

Guidelines and Sample Questions for Checking References

Checking an applicant's references is a critical part of the hiring process that provides the employer with a better and more complete picture of the candidate's abilities and record of past performance.

Reference checks should be conducted on all final candidates and should be considered when comparing the final candidates to each other.

When conducting reference checks by telephone, the caller should:

- Introduce herself/himself and state the purpose of the call.
- Confirm that it is a convenient time to talk with the reference.
- Briefly describe the position for which the candidate has applied.
- Confirm the relationship between the person giving the reference and the candidate. (i.e. employer, colleague, co-worker, former employer etc.)
- Verify the candidate's duties such as job title, major responsibilities, date of employment.
- **Be consistent!**
 - Always ask the same exact questions for each candidate.
 - If more than one person on the selection team is conducting reference checks, each checker should use the exact same script, and follow it explicitly for each reference.

****All information gained from the reference checks should be weighed equally.**
Something that disqualifies one candidate should also disqualify any of the candidates.

Sample Reference Check Form & Questions

Candidate's Name: _____

Person Performing Reference Check: _____

Name of Reference: _____

Title of Reference: _____

Organization of Reference: _____

Phone Number of Reference: _____

Date of Reference Check: _____

1. What was the nature and length of your relationship with the candidate?
2. Please describe the candidate's duties. Were these completed satisfactorily? Did the candidate go above and beyond expectations?
3. What was the candidate's reason for leaving?
4. How would you characterize the candidate's relationship with superiors and peers?
5. How would you describe the candidate's style of communication with a) peers/colleagues and b) superiors?
6. Please describe the candidate's level of planning and organization.
7. How does the candidate handle conflict?
8. Does the candidate always act in a professional manner?
9. What was the candidate's greatest strength?
10. Is there anything else that I should know about this candidate or that you wish you had known before hiring this person?
11. Would you hire this person again? Yes _____ No _____ (If "No," why?)

Reference check completed by: _____ Date: _____
Signature