

A top-down view of a workspace. In the upper left, a portion of a laptop keyboard is visible. A hand is writing in a spiral-bound notebook with a grey pen. To the left is a white coffee cup on a saucer. Below the coffee cup is a white mouse on a mousepad. In the bottom right corner, there are several colored pencils. The image is overlaid with dark blue circular shapes containing white text.

hireful.
we help. you hire.

advert copy
guide.

.....

foreword.

I've never written an offline job advert. When I started in recruitment in 1998, traditional media (newspapers, trade publications) were still a dominant media force. It was a local newspaper advert that attracted me to apply to work in recruitment. Lucky for me, I was working in the IT recruitment sector and was soon writing online job adverts to attract contractors for my clients' vacancies.

Fast forward 21 years and job boards dominate the recruitment advertising sector. The major job boards can offer hundreds of thousands of adverts for jobseekers to consider. Most of these adverts are less than great in terms of advert copy. Some of them are terrible. My pet hate is where no effort is made by the advertiser to even create an "advert" and a person/job specification is just dropped in instead (see the HSBC advert for a good example of this).

There are perhaps 3 reasons why the standard of advert copy is so poor:

1

fear of change.

"This is how we have always done it / This is how everyone else in our sector does it."

2

lack of time.

"We have so many vacancies and so little time."

3

lack of knowledge.

"I know it's not great, but I'm not sure how to make it better."

So, I set myself a challenge. How can we simplify the advert copy process and help recruiters and HR professionals to produce adverts rather than job specifications?

After giving it some thought, I decided the best solution was to strip everything back to the bare bones of the advert, and then produce a range of additional content that you can decide whether or not to include.

but what about the content you removed?

Some candidates are "detail-oriented" and want to see all 18 bullet points to confirm the responsibilities. Well, all candidates should have access to a full job/person specification which should be a separate document that is available to download from the job advert page.

How about other information, such as your recruitment process or your organisation's mission/values, approach to D&I, etc? All of this is important information, and you might want to signpost in your advert that if this is important to them, they can read more about it via your website/careers site.

I hope you find the following guide useful, feel free to share it and let me know if you have feedback (good or bad).

Happy advert writing!

Adrian McDonagh
co-founder / chief helper
hireful
Email: adrian@hireful.co.uk



contents.

- short advert copy template** ...page 4-6
Here I've edited and created 3 examples of a 'short advert', using only the key information.
- additional content** ...page 7
Some optional content that could enhance your job advert copy.
- original v. short advert copy:
Woodland Trust** ...page 8-9
Here I compare the original advert from The Woodland Trust with my 'short advert copy'.
- original v. short advert copy:
HSBC** ...page 10-12
Here I compare the original advert from HSBC with my 'short advert copy'.
- short advert copy + additional
content: hireful** ...page 13-14
Take a look at an example of a 'short advert' for hireful, as well as the short advert with additional content.

Disclaimer: Neither HSBC or Woodland Trust are a client of hireful. They happened to be two adverts of different styles that I thought would make for interesting examples to use.

short advert template.

There's little point calling your advert "Content Ninja" if the candidates you are looking to attract will be searching for "Content Manager".

This example is easy to read and will be a strong technical match for jobseekers who also search for "Sales Manager".

This example would be recommended if the advert is looking for someone with a passion for cycling. The title would both attract relevant and repel irrelevant people. Only recommended if there was a strong argument for it as option 1 is technically stronger.

[job ad title]

Use the most commonly used job title that matches your advert. Use additional content only if this will really help attract your ideal candidate.

example 1: Sales Manager

example 2: Sales Manager – Award winning cycling brand

example 3: Sales Manager – Times100 Best Employer

This example showcases the organisation as a great employer - useful addition if there's lot of competition for this type of candidate.

[1-2 sentence opener]

Explain who you are and what your mission or purpose is.

example 1 (Woodland Trust): The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. We aim to engage and inspire people to help us meet our vision of creating, restoring and protecting woodland.

example 2 (HSBC): HSBC is one of the world's leading banks with over 39m customers. Our mission is to enable businesses to thrive and economies to prosper, helping people fulfil their hopes and dreams and realise their ambitions.

example 3 (hireful): hireful is the UK's most helpful recruitment company offering a range of services including advertising, search, software and training. Our mission is to help everyday organisations to recruit better.

You should assume that all candidates have no knowledge of your organisation. Even HSBC should explain, succinctly, who they are.

short advert template.

[1-2 sentence job explainer]

Explain what the job is and how it links back to your mission or purpose.

example 1 (Woodland Trust): As a Public Affairs Officer you will increase the Trust's influence with environmental NGOs and politicians to ensure that future policy and resources are directed to protect woodland.

This is a challenging role to relate back to the mission of HSBC (making money), so I removed this sentence from the final copy.

example 2 (HSBC): As a Junior Portfolio Manager you provide the research and analytics to ensure our team make the right investment decisions. Your skills will help our customers to achieve financial freedom.

example 3 (hireful): As a Support Consultant you will help customers to develop the skills they need to master our recruitment software and efficiently deliver a first class experience to their candidates.



[optional direct question]

Is there a key question you want to ask to both engage relevant applicants and repel others? Asking (the right) questions is a good tactic to build engagement by talking directly to the jobseeker.

This question focuses on passion, which in theory, would be a vital attribute for the successful candidate.

example 1 (Woodland Trust): Do you believe our woodland areas are a vital part of our heritage and need to be protected?

I have no personal knowledge of the HSBC working environment but use this question as an example for a challenging working environment. Remember you want to repel people who are not the right fit.

example 2 (HSBC): Do you have what it takes to work in a fast moving environment providing support to senior trading staff?

At hireful, we often recruit people with the skills and attitude but perhaps not the experience. In this instance, a question to get the candidate to confirm that they are what we look for in terms of attitude and skillset is really important.

example 3 (hireful): Do you have an inner drive to help people and a love for technology?

short advert template.

There are four requirements added to this short paragraph. The original advert also asked for items like "an interest in current affairs" which is a given based on the items included. Think about what really needs to be here. If this paragraph gets too long then you are better to adopt a bullet point list approach.

Desirable skills can often be left out from this short advert style. However, qualifications provide an easy checklist for candidates to understand whether they are a good fit. You should note that I called them desirable but still stressed that they are "not essential". Some candidates might be easily discouraged from applying if they don't have the desirable skills.

[short paragraph to explain the skills needed]

example 1 (Woodland Trust): You will need to have excellent written and verbal communication skills and be experienced deploying these skills in a political context. A working knowledge of environmental policy and a willingness to travel (including some overnight stays) is essential.

example 2 (HSBC): You will need EXCEL VBA programming experience and have used MATLAB in a prior investment role. CFA or FCA (CF30) registration is desirable but not essential.

example 3 (hireful): You will need to be a strong communicator who has a good knowledge of technology. This knowledge might be from past work experience or it could be that your hobbies and interests revolve around tech.

This description is trying to appeal to both people with formal experience and hobbyists.

[call to action]

This can be a set of instructions OR it could be a instructions combined within a question.

example 1 (Woodland Trust): There's no other organisation like the Woodland Trust. Whatever you do here you will be supporting our work to protect and enhance woods and trees. So click apply and we look forward to receiving your application.

example 2 (HSBC): If you want to know more then click apply and visit our careers site for more information on this opportunity.

example 3 (hireful): If you're ready to help us build the UK's most helpful recruitment company then click apply and complete the short application process (3-4 mins). We feed back to all applicants within 3 working days.

Assuming this is a job board advert, the task we need the applicant to complete is to click to apply. This will send them to the vacancy on the careers site. Here they can find more information, ideally including the job and person specification.

This call to action repeats our mission (key information), tells the applicant what to do next and that it's an easy step as well as highlighting to them that we'll reply promptly.

additional content.

You may want to consider adding some of the below additional content to your short advert copy.

[start with humour]

The best advertising puts a smile on our face. It might not be easy but if you can find a humorous way to start your advert you can hopefully grab the reader's attention straight away.

[diversity statement]

More and more adverts highlight what an organisation is doing to improve their diversity and inclusion. Try to avoid saying something that really says nothing such as "INSERT COMPANY is an equal opportunities employer." Congratulations! I am sure it'll be a huge relief for jobseekers to know you meet the basic level of legal responsibility here.

[using a short bullet point list instead of a paragraph]

This is useful if you have more to say. Paragraphs containing 5+ sentences run the risk of hiding important information. Better to list it in bullet points to make it easier for the jobseeker to read.

[benefits]

It's a good idea to add 1-2 sentences to describe your benefits. As you'll see on pages 13-14, I haven't added this content as benefits, like salary and location, are normally given their own separate area outside of the main job description area.

[career development]

If your organisation offers good career development prospects then you might want to include some information on this. This can be difficult to do in 1-2 sentences and maintain the same short but powerful approach. I'd recommend trying to evidence this approach - see our advert on pages 13-14 where we reference the fact that "over 80% of our managers joined us as a non-manager and were promoted into their role".

[3 things you likely didn't realise about us/this role]

Adding a short list of things that some people might not realise about a vacancy or your organisation can be a good way to produce some engaging content that the reader might not be expecting.

original v. short advert.

example 1 - Woodland Trust

Below is the original advert copy, which I think is a good advert. Here are its pros and cons:



Short advert (280 words) that's easy to read and highlights the key information. Good use of headings to allow candidates to jump ahead to the part that interests them most.



Highlights the "mission" of The Woodland Trust and what makes them a good employer.



The only improvement I'd suggest would be to make the advert copy talk directly to the candidate. Perhaps changing the headings to "The impact you will have" instead of "The role". Also, there's the potential to use a question or two to engage the candidate.

The screenshot shows a job advertisement for a Public Affairs Officer at Woodland Trust. The ad includes the following details:

- Job Title:** Public Affairs Officer
- Company:** Woodland Trust (4.5 stars, 12 reviews)
- Location:** Home Based
- Work Type:** Remote
- Salary:** £26,000 - £28,000 a year - Contract
- Apply Button:** Apply on company site

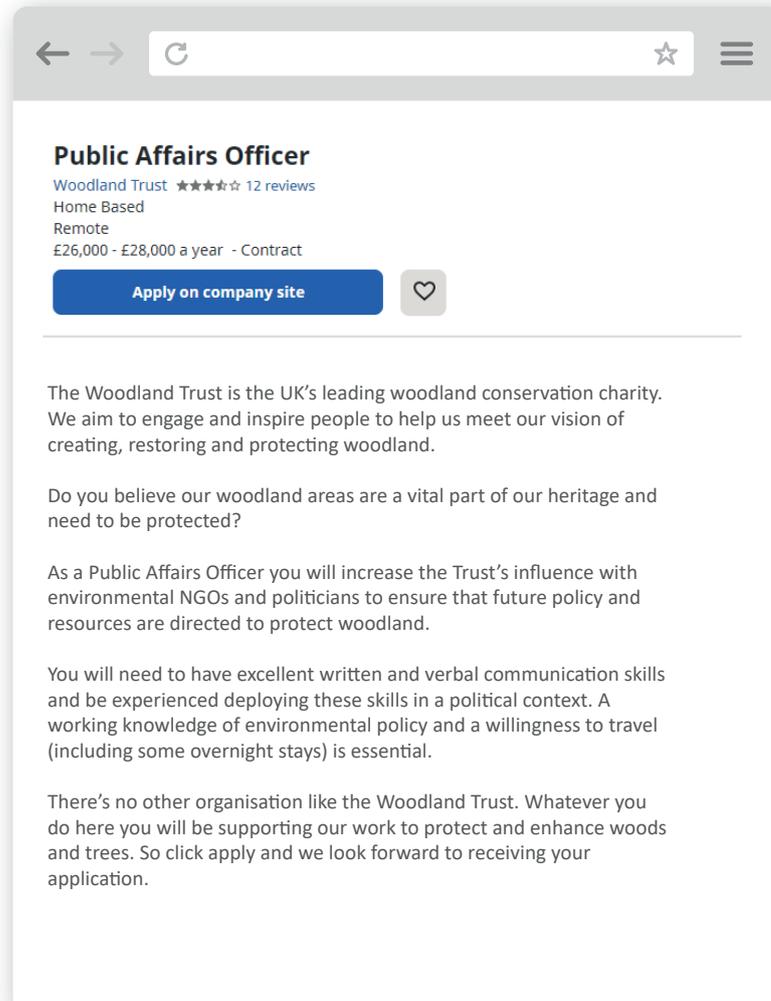
The advertisement is structured with the following sections:

- ABOUT US:** The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. We want to see a UK rich in native woods and trees, for people and wildlife. The Trust aims to engage and inspire people about woods and trees to help us meet our vision of creating, restoring and protecting woodland.
- THE ROLE:** The Public Affairs Officer role will work to increase the Trust's influence through public affairs and policy work, building strong partnerships with environmental NGOs, politicians at local and national government level and relevant stakeholders. An integral part of this role is the ability to lead on the Trust's advocacy relationship with local authorities and the two national parks across Scotland to ensure policy support and resource allocation for woodland protection, creation, and restoration. In particular, the Public Affairs Officer will support planning policy influencing at the local and national government level.
- THE CANDIDATE:** You'll possess outstanding written and verbal communication skills and a good understanding of how to deploy them within a political context. Working experience of Scottish politics and environmental policy, and a keen interest in current affairs are a must alongside the ability to be a good advocate for the Woodland Trust's mission. You must be able to travel for site visits and meetings, sometimes in remote areas of Scotland, and with some overnight stays.
- WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:** There's no other organisation like the Woodland Trust. Whatever you do here you will be supporting our work to protect and enhance woods and trees. In return we recognise and value our people. You'll have our full support, training and opportunities for professional development, along with a contributory pension, life assurance and good holiday entitlement.

original v. short advert.

example 1 - Woodland Trust

Here's how this advert looks in the short template.
The final copy is 149 words.



original v. short advert.

example 2 - HSBC

Below is the original advert copy. I'm not a fan of this advert, but included it as it is a good example of a job specification and person specification being joined together and called an advert. The original advert is 814 words. Here are its cons and cons:



The copy makes no effort to engage or talk to the candidate. I have read instructional manuals to lawnmowers that were more exciting than this.



It's highly repetitive. For example, it references that you will need strong communication skills 3 times. Do you need to state that candidates need to "Be able to work independently and to take initiative" and then 3 points later also mention "Demonstrate ability to organise work independently"?!



Does a jobseeker really need a link to your privacy policy at the pre-apply stage? This only needs to be made available during the application process. I would file this under "If lawyers wrote job advert copy".

The screenshot shows a job advertisement for a Junior Portfolio Manager at HSBC. The ad includes the following details:

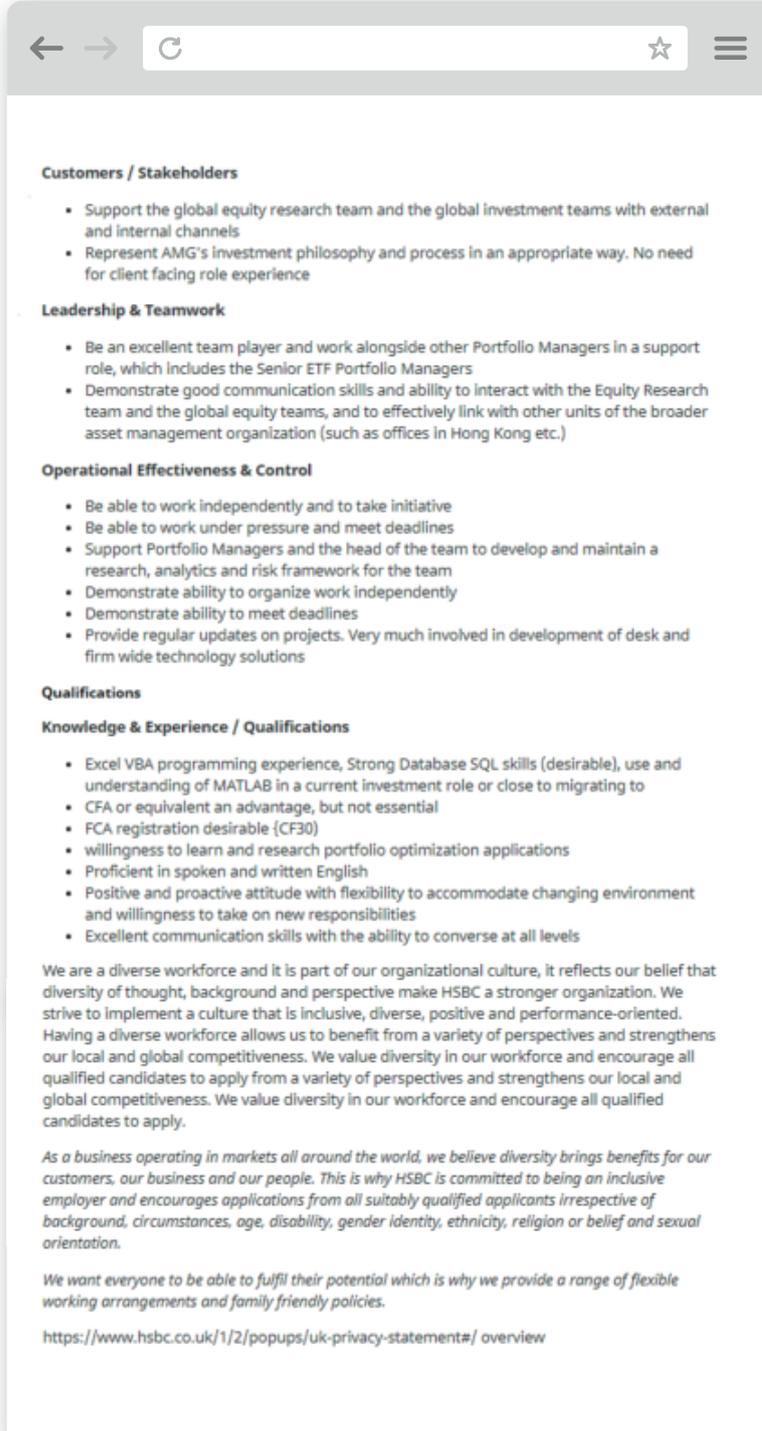
- Role Title:** Junior Portfolio Manager
- Business:** Retail Banking and Wealth Management
- New or Existing Role:** New
- Grade:** GCB5
- Role Purpose:**
 - Management of designated ETFs (as appropriate) including monitoring investment performance and making investment decisions. Achieving target tracking performance in respect of all managed funds. Responsibility to further develop the Investment team capability by enhancing processes, procedures & implementation opportunities, in a simple, cost-effective and highly efficient manner. Working closely and collaboratively with key stakeholders across AMG to align investment manufacturing with AMG's investment philosophy and processes. Responsibility to represent the core investment process to the product functions, other stakeholders and AMG clients. Support the Head of Passive equities in a collaborative approach to improve investment capability, technology solutions, and process and client deliverables to further grow the business.
- Key Accountabilities:**
 - Analysis of index changes & corporate actions identifying opportunities for added value to the investment process
 - Preparing PLFs for the creation of PCFs
 - Working closely with Capital Markets to provide a high level of service to Authorized Participants
 - Conducting ad-hoc research, and preparing material for investment reports, as required
 - Participating in research and product development activities, including assisting in the development of Equity and Fixed Income ETFs
 - Helping to maintain the integrity and increase the efficiency of ETF Indexation systems (as appropriate)
 - Support ETF Capability head
 - Working closely with head of ETF investment team, supporting this individual in strategy, resourcing and cross training
 - Cross-training and mentoring of the current ETF investment team which includes equity, fixed income and commodities
 - Typical Targets and Measures
 - Performance in line with objectives including tracking error targets and risk controls
 - Looking at both risk and cost for implementation of creation / redemption baskets
 - Understand stakeholder management and satisfaction criteria for success in line with Head of Passive Equities
 - Assisting in the execution of required fund management research and design material in collaboration with stakeholders for successful business retention and acquisition
 - Work in collaboration of investment team to enhance all systems and process enhancements
 - As the firm builds out Fixed Income and Commodity ETF's, the individual will seek to support and be guided by the head of the investment team in the implementation and build out, if required
 - Work with head of the investment team on a training and mentoring programme for 2020

continued on next page...

original v. short advert.

example 2 - HSBC

...



← → ↻ ☆ ☰

Customers / Stakeholders

- Support the global equity research team and the global investment teams with external and internal channels
- Represent AMG's investment philosophy and process in an appropriate way. No need for client facing role experience

Leadership & Teamwork

- Be an excellent team player and work alongside other Portfolio Managers in a support role, which includes the Senior ETF Portfolio Managers
- Demonstrate good communication skills and ability to interact with the Equity Research team and the global equity teams, and to effectively link with other units of the broader asset management organization (such as offices in Hong Kong etc.)

Operational Effectiveness & Control

- Be able to work independently and to take initiative
- Be able to work under pressure and meet deadlines
- Support Portfolio Managers and the head of the team to develop and maintain a research, analytics and risk framework for the team
- Demonstrate ability to organize work independently
- Demonstrate ability to meet deadlines
- Provide regular updates on projects. Very much involved in development of desk and firm wide technology solutions

Qualifications

Knowledge & Experience / Qualifications

- Excel VBA programming experience, Strong Database SQL skills (desirable), use and understanding of MATLAB in a current investment role or close to migrating to
- CFA or equivalent an advantage, but not essential
- FCA registration desirable (CF30)
- Willingness to learn and research portfolio optimization applications
- Proficient in spoken and written English
- Positive and proactive attitude with flexibility to accommodate changing environment and willingness to take on new responsibilities
- Excellent communication skills with the ability to converse at all levels

We are a diverse workforce and it is part of our organizational culture, it reflects our belief that diversity of thought, background and perspective make HSBC a stronger organization. We strive to implement a culture that is inclusive, diverse, positive and performance-oriented. Having a diverse workforce allows us to benefit from a variety of perspectives and strengthens our local and global competitiveness. We value diversity in our workforce and encourage all qualified candidates to apply from a variety of perspectives and strengthens our local and global competitiveness. We value diversity in our workforce and encourage all qualified candidates to apply.

As a business operating in markets all around the world, we believe diversity brings benefits for our customers, our business and our people. This is why HSBC is committed to being an inclusive employer and encourages applications from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of background, circumstances, age, disability, gender identity, ethnicity, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

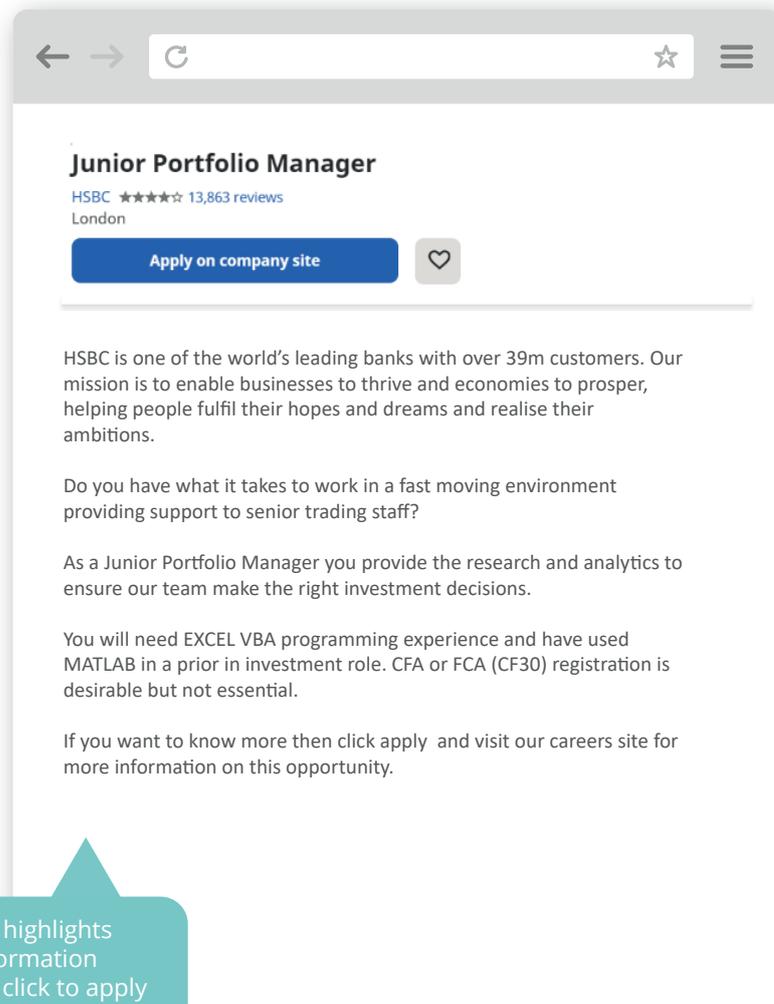
We want everyone to be able to fulfil their potential which is why we provide a range of flexible working arrangements and family friendly policies.

<https://www.hsbc.co.uk/1/2/popups/uk-privacy-statement#/overview>

original v. short advert.

example 2 - HSBC

Here's how this advert looks in the short template.
The final copy is 121 words.



The call to action highlights there is more information available - if they click to apply they can find out more.

The job of a job board advert where you are directed to apply on a careers site, is to intrigue the jobseeker enough so that they click through to your careers site to find out more.

short advert.

example 3 - hireful

Here's an example of a short advert for hireful (140 words).

join the talented team.

Support Consultant

Strixton, Northamptonshire
Technical Team
Full time
Permanent

hireful.
we help. you hire.

Apply now

At hireful we exist to help everyday organisations recruit better. We provide a range of recruitment services including advertising, training, software and headhunting; all of which are aimed at helping our clients to up their recruitment game.

In order for us to do this we have a set of company values that we're proud to say we live & breathe across everything we do. Demonstrating these values is essential for anyone joining our team (more than anything else!) They are: helpful, friendly, knowledgeable, Honest and Fun. If these come naturally to you then I hope you'll consider applying as you're likely to fit right in.

Salary
Competitive

Benefits
Flexible working hours, 25 days off each year plus public holidays, modern office in a great location and the opportunity to help to set up a new team and workspace from scratch

Share:
LinkedIn Twitter Facebook

hireful is the UK's most helpful recruitment company, offering a range of services including advertising, search, software and training. Our mission is to help everyday organisations to recruit better.

As a Support Consultant you'll help customers to develop the skills they need to master our recruitment software and efficiently deliver a first class experience to their candidates.

Do you have an inner drive to help people and a love for technology?

You will need to be a strong communicator who has a good knowledge of technology. This knowledge might be from past work experience or it could be that your hobbies and interests revolve around tech.

If you're ready to help us build the UK's most helpful recruitment company then click apply and complete the short application process (3-4 mins). We feed back to all applicants within 3 working days.

short advert + additional content.

example 3 - hireful

Here's the same short advert for hireful but with some additional content (346 words).

join the talented team.

Support Consultant
 Strixton, Northamptonshire
 Technical Team
 Full time
 Permanent

hireful.
we help. you hire.

Would you like to join a small but growing (45 staff), exceptionally brilliant team in brand new converted office barns? Overlooking some fluffy sheep. Lots of them skipping about, more of them in spring...

...hireful is the UK's most helpful recruitment company offering a range of services including advertising, search, software and training. Our mission is to help everyday organisations to recruit better.

What you'll be doing:
 As a Support Consultant you'll help customers to develop the skills they need to master our recruitment software and efficiently deliver a first class experience to their candidates.

Do you have an inner drive to help people and a love for technology?

What we need you to bring to the party:

- Strong written and spoken communication skills.
- Good knowledge of technology (we don't need coders but we want people who love using software). This knowledge might be from past work experience or it could be that your hobbies and interests revolve around tech.
- An enquiring mind with the confidence to ask questions.
- A team player who is always looking to help and will maybe occasionally even share your mid-morning snack with your colleagues.

What we will offer in return:

- A decent salary/benefits and the opportunity to develop your career (over 80% of our managers joined us as a non-manager and were promoted into their role).
- A relaxed culture where you are expected to plan your own day, take breaks when you need them and enjoy your work.
- A flexible working environment where you can plan your own week and work at least 1 day a week from home.

What next?
 If you're ready to help us build the UK's most helpful recruitment company then click apply and complete the short application process (3-4 mins). We feed back to all applicants within 3 working days.

We believe in the power of diversity here at hireful. We strongly encourage applicants from all parts of society. You can read on our careers site about the actions we are taking ourselves and how we are also helping other organisations to build more inclusive recruitment strategies.

Apply now

At hireful we exist to help everyday organisations recruit better. We provide a range of recruitment services including advertising, training, software and headhunting, all of which are aimed at helping our clients to up their recruitment game.

In order for us to do this we have a set of company values that we're proud to say we live & breathe across everything we do. Demonstrating these values is essential for anyone joining our team (more than anything else!) They are Helpful, Friendly, Knowledgeable, Honest and Fun. If these come naturally to you then I hope you'll consider applying as you're likely to fit right in.

Salary
Competitive

Benefits
flexible working hours, 25 days off each year plus public holidays, modern office in a great location and the opportunity to help to set up a new team and workspace from scratch

Share:
[in](#) [t](#) [f](#)

Our attempt at humour. This doesn't need to be laugh out loud funny just something that represents your organisation's tone of voice and aims to put a smile on someone's face.

I added some headings to this advert as it is longer, this will make it easier if the jobseeker wants to jump ahead.

This heading is a good example of the hireful tone of voice being quite informal and fun (fun is one of our values).

This longer advert allows us the chance to talk about some of the additional attributes we see as key for this role and also inject a little more fun to the advert.

I know some people reading this might think "wow we would never say that" and that's fine. No judgements here. We have always been a little bit informal and quirky.

Some D&I statements list out all the groups they are keen to see applications from. I think this is unnecessary. It's more important that you mention you are taking action and you are able to direct interested applicants to where they can read more about what you are doing.

Other variations on this heading that also talk directly to the jobseeker include:
 "What's in it for you"
 "How we'll reward you"

additional content.

In spirit of working to be the UK's most helpful recruitment company, we didn't stop at just creating this free ad copy guide. We've also got some other handy (and free) resources including our job advert template, a video walk-through of how to create your own advert copy template, and our advert copy webinar 'how to create great advert copy... by like using the good words and stuff.' Scan the QR codes below to get started.

job ad template.



bit.ly/hirefuladtemplate

ad template
walkthrough.



bit.ly/hirefuladwalkthrough

ad copy webinar.



bit.ly/hirefuladwebinar

hireful.

we help. you hire.



applicant tracking system

Struggling to manage your recruitment? Keeping track of your applicants can feel like a lot. Whether it's getting the right people applying for your roles, scheduling interviews, or creating the smoothest of the smooth candidate experience - we could all do with a buddy to help us out.



advertising

Let's talk advertising campaigns. They can be pretty handy when it comes to getting the word out there about the roles you're trying to fill. We help you save time and create campaigns that find you the strongest candidates to move through the recruitment process smoothly.



recruitment agency

This is not your typical recruitment agency service. Now we get it if you're cynical about working with recruitment agencies. We used to be too. That's why we do things differently. We get to know you and what you really need so you can get the right processes and team in place.



training, education & support

There's only so much time, budget, and resources to go around - particularly when it comes to taking time out from your key tasks to undergo training. Get real practical help for your HR team and in-house recruiters through flexible webinars, workshops, online training, and conferences.

w: www.hireful.co.uk

a: 15-17 Strixton Manor Business Centre, Northamptonshire, Strixton, NN29 7PA

t: 01933 428 991

e: help@hireful.co.uk