

The Job Description for Your AI

Write it the way you would write one for a new hire. What you say back becomes the instructions it runs on, word for word, so the detail you put in is the employee you get out.

Do not sit down and fill this in alone. Hand it to the AI and let it interview you.

"I want help with ____ in my shop. Before we build anything, interview me. Ask me the questions on this sheet one at a time, wait for my answer, and push back when my answer is vague. When we are done, write it all back to me as your job description, in my words, and we will use that as your instructions."

Nine things it needs to know

1 The job

- What problem am I hiring you to help with, and what does it cost me in a normal week?
- What exactly should you hand me, and on what day? A morning list, a weekly order, an alert when something is off?
- Who reads it, and what do they do next?

Why this one: Naming the thing it hands you, and the day it hands it over, is what turns an idea into something you can build. Norton's came down to two: a morning list for the general manager, and a weekly order recommendation for the owner.

2 The shop

- What kind of shop is this, who buys from us, and what makes us different from the shop down the road?
- How do I make this decision today, in my own words, start to finish?
- What are my rules of thumb, including the ones I have never written down?

Why this one: The question that started this whole project: what is in my head that my shop manager would need to know to run the shop without me for two weeks.

3 Where your job stops

- Which calls are always mine, no matter how confident you are?
- What are you allowed to decide on your own?
- When you are not sure, what do you do?
- When the data disagrees with me, say so. I would rather be corrected than agreed with.

Why this one: Two things, set on day one and never moved. You recommend, I decide: the owner only hands his ordering over if he can check it. And do not be a yes machine, which is the one rule on this whole sheet that gives permission instead of taking it away. It will happily agree with you about your own shop, and you will have no way to catch it.

4 What good looks like

- What is this number today, before you touch anything? Write it down now.
- What would make me and my team say out loud that this worked?
- When is it good enough to start using, and what would make me switch it off?

Why this one: Take the starting number before anything changes. Ours is a physical count on the day the tool goes into the shop, so there is something honest to compare against later. Skip it and you can never prove it helped.

5 What you must never do

- What must you never do, even if I ask in a hurry?
- What must you never change or touch?
- Who must you never create extra work for?

Why this one: That last one is not about the AI, it is about your staff. Ours was near zero data entry: nothing new for the team to keep up beyond what they already do. Set yours before somebody quietly gets handed a new spreadsheet to maintain.

The Job Description for Your AI, continued

6 What you must always show

- Every number you give me traces back to a file I can open. Agreed?
- When I ask how you got there, show me the arithmetic, not a paragraph.
- Tell me how old the data behind an answer is, and say plainly when it is too old to trust.

Why this one: *This is the twin of the rule above, and the more useful half. A prohibition is a fence; this one turns into a feature. Ours became a button called Show the Math.*

7 What you run on

- What records do I already keep, and where do they actually live?
- How do they get to you, who does it, and how often? What happens the week nobody remembers?
- What else may you reach on my behalf, and whose computer do you live on? Who can see my numbers?

Why this one: *A one time pile of files makes a demo. What makes it a tool is a place the shop drops new files and something that picks them up on its own, without anybody being asked to remember.*

8 What you cannot know

- What is missing, thin, or plain wrong in my records?
- What questions must you refuse to answer from them?
- How will you say so, out loud, when one of those comes up?

Why this one: *The one most people skip, and the one that decides whether anyone keeps trusting it. We wrote down what our records could not answer before we trusted a single answer, so every result came out with its own caveat attached.*

9 When you are wrong

- How do I tell you, and where does my reason get written down so it sticks?
- When I overrule you, I want my reason sitting next to the next recommendation, not lost in a chat window.
- After I correct you: what did you learn, what let it happen, and what changes so it cannot happen again?
- Once the first job is working, what is the next problem I point you at?

Why this one: *Every time the owner overruled a recommendation here, what he changed and why got written down, and his reasoning now sits next to next week's order instead of in his head. The third question is the one that compounds: a fix repairs today, naming what let it happen repairs every week after.*

When the interview is done

Ask it to write the whole thing back to you as one page, in your words, and keep that page where the work happens. That page is the job description. It is not a summary of the project, it is the instructions the thing actually runs on, and every answer it gives you from then on comes out of it.

We used Claude. The method works with any good AI assistant. Nothing on this sheet needs a technical answer. Every question is about your own shop.