

## Reference Checking | Best Practice Resource Guide

Updated and Distributed by: Office of Parish and School Human Resources

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

July 2024

Reference checking is an important step in the recruitment process. Great candidates have great references! Therefore, reference checks can be an excellent opportunity to get to know candidates professionally and personally through the eyes of their references. Less positive references reveal information important to the hiring process as well.

**Note:** If reference checks are completed after offers, the offer should be contingent upon reference checks (plus other contingencies such as Safe Environment Certification and/or Pre-Employment Physicals).

### Reference Checking Guidelines

- 1) Talk with the candidate's current supervisor.** While business managers or HR departments can verify dates of employment, job titles, reliability and more statistical information, they can't be expected to give non-quantifiable information. A supervisor can comment on personal characteristics, "fit," and possibly the "real" reason for leaving. This can be extremely valuable to the potential employer.
- 2) Look for gaps or discrepancies in the candidate's work history.** Candidates should account for all time periods, even time spent in a job search. The first step of any reference check is to verify the relationship of the person giving the reference and the length of the work relationship. Any differences in job sequence, dates of employment, gaps, etc. should be addressed with the candidate. Reference checking may reveal that a candidate "rounded off" an employment period, or had a different title. Any discrepancies should be addressed with the candidate.
- 3) All questions must be job related, but don't be afraid to ask questions that are more probing and in-depth.** Get specific examples to substantiate generalities. Ask supervisors about quality and results; ask subordinates about leadership skills; ask peers about team projects, cooperation and support. All questions and responses should be recorded appropriately on the reference check form.
- 4) Personal references are helpful to confirm a candidate's personality, but personal references may not have insight into candidate's work history.** To verify the candidate's work experience, contact references who have seen or worked with the candidate in a professional setting.
- 5) If lack of information from traditional sources presents a roadblock, go back to the candidate and ask for professional or business references.** Former clients/customers, sub-contractors, consultants, etc. often can give the prospective employer a "real world" perspective on the candidate.

## Sample Reference Checking Form

<b>Candidate:</b>	<b>Position:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Reference Name:</b>	<b>Phone Number:</b>	
<b>Relationship (Supervisor? Co-Worker?):</b>		
<b>Length of Relationship:</b>		

### Qualifying the Candidate – Part I

*(Select questions from this list based on the relationship to the candidate)*

**Tell me about your experience working with <candidate's name>:**

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**Please give me a summary of his/her strengths and areas for improvement:**

*(get examples of accomplishments to support major strengths).*

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**Tell me about a time he/she went the “extra mile.” What was his/her best accomplishment?**

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**How strong was this person in working with others? Can you give me an example of his/her ability to handle pressure or criticism?**

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**How dependable is he/she? Can you give me some examples?**

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**Let me provide a brief overview of the position we’re considering <candidate name> for... what do you think he/she will do well with? Struggle with?**

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**What do you think <candidate name>'s supervisor should do to help him/her be successful?**

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## Qualifying the Candidate – Part II

<p>Could you please help me rank &lt;candidate name&gt;'s ability in some areas so I can have a clearer picture of where he/she might fit our needs?</p> <p>Would you say that &lt;candidate name&gt;:</p>	Needs Work	Competent	Very Strong	Don't Know
<b>Problem solving (creatively looking for solutions)</b>				
<b>Prioritizing/ accomplishing work</b>				
<b>Communication (at all levels, written, presentations, etc.)</b>				
<b>Interpersonal (deals w/conflict, builds rapport)</b>				
<b>Attendance/ Punctuality/ Dependability</b>				
<b>Technology/ electronic communication</b>				
<b>Summary/Comments/Conclusions:</b>				
<b>Reference Check Completed By:</b>			<b>Date:</b>	