

REFERENCE CHECK GUIDE

Reference Check Conducted By _____

Name of Applicant (A) _____

Individual Contacted _____ Title _____

Company Name _____

General Principles

1. In-depth, personal reference checks should be done by a **Topgrading Interviewer** (because they learn which people to contact and have descriptions of them).
2. Preliminary reference checks can be done before face-to-face interviews if, say, you know a former boss (supervisor), but in-depth reference checks are done **after** the Topgrading Interview.
3. **The candidate arranges the calls.** The candidate should have known from the start of the hiring process this is the policy – that an offer will eventually require the candidate to arrange personal reference calls with bosses (and maybe others). If after the Topgrading Interview the candidate and the interviewers want to move forward, the interviewers decide which people to talk with, and ask the candidate to arrange those calls, providing references' availability and phone numbers. The candidate will generally get back within a day with the availability and phone number of the references.
4. Try to talk to as many bosses the candidate reported to over the past 10 years. If the candidate does not want the current boss called, try to talk to someone who has left the current employer. It's ok to talk to others who saw the candidate "in action," and references who were a level or more above the candidate at the time tend to provide the best information.
5. In the interview create the tone of a **trusted confidante**. Promise confidentiality and respect it.
6. Follow the interview guide and **take notes**.

Sample Introductory Comments

Hi (name of person contacted), thank you very much for accepting my call. As (A) indicated, we are considering hiring them and I would **very much** appreciate your comments on their strengths, areas for improvement, career potentials, and how I might best manage them. Anything you tell me will be held in the strictest confidence. (Assuming concurrence ...) (A) and I have spent ____ hours together. I have thoroughly reviewed their career history and plans for the future, and I was particularly interested in their experiences when they reported to you. If you don't mind, why don't we start with a very general question ...

Comprehensive Appraisal

What would you consider (A)'s:

Strengths, Assets, Things You Like and Respect About (A)?	What were/are (A)'s Weaker Points and Areas For Improvement?

Notes:

- It is OK to interrupt strengths to get clarification, but do not do so for shortcomings. Get the longest list of shortcomings possible and then go back for clarification. If you interrupt the negatives and get elaboration, the tone might seem too negative, thus closing off discussion of further negatives.
- If you are getting a "whitewash," inquire about negatives directly. For example: "Pat said that she missed the software project due date by three months and guesses that that hurt her overall performance rating. Could you elaborate?"

Responsibilities/Accountabilities

Would you please clarify what (A)'s responsibilities and accountabilities were in that position?

Overall Performance Rating

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being Excellent and 1 being Poor, how would you rate (A)'s overall performance?

Why? _____

Reasons for leaving? _____

Would you rehire (A)? _____

Confirmation of Dates

Just to clean up a couple of details, do the following seem correct? (prepopulate from the resume or application)

(A)'s starting _____ and final _____ employment dates?

Description of Position Applied For

Let me tell you more about the job (A) is applying for... (Describe the job)

Good/Bad Fit

Now, how do you think (A) might fit in that job? (Probe for specifics)

Good-Fit Indicators	Concerns

*Note: Probe for specifics. Don't accept vague generalities [(A) sometimes procrastinates] but ask for concrete examples, dates, consequences, etc.

Advice for Me as Hiring Manager

What would be your best advice to me for how I could best manage (A)?

Final Comments

Have you any final comments or suggestions about (A)?

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