

Reference Article

Imagine this scenario. A client calls our firm after conducting his own search for a new member of his management team. He sends the candidate to us for assessment and reference verification. Everyone at the company is in love with the candidate of choice. We determine, through references, the candidate has been terminated from his most recent employer for misappropriation of funds. We report this information back to our client; first he has an apoplectic fit, then realizes the situation they would have been in had they hired the candidate without checking references.

This event is a true scenario. Not all candidates embellish the truth to this degree, but some may neglect to mention a specific detail regarding their history. Do you think this individual would willingly disclose this type of career-limiting information?

The motto is: spend the time before the hire—it is a minor investment in the entire process.

When placing a reference call, ask the potential Referee if they can spare five to ten minutes of uninterrupted time. Brief them about your company and the opportunity; offer a profile of the position, responsibilities and challenges. Prior to calling, make sure **you** understand what will differentiate individual from another in this role. If your incumbent was next to superhuman and was promoted, describe the qualities they exhibited that made them rise to the top...if your incumbent didn't cut it and you set them free, explain what they lacked that led to your current situation.

The following is a template that can be used to ask the Referee for information relevant to many aspects of the individual's performance. None of these questions are intrusive and all should elicit objective and quantifiable information. Many can be used whether your firm is a Retailer or Supplier.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- The referee's association with the candidate? For how long?
- How does the candidate compare versus other similar employees they have known?
- Are there any habits, traits or weak skills that have prevented the candidate from achieving their full potential in their career with their company?

INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE re:

- Products (current and anticipated)?
- Distribution/availability?
- Competitive trends?
- Retail operations in general?

ACHIEVEMENT RECORD

Performance in the current year as well as the three most recent years:

Fiscal Year	Quota	Actual	Group Ranking
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

PERSONAL EMPHASIS ON

- Customer service and support
- Quality of work
- Volume
- Repeat business
- Dispute resolution

ADDITIONAL QUALITIES

- Planning and organization skills?
- Initiative/industriousness/flexibility?
- Willingness to learn from others?
- Maturity/judgement/self-confidence?
- Ability to cope with pressure? What/where is their stress outlet?
- Consistency?
- Personal motivation re: growth, progress, and goal achievement?
- Human relations skills re: conflict management and negotiating?
- Principal contribution to the company?

Spend whatever time is necessary on this portion of the hiring process. You will not only reaffirm your hiring decision, you will have a much better understanding of the person's strengths, limitations and ultimately how you will work best together. Good luck!

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