

## Reference Checking Guide

### *Important Steps to Complete Before Contacting a Reference*

- Think carefully about the key duties and competencies of the job being filled- the skills required to perform the duties, and the personal qualities required to assure a good fit.
- Consider the candidate's resume, application, and interview responses. Look for gaps in information that you might want to check out or areas of concern that you want to explore.
- Prepare specifics you want verified including the relationship of the reference contact to the candidate, the length of time they worked together, the job duties/accomplishments the candidate cited and if applicable, the reason he/she left the organization.
- Make sure candidate is aware you are going to begin reference checking process.

### *Tips for Effective Reference Checking*

- By the time you are ready to make a reference call you may be already pre-disposed to hire the candidate and end the job search. Don't let this get in the way of asking the right questions or listening to, and taking seriously information that is counter to your impressions of the candidate.
- Try to establish some rapport or connection with the person you are speaking with. Underscore the importance of this hire to Smith. Thank the person you are speaking with for their candor and let them know you will use any information they give with discretion.
- Describe the position and responsibilities of the position the candidate applied for, and any other relevant information around what would make a potential candidate a good fit. This will help the reference provide you with more relevant feedback.
- Our current recruitment system (HIRETOUCH) asks candidates to give authorization to check references. Inform the reference of this- you may get more information by making this statement.
- Ask open ended questions. Use follow-up questions for clarity and thoroughness,
- Try to get supporting facts and relevant information based on the candidates past performance to back up statements made by the reference.
- Consider signs of evasiveness, unusual pauses, or changes in the tone of voice of the reference but also keep in mind this may or may not be accurate or relevant.
- Ask the reference if there are others in their organization who could provide information on the candidates experience

### Sample questions

#### **Personal Characteristics/Emotional Intelligence/Communication Skills (ask for examples to support responses)**

- What kind of personal qualities come to mind when you think of XX?
- How does XX deal with conflict?
- In stressful situations, how does XX react?

- How did you see him or her grow while you were working together?
- How well does XX build consensus among constituents with differing opinions or interests?
- How well does XX listen? How does she or he engage people?
- Does XX always conduct his/her dealings with others in a tactful manner?
- What type of work environment does she/he need to succeed?

### **Leadership Skills**

- How would you describe XX's style of leadership?
- What involvement did XX have in leading a strategic plan or initiative in your organization? What specifically did she or he contribute?
- Are you aware of any management challenges that XX faced? Describe how they were handled?
- How would XX's direct reports describe her/his management style?
- Please describe XX's political acumen and ability to work with senior leaders.

### **Areas for Development and Support**

- Given that no one is perfect and everyone has areas in which he or she can improve, can you describe any areas XX can or should continue to develop? Or, If you were to do an appraisal on XX, what would her or his developmental objectives be?
- What have been XX's biggest professional challenges? Give an example of how he or she overcame them.
- The following are the key competencies we are looking for in our Smith opening (describe). What areas would XX need to develop in if she/he were offered this position?

### **Closing**

- If X remains in your organization, what would be her/his growth potential?
- What are XX's key accomplishments or impact on your organization?
- If X leaves your organization, would she/he be eligible for re-hire?