



## Avoiding The Employee from Hell Effective Reference Checks

*A study by the USA Society of HR Management found many candidates were prone to exaggerate. 53% falsified their length of employment, 44% their past job titles and 30% claimed degrees they did not hold.*

If you do your own reference checks these 10 points will help you avoid the employee from hell. Don't rely on written references.

### 1. Managers not colleagues

It's surprising how often work friends or the occasional relative become referees. Quiz the candidate about the referee relationship. You need people who have actually managed the candidate.

### 2. Reference from current boss

Make it clear that any appointment will be subject to a sound reference from the current boss after the candidate resigns. Watch the reaction, good candidates agree readily.

### 3. Check the referee's identity

Some people will ask friends to pose as past bosses. Call the company switch number and check that the name and title you have are correct, then ask to be put through. Take extra care if the candidate has given you a direct or mobile number.

### 4. Ask for examples of behaviour

Ask questions that explore behaviours relevant to the job you may offer the candidate. Target the referee's direct experience of the candidate, not just a check list.

### 5. Would you employ again?

This is an obvious question, but listen for any hesitation and explore.

### 6. Against Company Policy

An increasing number of organisations only provide dates of employment. Ask the candidate for a copy of her/his last Performance Review.

### 7. Qualifications & right to work etc

Insist on sighting the originals of any qualifications. Also verify the person's right to work in Australia – a driver's license is not enough. If it is an inherent requirement of the role that you check criminal convictions or driving record you must have the candidate's written consent.

### 8. Privacy

Remember that under National Privacy Principles it is illegal to collect information from or share it with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties without the candidate's consent.

### 9. The false positive

Beware the referee who sees the candidate through rose coloured glasses or gives a good reference to get rid of them. Make sure you speak to at least 3 referees for balance.

### 10. Avoid litigation

In the USA candidates are suing referees who they claim have denied them a new role, while employers are suing referees for giving false positive references. Stick to the objective truth when providing references or when recording what referees tell you. Especially avoid all potential discrimination issues.

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