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# The Reference Check Script

12 questions that reveal what resumes hide

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## BEFORE YOU CALL

- ✓ Call every reference — not just the ones the candidate hand-picked.
- ✓ Identify yourself, explain you're considering the candidate for a position, and ask if they have 5 minutes.
- ✓ Listen for hesitation, hedging, and what they *don't* say — silence is information.
- ✓ Take notes during the call, not after.

Candidate ..... Reference .....

Ref. Title/Company ..... Date .....

Relationship to Candidate .....

## QUESTIONS 1–6

1. "How do you know [Candidate], and how long did you work together?"

*Establish credibility of the reference*

NOTES .....

2. "What was [Candidate]'s role, and what were they responsible for?"

*Verify the resume — do the titles and responsibilities match?*

NOTES .....

3. "What would you say are their greatest strengths?"

*See if strengths match what the role requires*

NOTES .....

4. "What areas would you say they need to develop?"

*Most revealing question — listen carefully to what they avoid saying*

NOTES .....

5. "How did they handle pressure or tight deadlines?"

*Predicts real-world performance under stress*

NOTES .....

6. "Can you give me an example of a conflict they had at work and how they handled it?"

*Reveals character under difficult circumstances*

NOTES .....

## SCORED QUESTIONS (7-9)

7. "How would you describe their work ethic?"

NOTES .....

SCORE  1  2  3  4  5

8. "How well did they work with the rest of the team?"

NOTES .....

SCORE  1  2  3  4  5

9. "Were they someone you could count on to follow through?"

NOTES .....

SCORE  1  2  3  4  5

## KEY INSIGHT QUESTIONS (10-12)

10. "Why did they leave your organization?"

*Compare this answer to what the candidate told you*

NOTES .....

11. "If you had the opportunity, would you hire them again?"

*THE question — hesitation here is a red flag*

NOTES .....

12. "Is there anything else I should know about [Candidate] that would help me make a good decision?"

*Opens the door for information they want to share but weren't asked about*

NOTES .....

Score (Q7-9): \_\_\_\_\_ / 15

● 12-15 Strong ● 8-11 Mixed signals ● Below 8 Concerning

RESUME MATCH:  Consistent  Minor differences  Significant gaps

REHIRE:  Enthusiastic yes  Qualified yes  Hesitant  No

OVERALL:  Strengthens candidacy  Neutral  Raises concerns

# Reference Checks Are Phase 9 of a 10-Phase System

This script helps you verify what interviews can't. But reference checks are just one step. The full system covers everything from writing the job description to onboarding your new hire.

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