

The 5-line template

An ad does 1 job: it makes the right 20 people apply and keeps the wrong 200 away. Five lines do that in the 30 seconds a candidate gives you. Everything else is decoration.

SECTION	WHAT GOES THERE	LENGTH
The problem	What is broken or growing, and why a person is the fix	3 sentences
The first 90 days	3 outcomes: shipped, measured or decided. Concrete enough to be wrong about	3 lines
What we score	The 3 scorecard lines that carry the decision, with the evidence you look for	3 lines
Salary and location	The real band from your own audit, the currency, base or total, remote or office, the time zone	1 line
The loop	Rounds, days, who decides, when you answer	2 lines

The whole thing fits on 1 screen: 150 to 250 words. LinkedIn's analysis found posts under 150 words drew 17.8% more applications than long ones.

Filled in: Senior Backend Engineer, payments

The problem. Our payments service was written for one country and now runs in 6. Every new market is a special case in the same 4,000-line module, and the last two incidents were both in it. We need one person to own splitting it.

Your first 90 days. By day 30 you have shipped a change to the payments service and drawn its map. By day 60 you own the design doc for the split and it has been reviewed. By day 90 the first market runs on the new path in production.

What we score. System design: you clarify requirements before drawing anything, estimate scale with numbers, and name a trade-off nobody prompted. Ownership: you have run a system end to end and can say what broke and what you changed after. Communication: you say what you do not know and sum up a decision in 2 sentences.

Salary and location. 85,000 to 100,000 euro base, Berlin or remote within CET ± 2 . The top of the band is for someone already operating at staff level.

The loop. 4 rounds in 1 day: a 30-minute screen, a 60-minute practical round in a repo like ours with any tools allowed, a 60-minute design round, 45 minutes with the hiring manager. The hiring manager decides; you hear by the next working day.

212 words. A wrong candidate can see themselves in it and stop reading, which is the point.

Write it from the scorecard, in this order

1. Pick the 3 scorecard lines that would make you say no on their own. One sentence each on what evidence looks like.
2. Write the 90 days before any requirement. 3 outcomes: shipped, measured or decided.
3. Cut every requirement no round will test. A requirement nobody tests is a filter nobody chose.
4. Add the salary range and the shape of the loop. Both are things candidates ask each other about.

The recruiter's edit: cut, do not add

CUT	WHY
Any technology no round tests	14 technologies for a role that uses 4 is a filter you did not intend. Women applied at 100% of the list, men at 60%.
"Strong communicator", "team player", "passionate"	Excludes nobody, so it selects nobody.
"Rockstar", "ninja", "fast-paced"	Narrows the pool in ways you did not choose.
Years of experience as a requirement	Years are not evidence. The scorecard line is.
The company paragraph above the fold	Move it to the bottom. The candidate came for the role.

The 30-second test

Hand the ad to an engineer who does not know the role. Ask: what is broken, what would I have shipped by day 90, what will they score, what does it pay, how many rounds? If any answer takes longer than 30 seconds to find, the line is missing or buried.

SmartHiring by Elman Huseynov · the post behind this file: smarthiring.tech/software-engineer-job-description/ · Use it inside your company as you like; please link the post rather than re-hosting the file.