

9. Reference & Background Checks

The Fourth and Fifth Steps In the Selection Process

We're now entering steps 4 and 5 of the 5-step selection process. Now you and the candidate should be at the stage where you both think she and the job are a good fit.

Employment Reference Checks

- In general, you are looking for three things during the Employment Reference Check Step:
 1. Indication of past success in job performance.
 2. Confirmation of the things you've seen in the candidate and the conclusions you have drawn about the candidate.
 3. Validation of your own position in the profession about the candidate.
- You may encounter employment references who are reluctant to give you little more than the information of "name" and "serial number" when you're calling for past employment information on a candidate.
- Some employers simply confirm if the candidate did or did not work there, possibly hold on to the candidate and the time that she worked there. For the reasons you will evaluate, the scoring a little differently during the process.
- For solving the job interview, use *Employment Reference Check* (HR 04-95). Be sure to have the candidate's social security number filled in on the top of the form. Some employers file personnel records by social security number.

Green and Red "Flags"

As you go through the 12 questions, you will be looking for green flags (positive "+" signals) and red flags (negative "-" signals). The scoring process needs to indicate that there are more "+"s than "-"s. When you've obtained the answers to all the questions you're able to get answers to. You're looking for Green Flags ("+") and Red Flags ("-").

Employment Reference Checklist

Item	Question	Response Evaluation Consideration
1.	Could you verify that Mary Summers was employed by your company between the dates of _____?	Do the dates of employment match those on the candidate's application? If not, how great is the discrepancy? Does the discrepancy raise a red flag?
2.	Was Mary working for your company on a part-time or full-time basis?	Does the answer to this question indicate a good fit (green flag) or possible red flag (red flag) for the work hours required for the job you're offering? You also need to consider current factors such as the candidate's present situation which she may have told you about that may indicate a good fit with the job you're offering compared to this prior employment.
3.	What was the position as which she was hired by your company?	Does the employment experience indicate a chance for success on the job you're offering?
	What was the position with your company at the time of her departure?	Did the employee change positions during her time with this employer? A negative answer could well be a green flag in this instance. For example, reasonable tenure on a prior fast food or retail job would indicate ""steadiness"" - a requirement for success on the job you're offering.

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5. What was her rate of pay at the time of her departure? If the rate of pay was equal to or lower than the income the candidate will earn working for you, this is an indication of satisfaction with what he/she can earn house cleaning.

If the rate of pay was less than the candidate's potential with you, this is a red flag indicating tenure may be short if she accepts the offer.

6. How would you evaluate how well she performed her job?

While the answer may get some numbers (e.g. 4.5 out of 5) and a few adjectives, you might be subjective, you should get an indication how well she would perform if hired from the response to this question.

7. How was her attendance record? Did she miss many work days? (If so, explain)

Check the attendance record for a Green or a Red Flag?

8. Was there any disciplinary action taken against her?

Same as the last question. Does the answer raise a red flag or a green flag?

9. How did she get along with coworkers and supervisors?

If there was a conflict or problem getting along with coworkers, this might be a Red Flag issue. If the response indicates that she was well-liked, it is an indication she would get along well working with others on a cleaning team.

What was the reason that she left her employment with your company?

Does the answer compare with what the candidate told you with respect to the reason for leaving the job? Does the answer send up a Green Flag?

or a Red Flag?

11. If she left on own accord, did she give notice and, if so, how much notice?

If the candidate has a history of giving responsible termination notice to past employers, it's a Green Flag that she will do the same for you.

But if you learn that the candidate "just showed up" for work one day and then should raise a BIG Red Flag.

12. Would you rehire her if the opportunity presented itself?

The answer to this question can make a difference. If you get a positive response to this question, it's a Green Flag. Obviously, it's a high sign for the candidate.

A "no" is usually a Red Flag. However, if you get a "no" from the employer and not from other job references, the reason could be that the person reporting on the candidate didn't like her personally, or that the candidate may indeed not have been a "good fit" for that job or for that particular employer.

Allow the same line of questioning with all three employers listed on the Application. This will provide you with a consistent overview of the candidate's work history because you're comparing "apples to apples" based on the references provided by each of the candidate's last three employers.

As said earlier, you may not -- and probably will not -- get answers to all of the questions on the checklist. But by following this line of questioning you will learn as much from the candidate's employment references as possible.

Scoring the Employment Reference Questionnaire & Checklist

- IMPORTANT VARIANCE TO OUR STANDARD RATING SYSTEM OF SCORING THE *INDIVIDUAL* EMPLOYMENT QUESTIONNAIRE & CHECKLISTS FOR EACH PRIOR EMPLOYER
- Because you may not get answers to all questions using the conventional measurements as on other worksheets, you should be instructed to use that standard here. You may instead rate the results of the interview on GREEN FLAGS and RED FLAGS

Rating this Report

- (A) Total number of questions answered _____
- (B) Total **GREEN FLAG** (positive answers) _____
- (C) Less **RED FLAG** (negative answers) _____
- (D) TOTAL of (B) - (C) _____

- Add up the total number of questions answered. Enter this number in (A). If all questions were answered, the total would be 12. Let's say that the candidate never got a reference from answers 9 of the 12 questions.

Rating this Report

- (A) Total number of questions answered 9
- (B) Total **GREEN FLAG** (positive answers) _____
- (C) Less **RED FLAG** (negative answers) _____
- (D) TOTAL of (B) - (C) _____

Count up the number of GREEN FLAG answers and enter the total in (B). Let's assume that 6 of the answers are positive..

Rating this Report

- (A) Total number of questions answered 9
- (B) Total **GREEN FLAG** (positive answers) 6
- (C) Less **RED FLAG** (negative answers) _____
- (D) TOTAL of (B) - (C) _____

- The 3 remaining questions sent up _____ **AG.** _____ of this _____ per _____ (C)

Rating this Report

- (A) Total number of questions answered _____
- (B) Total **GREEN FLAG** (positive answers) _____
- (C) Less **RED FLAG** (negative answers) **3**
- (D) TOTAL of (B) _____

- Enter the total in (B) _____ that either a positive or negative rating. In _____ an employment reference check on the candidate from _____ employer would rate POSITIVE. Enter the total in (D).

Rating this Report

- (A) Total number of questions answered 9
- (B) Total **GREEN FLAG** (positive answers) +6
- (C) Less **RED FLAG** (negative answers) -3

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(D) TOTAL of (B) - (C) +3

Rating this Report

Scoring this Report

(A) Total number of questions answered _____

If (D) is a POSITIVE number, report rates _____

(B) Total **GREEN FLAG** (positive answers) _____

If (D) is NEGATIVE NUMBER, report rates _____

(C) Less **RED FLAG** (negative answers) _____

IF the TOTAL REPORT is 30+ reports _____

(D) TOTAL of (B) - (C) _____

Employment Reference Questionnaire Checklist Worksheet

- At this point you will have completed ratings on each of the three Employment Reference Questionnaire & Worksheets. Each will have been ranked with a "+", "-", or an "X".
- Now it's time to transfer these Symbol Ratings onto your Employment Reference Questionnaire & Checklist WORKSHEET (Form HR 36-95), on which you record the Symbol Rating for each prior employer and transfer the Symbol Numbers as follows:

1. "L" or "H" = 1 point on the Report Score
 2. "+" = 1 point on the Report Score
 3. "-" = 0 points on the Report Score

- When you transfer the Symbol Ratings from the individual Employment Reference Questionnaire & Checklists, it should look something like this:

Date: 1/24
 Date Reported: Mary K. Summers

Reference Employer Company Name	Reference Person Reporting on Employment History	Report Rating	Report Score
Holiday Inn - Center Park	Edith Snow	✓	+2
Burt's Florist	Burt Majors	+	+5
ABC Dry Cleaning	Ann Banks	✓	+2
REPORT TOTAL			+9

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- Perfect Score = 15 Points
- Good Candidate = 9 Points
- Minimal Candidate = 6 Points

- In this example, our candidate Mary Summers would be considered a "Good Candidate"

Personal Reference Check

- Providing your candidate's score on the Employment Reference Check investigation **was at least a "6"**, you will not need to follow up on Personal References given you by the candidate. Usually, the applicant is not going to give you references of persons who know anything negative about her. And many personal references will in fact try to "sell" you on their friend, neighbor, or former acquaintance. However, you can get a lot of information from personal references.
- When calling Personal References, use the Personal Reference Questionnaire Form HR 6005.

The Personal Reference Checklist

Item	Question	Response	Evaluation Consideration
1.	Do you personally know the candidate, Mary Summers?	Yes	This confirms that the reference does know or does not know the candidate.
	What is your relationship with, or how do you know the candidate?	Former supervisor	<p>Having a record (name and telephone number) of individuals you can contact who know the person may come in handy in the future.</p> <p>"How they know" the candidate can sometimes help you probe further into certain areas.</p> <p>If the reference is a current or former coworker, it will be helpful when you get into some of the other questions in your personal reference check.</p>

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stipulates that relatives are not acceptable personal references.

3. How long have you known her?

References known for a "couple of months" don't know too much about the candidate.

The Application Form stipulates that references given should have known the candidate for three or more years.

4. Has she ever worked with you or for you?

The reference person has already identified him or herself as a current or former coworker. However, you will specifically ask the candidate even if the reference person.

You should then change the tone of the following question to pertain specifically to the reference person's actual working experience with the applicant.

5. Do you ever supervise other workers?

If the reference person knows, you may learn whether the candidate has ever supervised other workers. A positive answer here could indicate that working on a cleaning team as a subordinate might not be a good fit for this candidate (and therefore a "C" rating).

However, if you think you'll have an opening for a team leader in the near future, this could be a "√" sign.

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6. If you worked with Mary, what would you like best about working with her?

The answer to this question may reveal how the applicant might interrelate with fellow team members. Listen for both positive and negative signals.

7. If you know, what has Mary found most satisfying about prior jobs?

Asking the reference person this question may reveal characteristics that are important to the position.

"She always likes to work with me, she is a team player, and she is independent. She can't be a good fit in a team environment."

"She seems to enjoy the job she is working on with a steady routine. It seems to indicate a good fit."

8. If you know, what has Mary found least satisfying about prior jobs?

You can determine from this question that the job you're offering has characteristics that the reference person says the candidate seems to dislike, this might be a Red Flag.

Conversely, if it turns out that your position would seem to be an answer to what the applicant disliked about past jobs, you have a Green Flag.

What characteristics best describe Mary's greatest strengths?

You might ask this question by saying, "What characteristics would you say best describe why Mary would make a good employee? What are her strong points?"

You're looking for positives here. You want to hear things

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like: "She's a hard worker."
"If she says something, she
does it." "She's very loyal and
honest."

10. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Where could Mary stand the most improvement?

You want to probe for this candidate's weakest characteristic or trait. It's a little bit more difficult to do with some references, however.

Say something like, "We don't have our strengths and weaknesses. We can talk about your strengths and weaknesses, but we're not sure we can assist you in making Mary more successful with her job."

Using the Personal Reference Checklist

- Since many of the candidates do not get when using your Personal Reference Check will be seen as biased and prejudicial in favor of the candidate, you may feel that the evaluation worksheet would be a valid, quality tool.
- However, you should be cautious through the exercise of rating the responses on the Personal Reference Questionnaire Form with a "+" or "-" check beside each of the subject questions which are answered. If you are not sure of the answer, you might have some cause for concern.
- Primarily, you are hoping to accomplish from your Personal Reference Check to confirm your positive feelings about the applicant.

You may also learn something that may help you better understand the candidate that will help you manage her.

Personal History Background Check

- At the time of your Personal Interview with the candidate you will have had her complete and sign the **Authorization for Release of Information Form HR 33-95**.
- By signing this authorization, the employee is authorizing you to conduct a Federal, state or county criminal history and a search of her

State Driving Records, as well as other background information you may wish to obtain.

Required Information Information you must have in order to obtain a Criminal History Search Report includes, without exception:

- First, Middle and Last Name of the applicant
- Other names previously used, including maiden name, nicknames, etc., and when these other names were used
- Date of Birth
- Social Security Number
- Driver's License Number
- Current Address
- Previous Address

NOTE: While some of these questions are not asked on the Application Form, they may (and must) be asked in order to obtain a Criminal History and Driving Record Report.

- In many jurisdictions, you can simply request your authorization for Release of Information from your local police department. There may or may not be a fee for producing the report.
- Criminal records are also often available to the public through the county court clerk at no charge.
- However, your local police department will not provide this information, if the candidate may have recently moved from another jurisdiction. Usually, the police report you obtain will only provide information with respect to criminal history in your county. You may need to request a report to reveal criminal history activity outside of the jurisdiction.
- There are many companies who will provide this information, for a fee, of course. Professional Employer Organizations (also known as Employee Leasing companies) and Payroll Services such as Automatic Data Processing, Inc. (ADP) (<http://www.adp.com>) and PayChex (<http://www.paychex.com/index.aspx>) offer this service.

We provide contact information for pre-employment background checks at the end of this chapter.

- Expect to pay about \$20 or \$30 for a Criminal History Research Report. If you're checking more than one jurisdiction, the report can cost \$50 or more. However, if the report helps uncover a positive criminal history, we don't have to tell you that this was a good investment. With the sensitive nature of the jobs your employees

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perform, you can't afford to gamble on someone who has a criminal background.

- A positive criminal Background Report will look something like the sample illustrated here:

*PRE-EMPLOYMENT SCREENING REPORT
CRIMINAL HISTORY SEARCH
For
Jane Doe
June 26, 2002*

*Applicant: Jane Doe
SSN: 103-70-2011
D.O.B. 12/5/74*

*Criminal Records were searched Maryland from
Present with the following result:*

*On November 19, 1993 the applicant was charged with
Distribution of Controlled Dangerous Substances in Baltimore City. The
case number was 014. On December 17, 1993 the applicant
was sentenced to probation. The judgment was for a period of
one month, and court costs.*

*On February 19, 1997 the applicant was charged with Unlawful
Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance in Baltimore City.
The case number was 061B1. On March 17, 1997 the case was
placed on the (Inmate) Docket.*

- We advise you to strongly consider halting the evaluation process right here if you find any evidence of criminal activities which, if repeated, could pose a serious threat to you, other employees, or your organization. For more information on this subject in the chapter on "Threats."

Driving Record Information

When you are currently researching Criminal History on the candidate's background, you need to also be conducting a background check on the candidate's driving record.

You will be able to obtain this report directly from your State Department of Motor Vehicles. Send (FAX) them a copy of the same Authorization for Release of Information you used to obtain Criminal History information.

- ❖ This report will verify whether or not the candidate does have a current valid driver's license, it's expiry date, whether there are any restrictions on the license, and information about driving

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violations that the candidate may have on her record. It will also indicate whether there have been any suspensions or serious charges as a result of the operation of a motor vehicle.

- ❖ Keep in mind that there is a substantial responsibility placed on the candidate if she is hired. The responsibility of driving with care to safeguard the well-being of her passengers and other employees she will be chauffeuring during the workday, and, of course, other drivers and pedestrians is a major concern.
 - ❖ Going through this process of checking a candidate's driving record may not seem important, but when an accident happens, it's too late to find out that the employee has been suspended or that there have even been previous infractions on her record prior to the accident.
- You can usually obtain both Criminal Background Search and Driving Record Reports from the same company.
 - You may want to visit <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs16-bck.htm> for more information on the topic of employment background checks.

BACKGROUND SEARCH LINKS

www.criminalsupersearch.com

www.pre-employ.com/homeweb/default.asp

www.screensvc.com

https://criminalbackgroundcheck.net/criminal_record_search.cfm

www.informus.com

www.conf-check.com

www.accurate-investigation.com

Documents relating to
Reference and Background Checks

Employment Reference Report Worksheet

Employment Reference Questionnaire & Checklist

Personnel Reference Questionnaire

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