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Questions to Ask to Optimize CANDIDATE REFERENCES

An application, resume, and interview only provide limited insights into who a candidate is and how they operate within an organization. It’s common to see an impressive resume, have a great conversation during an interview, only to find out after you’ve hired someone that they aren’t as good of a fit for the position as you thought they’d be. However, when leveraged properly, **a candidate’s references can help you uncover facets of a candidate’s personality or work habits** that might not otherwise come out during the screening process.

To help you go beyond the standard questions and get a more well-rounded view of the candidate and their likelihood to fit into the culture of your organization, we compiled a list of questions to ask references.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS / SKILL SET:

- 1 What are the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses?
- 2 What skills should the candidate develop in order to be effective in this role?
- 3 What was the candidate’s greatest accomplishment while working with you?
- 4 For this position, we need someone who can [insert most important skills]. Does this sound like something the candidate is capable of? If so, can you provide examples?
- 5 What skills would we need to teach this candidate so they can be effective in this role?

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS:

- 6 How dependable and reliable is the candidate?
- 7 How did they support their team members?
- 8 How did the candidate get along with their team members and other coworkers?
- 9 What is the candidate’s communication style?
- 10 What was the reaction from the candidate’s team members when they left your organization?

DISPOSITION / WORK ETHIC:

- 11 What work environment would the candidate thrive in? Why?
- 12 Would you recommend this candidate for this position?
- 13 Did the candidate complete all tasks and assignments given to them?
- 14 Did the candidate take direction well?
- 15 Did you ever have to provide the candidate with negative feedback and if so, how did they respond?
- 16 Did the candidate work independently, or did they require hands-on management?
- 17 What was it like to work with the candidate on a daily basis?
- 18 How did the candidate handle stressful situations at work?

POSITION FIT:

- 19 What makes the candidate a good fit for the position?
- 20 What advice would you give me to effectively manage the candidate?
- 21 If you could, would you rehire the candidate?
- 22 Who else should I speak with about the candidate to get additional insights?