NET Descriptors on the Custom Report Menu, users can choose the minimum score for the items displayed and the type of scale, such as Importance or Level.

The HR Manager copied the brief occupation description to the job description document he is creating (see page 6).

A sample of job titles obtained from incumbents is provided.

Users can download the tables for selected O\*NET descriptors by clicking on either XLS or CSV by Save Table.

Activities are listed in descending order of importance.

**O\*NET OnLine**

Help Find Occupations Advanced Search Crosswalks

Updated 2019

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15-1151.00 - Computer User Support Specialists

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View report: Summary Details Custom

Tasks | Work Activities | Work Context

Tasks Save Table (XLS/CSV)

10 of 14 displayed

Importance	Category	Task
90	Core	Answer user inquiries regarding computer software or hardware operation to resolve problems.
82	Core	Oversee the daily performance of computer systems.

Importance	Work Activity
97	Interacting With Computers — Using computers and computer systems (including hardware and software) to program, write software, set up functions, enter data, or process information.
81	Getting Information — Observing, receiving, and otherwise obtaining information from all relevant sources.



The HR Manager printed the *Custom Report* and asked the IT Manager to highlight Tasks, Work Activities, and Work Context information relevant for the position. Once the IT Manager highlighted the important information about the work of Computer User Support Specialists, the information was copied to the draft job description (see page 6).

Next, the IT Manager added information to customize the job description to the needs of Vitality, Inc. The HR Manager gave the Work Context Questionnaire\* to employees in the information technology department to complete. This gave him information about social and physical factors in the workplace. Social factors include supervision, responsibility and customer service interaction. Physical factors include aspects of the environment that affect the employee’s physical comfort. This information was also added to the draft job description.

Information from the Work Context Questionnaire\* can be used to describe the working conditions in which work is performed, and adds greater detail to a job description.

## Step 2: Identify the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities that are important for performing the identified tasks.

Returning to the **Custom Report Menu** in O\*NET, the HR Manager created another Custom Report to access information on Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities. Working with the IT Manager, the HR Manager copied the appropriate language from the O\*NET Custom Report for Computer User Support Specialists to the draft job description.

The user chose to examine Knowledge and Skills by *Level* rather than *Importance*.

To see a list of more occupations where that Knowledge or Ability is an important part of the work select the + icon. Click on any listed related occupation to see its full Summary report.

Information about *Abilities* was copied from O\*NET in the same manner as *Knowledge and Skills*.

The screenshot shows the O\*NET OnLine interface for a Custom Report for occupation 15-1151.00, Computer User Support Specialists. The page is divided into sections for Knowledge and Abilities. The Knowledge section is sorted by Level, showing two items: 'Computers and Electronics' (Level 88) and 'Customer and Personal Service' (Level 72). A callout box highlights the 'Computers and Electronics' knowledge area, listing related occupations such as Software Developers, Applications (15-1132.00), Computer Hardware Engineers (17-2061.00), Computer Network Support Specialists (15-1152.00), Multimedia Artists and Animators (27-1014.00), and Network and Computer Systems Administrators (15-1142.00). The Abilities section is sorted by Importance, showing 14 abilities with their respective importance levels and descriptions, such as Oral Comprehension (75), Oral Expression (75), Written Comprehension (75), Near Vision (72), Information Ordering (69), Speech Clarity (69), Deductive Reasoning (69), Problem Sensitivity (66), Speech Recognition (66), and Written Expression (66). The page includes navigation links, a search bar, and social media sharing options.

\* The Work Context Questionnaire is included in the O\*NET Questionnaires found at <https://www.onetcenter.org/questionnaires.html>.



Once the information was gathered using O\*NET OnLine, the HR Manager and the IT Manager completed a draft of a job description. They presented this draft to people in information technology functions within the company for final revisions.

The job description that the HR Manager and IT Manager developed using O\*NET information is shown to the right. The language for the job description was taken from O\*NET OnLine. The red text was contributed by the staff.

## Benefits to the Employer

The employer realized the following benefits:

- ▶ The time invested in developing the job description was reduced from an average of 24 hours to 8 hours.
- ▶ The cost to the employer was reduced dramatically from approximately \$1,440 to approximately \$480.
- ▶ The job description was created using a standardized and common language.
- ▶ The standardized language used made it much easier to compare work across functions and levels.
- ▶ The new O\*NET based description was of much higher quality than the less specific descriptions used in the past.
- ▶ Through O\*NET OnLine links, the employer accessed additional information on the Internet, such as current U.S. salaries, current and projected employment, and related training.

## Sample Job Description:

### Computer Help Desk Specialist

**Summary of Work Activities and Responsibilities:** Provides technical assistance to internal computer system users for word processing, electronic mail, spread sheet, database, and project management applications. Answers questions and resolves computer problems for system users in person or over the telephone. Prepares and conducts evaluations of software and hardware and makes recommendations to management for review. Monitors software, hardware, and peripheral equipment to detect errors, evaluate effectiveness, and resolve problems. Installs software, hardware, and peripheral equipment and performs minor repairs. May be required to prepare and conduct training for system users. Help Desk Specialists are results oriented, capable of working on their own and making decisions. Work is performed from a central, well equipped technology center or at user stations. (This summary is a compilation of information found in the O\*NET Custom Report for Computer User Support Specialists)

#### Typical Tasks:

- 1) Installs and performs minor repairs to hardware, software, and peripheral equipment in a system using [insert required software] following design or installation specifications.
- 2) Confers daily with staff, users, and management to determine requirements for new systems or modifications.
- 3) Reads technical manuals, confers with users, and conducts computer diagnostics to investigate and resolve problems and provide technical assistance.
- 4) Enters commands and observes system functioning to verify correct operations and detect errors.
- 5) Refers major hardware or software problems or defective products to vendors or technicians for service.
- 6) Maintains record of daily data communication transactions, problems and remedial action taken, and installation activities.
- 7) Conducts office automation feasibility studies, including workflow analysis, space design, and cost comparison analysis.
- 8) Reads trade magazines and technical manuals, and attends conferences and seminars to maintain knowledge of hardware and software.
- 9) Inspects equipment and reads order sheets to prepare for delivery to users.

(from the **Tasks** section of the **Custom Report**)

**Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:** Must have knowledge of electronic circuit boards, processors, chips, and computer hardware and software, including applications and programming. Must understand the principles and processes for providing customer services. Knowledge of instructional methods is helpful but not required. (from the **Knowledge** section of the **Custom Report**) Must be able to determine what is causing operating problems and decide how to solve them using active listening and critical thinking skills. (from the **Skills** section of the **Custom Report**) Must have the ability to communicate clearly, both orally and in writing, and use deductive and mathematical reasoning to detect, diagnose, and solve computer and system related problems. (from the **Abilities** section of the **Custom Report**)

**Education and Experience Requirements:** People in this position must have a Bachelor's Degree in Management Information Systems, Computer Science, Information Technology, or a related computer field, and two years of experience in computer support and service. Must have experience with [insert required software]. (from the **Job Zone - Education** section of the **Custom Report**)



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