

Essential vs. Marginal Job Functions

Before creating a job description announcement and beginning the hiring process, you'll need to determine the essential job functions and marginal functions (non-essential functions) of the job position. The essential job functions will need to be included in the job description. This information will be important for determining if an applicant can perform the essential duties of the position with or without reasonable accommodation.

For example, let's look at the essential and marginal job functions of a receptionist position in a professional office.

Essential job functions might include:

- Answering the telephone and assisting callers.
- Recording messages for department personnel.
- Greeting clients and customers.

Marginal job functions might include:

- Serving coffee to clients and customers.
- Escorting clients to staff offices.

For this receptionist position, an applicant would need to be able to perform the essential job functions (duties) of this position with or without reasonable accommodation. **The marginal or non-essential job functions are those that could be redesigned or reassigned to other employees, if necessary.**

Whether or not a particular duty is considered marginal will depend on:

1. The importance of the duty to your company's operation;
2. It's frequency;
3. If there's sufficient staff to reassign the marginal duty to other employees;
4. If the marginal duty can be redesigned or performed in another way.

In other words, **if the duty is viewed as important to your company's operation, the duty is performed with frequency, there isn't sufficient staff to reassign the marginal duty, and the duty can't be redesigned or performed in another way, the duty would be considered an essential function of the position.**