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Donald Cooper is respected by clients in over 40 industries as both a “thought leader” and a passionate visionary in the areas of marketing, service and business excellence.

Drawing from his real life experience as a world-class manufacturer, award-winning retailer and business speaker, he has helped thousands of businesses throughout the world to add more real value to their customers’ lives...and more dollars to their bottom lines.

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His website, www.donaldcooper.com also offers free articles and business tools.

Two quick tips to get the info you need when checking references:

Getting and checking employer references and confirming claims of education and degrees is one of the most important things you can do when selecting a candidate for any job. There's a significant (sometimes huge) financial cost, opportunity cost and general disruption that occurs when you bring on board, train and then have to terminate an employee who doesn't work out.

So, always ask a candidate for the names and contact information for their last three employers, or for each employer that they've had in the past five years, whichever is greater. Once you have the names and contact info, here are two tips for getting the info you need when checking references...

1) When you get the person from who you'd like to get a reference on the telephone, tell them...

- who you are,
- why you're calling,
- the company that you're with,
- the person that you're calling about...and,
- the position for which they're being considered.

Then, say something like, "Because it's so important, for both the success of our business and for the good of the candidate, that we make good placement decisions, we'd like to know a little bit about 'person X's' employment with your company."

Assure them that everything that they share with you will be kept in the strictest confidence and most specifically that nothing that's said will be disclosed to the candidate.

2) Because candidates often 'pad' or outright lie on their resumes and in job interviews, always confirm the following facts with the references that they give...

- that the candidate was employed by that organization during the timeframe that the candidate has stated on their resume. (always get a written resume, regardless of the position)
- that the candidate was employed in the position and with the level of responsibility that they've stated on their resume.
- that the specific accomplishments stated on the resume are accurate.
- that their salary or wage was what they've stated on their resume.
- that their reason for leaving is accurate.

Note: If the candidate has lied about any of these basic facts, you already know what you need to know.

Next, ask specific questions that will tell you if the candidate has the skills, experience, attitudes and commitment required to do the specific job for which you're interviewing. Always have a written list of carefully thought-out questions in front of you before you call for a reference. Create questions that are designed to get you the info you need. The quality of the information you get will depend on the quality of the questions you ask.

Two quick tips to get the info you need when checking references: (Cont'd):

Ask specific questions regarding...

- possible attendance issues,
- attitudes...(positive and negative),
- dependability,
- productivity and,
- integrity.
- willingness to take initiative and accept responsibility,
- whether they were a 'team player'. Did they abide by and support the policies and culture of the business?
- ability to be a creative problem solver,
- leadership ability. If they have it, what is their leadership style?
- their ability and desire to be a responsive and willing follower,
- did they uplift and energize the area of the business in which they worked?
- did they respond well to training that was offered? Did they appear to be a quick and willing learner?

Then, ask if there is anything else that comes to mind that you should know about this person.

Ask, "Are there any other questions that I should have about this person, but didn't?"

Finally, ask if they would rehire this candidate if he/she applied for this type of job in their business. If they answer, "No", ask them what their concerns would be.

So, in conclusion, always check references and also verify academic achievements. Then, use the questions above to get the information you need to make much better decisions about the people you hire.

For more information on how Donald Cooper can help you redefine and reinvent your business to create, deliver and communicate compelling, customer-owning Value, visit our website at www.donaldcooper.com , email us at info@donaldcooper.com or contact us by telephone in Toronto, Canada at 1-(416) 252-3704.