

Recruiting people who are changing the world through cutting edge technology.

Many small business owners underestimate the importance of reference checking applicants as part of the recruitment process, often relying instead on 'gut instinct' to make their hiring decisions. And, whilst this might work well in many instances, once you weigh up the cost of what a bad hire could have on the business, it stands to reason that emotion should not play any part of the decision making.

References themselves can be limited in the information they provide, as many companies have a standard response they send out, which only confirms start and end dates etc., but regardless of this, they still serve an important purpose in substantiating facts, and can highlight discrepancies in CV and / or work history.

Below we answer some of your questions about the referencing process.

Who should I request a references from?

The main references to obtain are usually current and previous employers, and in the case of graduates perhaps a previous Tutor. However, as per above these may only provide limited information.

To find out more about the individual, you could ask for a Line Manager's name, who might be able to provide details about work ethic, and how the individual interacted with peers and managers.

When should I commence reference checking?

Checking references can at times be time consuming particularly for companies that perhaps use a central HR department. References are usually taken up after the final interview stage, when a provisional offer of employment is made.

However, ensure that any offers you do provide to an applicant, state that 'offers are subject to satisfactory references'. Otherwise you could find yourself honouring an offer, despite finding out the applicant is not suitable.

Can an applicant say 'No' to reference checks?

For obvious reasons, it is usual for a candidate to ask that you not approach their current employer, until after their offer has been accepted.

However, if an applicant declines to provide referee contacts, without a genuinely good reason, then this should really flag up a warning.

Ensure that your correspondence advises that references are a required part of your process.

How should I obtain a reference?

Whether you wish to obtain a reference verbally or in writing is entirely a personal choice. However, whichever way you choose, always check that the contact information provided can be substantiated. For example; employer references should be sent to a business email and not a Gmail address.

Remember to keep records of the reference obtained, including details on the person providing the reference such as their name, department, job title and details of the reference.

What can I ask for in a reference?

Different roles might require different information, but generally you can request the following:

- Dates of employment
- Job title
- Salary / package
- Attendance (sick, late, etc.)
- Main responsibilities of the role and ability to do the job
- Relationship with customers, colleagues and managers
- Disciplinary action
- Potential of rehiring

Don't forget that you may request this information, but you may not receive answers for all of them.

Our advice to you...

References should not be the only basis on which you form a decision, and should be treated as just one part of the decision making process, along with interviewing, skills tests, competency based testing and perhaps profiling.

And remember, whilst past behaviour is a good indicator of future behaviour, sometimes a poorly run company where there was little support for individuals can return a less than favourable reference.



How can I get further assistance?

We have a number of Recruitment Consultants, who would be happy to talk to you about your hiring needs, then introduce you to candidates, who we feel would suit you. Just phone us on 020 8123 7769 or email rod@resourceondemand.com and one of our team will be happy to help.