

Asking the Right Reference Questions

Organizations vary widely on whether or not they do reference checks on candidates. Check references carefully. Some companies you call may only be willing to confirm facts for fear of a defamation lawsuit. Others, however, may give you some insight into the candidate. Listen to the tone of how the reference tells you about the candidate.

At the very least, checking references will confirm the truthfulness of the candidates and their resumes. If you make these calls and document the results, here are some sample questions to help you get the most useful information. Also, reference check value may be increased if done *after* interviews and/or assessments so that you have specific questions or hypotheses to explore with the people you call.

- What were the beginning and ending employment dates for this individual?
- What position(s) did the individual hold? Salary history?
- How long have you worked with or supervised this individual?
- What were the individual's most recent job duties?
- What can you tell me about the quality and quantity of this individual's work?
- How would you describe this person's ability to meet deadlines?
- What kind of supervision did this person require?
- Did this individual get along well with management and peers?
- How is this individual a team player?
- How would you describe this individual's attitude toward work?
- How would you describe the individual's overall performance?
- How was this person's attendance? Was he/she punctual?
- Why did this individual leave your company?
- Would you reemploy this person if you had the opportunity?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?