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Checking References

Of you think checking references on job candidates is a waste of time, think again. About one-third of the US workforce falsifies resume information and approximately 20 percent of American workers have criminal records. Skipping the reference check could lead you to hire an unsuitable employee or in the worst case into negligent hiring lawsuit.

But employers are reluctant to share information on former employees for fear of lawsuits, aren't they? No! The best candidates always have references. And, if you conduct the reference check according to the provisions of the Federal Credit Reporting Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act you can get relevant information without incurring legal liability.

Here's an overview of the reference checking process:

- Obtain a signed release from the candidate authorizing you to conduct background verification and/or reference checks.
- Conduct background checks once you have selected the ideal candidate.
- Checking references on all job candidates is costly, time consuming and unnecessary.
- Check references before a conditional offer of employment is made.
- Verify education information first. This is the piece of information that job candidates falsify most often and it is the easiest data to verify.
- Ask for and contact at least 5 references.
- Try to speak with references in person. Plan to spend 20 to 30 minutes with each individual.
- Prepare interview questions ahead of time.
- In addition to verifying employment ask questions focusing on specific qualification or behaviors the job candidate should possess. Don't ask for opinions instead ask about specific technical skills or probe for examples of the candidates leadership ability or work habits.
- Following each interview, document your findings on a standard reference form. Use these results to weed out those who have misrepresented themselves or don't meet your company's standards.

Though reference checking may be complex and time-consuming it is absolutely necessary in order to avoid the loss of company time, money and reputation due to poor hiring decisions. If you need help checking references contact AccruePartners. We can provide expert assistance with this step and all others in the recruiting process.