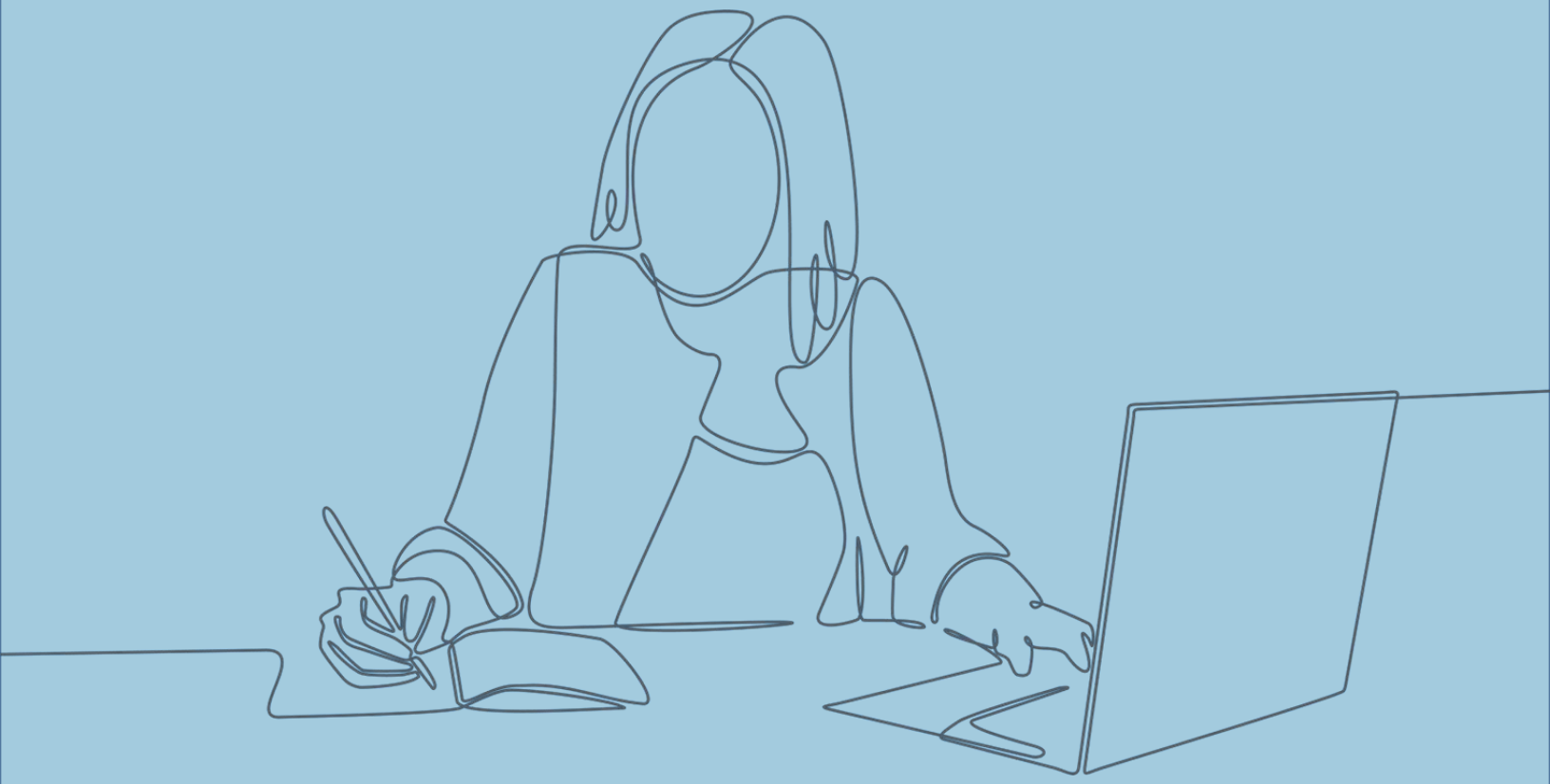
Human Resources



QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE (QRG)

How to Conduct Thorough Reference Checks

Ensuring Candidates are Properly Vetted

Yale *Learn and Grow*

FUNCTIONAL LEARNING

This Quick Reference Guide (QRG) is designed to support **Hiring Managers.**

By the end of this learning, you will:

- Describe your role and responsibilities as a **Hiring Manager** in preparing for, conducting, and reviewing reference checks.
- Discuss key steps that the Hiring Manager must take to conduct reference checks, using techniques and questioning methods that gather a valuable understanding of a candidate's qualifications.
- Identify best practices that aid in Hiring Manager / Department collaboration that leads to effectively conducting reference checks and then completing a fair review of these references.

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AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

Audience and Purpose

This learning is for the **Hiring Managers**. It demonstrates the partnership and steps in the process that the Hiring Managers and the TA Partners must take to prepare for, conduct, and review reference checks.

Reference checks are a critical step in the Talent Acquisition Recruitment Process as it allows candidates to be vetted properly. The reference check is an opportunity for the Hiring Manager to validate and verify information the final candidate has provided in their application, resume, and in the interview(s). The reference check also further assesses the employee's skills, strengths, and areas for development relative to the job they are applying for.

The Hiring Manager and the TA Partner must effectively collaborate to support this process to consistently and fairly conduct and review reference checks, which will ultimately lead to selecting the best candidate that meets the Department's hiring needs.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT

Why are reference checks important and highly recommended? Although not mandatory, getting references checked for your final candidate selection is an important way to ensure you are choosing the best candidate.

Other reasons why reference checks are highly recommended include:

- Confirming the candidate's information.
- Gaining a different perspective on the candidate's qualifications.
- Assessing the potential of the candidate to succeed in the role.
- Getting clarity on what the candidate is and is not good at to understand development opportunities.
- Understanding previous experiences of the candidate that may provide insight into their behaviors, motivations, etc.

Reference checks should occur once you have completed interviews and identified your final candidate. Prior to contacting references, you should:

1) Deem the candidate selected is a final candidate. It is not recommended that reference checks be conducted for back-up candidates, i.e., eventual runners-up/silver medalists, in the event the final candidate accepts the role.
2) Inform the final candidate that you are about to begin reference checks. If they have already provided references, it is assumed that they have given their permission, but it is always good practice to alert them on the status of their application and the next steps once interviews are complete and/or once the decision has been made to move forward with their candidacy.

References should be checked even if the final candidate selected is an internal candidate. As with any final candidate, permission must be granted to speak to the candidate's current supervisor.

Special Considerations When Contacting a Candidate's Current Supervisor

- Be mindful when you contact them! Prematurely contacting supervisors can impact the relationship between the employee and their current supervisor.
- It is not uncommon for an applicant to withhold permission to speak to the current supervisor during the interview process. (Note: In this case, an offer can be made contingent on the receipt of a positive reference from their current supervisor.)

For any more questions, consult with your HR Partner.

Some Best Practices for Consideration

- If a meaningful **Recruitment Strategy Discussion (RSD)** occurred prior to this, the TA Partner should already be aware if the role requires reference checks and what processes to follow—i.e., SkillSurvey or phone.

Understanding the Terminology

- **Reference Checks:** Outreach to the finalist's reference(s) via vendor, technology, email, phone, etc. This is highly recommended by the TA.
- **Finalist**: Candidate who has been down-selected and deemed a potential for hire and offered the role.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

1. Hiring Manager Requests Reference Check

The Hiring Manager updates the HR Status of their final selected candidate to "Dept – Request Reference Check". Up to this point, the Hiring Manager should have been dispositioning candidates in YALE TALENT NETWORK throughout their candidate evaluation and selection process.

This prompts two automatic communications to be sent:

1. To the candidate, indicate that they are a finalist, and that the Department is moving forward with requesting their references.
2. To the TA Partner, notify them of the request to start a reference check.

Some Best Practices for Consideration

- **IMPORTANT!** Recruitment activities such as reference checks should not move forward without completed notes, evaluations, and interview feedback being provided to the TA Partner. Ensuring that the final decision made is justified with proper documentation will safeguard all parties involved from risk.

2. TA Partner Determines Type of Reference Check Required

The TA Partner will consult and/or validate with the Hiring Manager if they would like to proceed with a SkillSurvey reference check or phone reference check. If the Hiring Manager's preferences were discussed during the Recruitment Strategy Discussion (RSD), the TA Partner may choose to bypass this step.

- **SkillSurvey Reference Check:** Highly Recommended Option. SkillSurvey is an automated reference check provider available to Hiring Managers at Yale. SkillSurvey sends a customized survey to each of the candidate's references, ensuring that all references respond to the same questions. Once the references have been submitted, SkillSurvey provides a report that compiles all the information and shares it with the Hiring Manager.
- **Phone Reference Check:** The Hiring Manager is responsible for checking references by phone. This person is most familiar with the position being filled and the competencies required to perform the job's duties. The Hiring Manager will take detailed notes of each reference check to facilitate the decision to proceed with an offer.

3. TA Partner Conducts SkillSurvey Reference Check (if chosen)

The TA Partner is responsible for conducting reference checks via SkillSurvey. As needed, the TA Partner may ask other TA Team Members (i.e., TA Coordinator) to assist with some of the administrative duties required.

The TA Partner should follow the steps below to conduct a SkillSurvey reference check:

1. The TA Partner logs into the SkillSurvey account.
2. From the home page, select Candidates > Create Candidates.
3. Enter the following information for the candidate:
    a. First Name
    b. Last Name
    c. Contact Method:
        i. Email
        ii. Text Message
        iii. Both Email and Text
    d. Email Address
    e. Mobile Phone Number
    f. Position Applying for = Posting Position Title in YALE TALENT NETWORK
    g. YALE TALENT NETWORK Req Number = ######BR
    h. Division
    i. Workforce Segment:
    j. Assign a Candidate to select your name or your delegate if needed
    k. Candidate Type
4. Select the appropriate survey.
    a. SkillSurvey will recommend surveys based on the title entered above.
    b. For niche positions, you may need to review several surveys before selecting the most appropriate survey
5. Click Send candidate notification.
    a. This will send a notification to the candidate to provide up to 5 references, including at least 2 supervisors.
    b. The candidate's references will receive an email asking them to answer an average of 30 questions, which takes about 10 minutes to complete.
    c. Questions are competency-based and related to the position. References can also submit comments in an open text field.
6. Monitor Progress.
    a. SkillSurvey will provide an update when the candidate has entered the references.
    b. SkillSurvey will provide an update when the references have been completed, and the report is available to download.

Once the TA Partner is notified that references are completed via SkillSurvey, they will:

1. Review the report, download it, and forward it to the Hiring Manager for review.
2. Disposition the Yale Talent Network by updating the candidate's HR Status.

4. Hiring Manager Conducts Phone Reference Check (if chosen)

The Hiring Manager is responsible for conducting reference checks via phone. As needed, the Hiring Manager may seek assistance from their administrative support or Lead Admin.

The Hiring Manager should follow the steps below to conduct a phone reference check:

1. **Prepare Questions:** The questions should be formulated before contacting any references to ensure that all references are asked the same questions. The focus should be on open-ended questions that encourage the reference to provide more information about the candidate. Consider the below while preparing questions:
    a. **General Questions:** These questions will allow the hiring manager to verify the candidate's employment history, the relationship between the candidate and reference, and the candidate's overall performance in previous role(s).
    b. Job-Related Questions: Job-specific questions are related to the position the candidate is being considered for. The focus of these questions is to understand if the candidate has the skills and abilities to be successful in the role they are being considered for.
    c. **Questions to Avoid:** It is important to avoid questions regarding race, color, religion, gender, age, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, veteran status, disability, or marital status. Please contact your TA Partner if you have any concerns about what questions should be asked during the reference-checking process.
2. **Contact the References:** The candidate's references should be aware to expect a call. It may still take a few attempts before finding a time when the reference is available.
3. **Conduct Reference Check:** Use the sample phone reference check script below to guide your discussion.

Sample Phone Reference Check Script

Introduction

Provide a brief introduction, including an overview of the position for which the candidate is being considered.

General Questions

- What is/was the reporting relationship? Did you supervise them directly?
- Please describe the key responsibilities of the candidate in their most recent position. Did the applicant hold any other positions at the company?
- How would you describe this person's reliability daily? Would you describe them as punctual on a regular basis?
- What were/are the candidate's most significant strengths on the job?
- What were/are the candidate's most significant areas of development?

Sample Phone Reference Check Script (continued)

Job Related Questions

- This job requires _____. Please describe the candidate's ability to _____.
- This position requires one to be highly reliable with an attendance record supporting that. Was the candidate able to meet the attendance requirements of the job?

Closing

Ask a few final questions and make sure to thank the reference for their time.

- Would you rehire this individual? Why or why not?
- Based on what I've described to you about this position and what you know about the candidate's work in your company, would you recommend them for this position? Why or why not?
- To the best of your knowledge, why did the person leave your organization? Would you rehire this candidate?
- Are there additional comments you'd like to make? Is there anything I should know?

Some Best Practices for Consideration

- When preparing job-related questions, ensure they are aligned with the competencies associated with the position.

5. Hiring Manager Review References and Validates Final Selection

The Hiring Manager reviews the SkillSurvey report or their notes from references conducted by phone and determines if they will move forward with an offer. The TA Partner will be available to help interpret results as needed.

1) If ready to proceed with the Offer:
    a. The Hiring Manager dispositions the YALE TALENT NETWORK by updating the candidate's status to References—Completed, Request Offer.
    b. The TA Partner will follow up to ensure that all interview notes have been received and that any University or Bargaining Unit (BU) requirements have been completed prior to preparing the offer.
    c. C. The TA Partner will move forward by updating move forward > offer in Workday and keeping the Hiring Manager / Department updated.
2) If not proceeding with the Offer:
    a. The Hiring Manager dispositions YALE TALENT NETWORK by updating the candidate's status to References - Completed, Dept Not Interested.
    b. The TA Partner will follow up and validate with the Hiring Manager if they proceed with reference checks for a runner-up/silver medalist (if one exists).
    c. If additional candidates are needed, the TA Partner will work with the Hiring Manager / Department to determine the next steps and recalibrate the search as needed.

Special Considerations for L34/35/Union Roles

- If a qualified layoff candidate has been selected as a final candidate and reference checks have been conducted, Hiring Managers must notify the TA team in writing to proceed with an offer (include the requisition number, name of selected candidate, and confirmation that references have been checked).
- For internal L34 and layoff candidates, proper turndown communications must be used – i.e., must include a reason based on the requirements listed in the posting.

For any more questions, consult with your HR Partner and/or Labor Relations.

Some Best Practices for Consideration

- All candidates, regardless of their reference check results, should be promptly informed of their application status to maintain a positive candidate experience.
- If candidates are not moved forward, but are still qualified for other roles at Yale, the TA Partner should proactively pass their resume to other TA Team Members for consideration.

Understanding the Terminology

- **Runner-up / Silver Medalist** – A back-up finalist candidate in the event a primary candidate falls through.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

What's Next

Thank you for reading this QRG. To supplement your learning, we recommend that you review the **How to Properly Disposition and Communicate to Candidates**.

Supplemental Learning

For a full listing of learning available:

- Quick Reference Guides
  - **How to Properly Disposition and Communicate to Candidates**

Supplemental Tools

For a full listing of tools available:

- Sites
  - **Manager Toolkit**
  - **Hiring Guide**

GLOSSARY

For a full listing of terminology, click **here.**

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