



EMPLOYMENT

# MATTERS

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Employment Matters  
is the newsletter of

**IntegrityWorks™**  
empowering workplaces  
with employment knowledge

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## Reference checking: fit for work?

*You're pretty happy with the person you just interviewed, so there's no need to check their references, right? Wrong!!!*

Are you sure you know who is working for you? What they did in their last job? How they performed in their last job? Think again. Reference checks are essential even if you think you've got the right person for the job. A reference check will determine that the person is a good fit for your job in both their skills and personality. Both of these are really important factors, especially in a small business. It does not matter if you have found a highly skilled person if they don't fit the culture of your business; if they don't match the rest of your staff. The only way around this is to talk to someone who has worked with them or managed them. This will also sound out any problem areas or areas in which they need to develop skills. It may also identify where they have lied, stretched the truth or embellished their CV.

### Who Can I talk to?

Preferably two people who worked with the person in their last job. But remember the Privacy Act (1993) does make it quite clear who you can ask and what you can ask them. For example, if during the interview the person mentions Joe Bloggs, you cannot ask Joe Bloggs what he thinks of them without their permission to contact Joe Bloggs. However, if they give Joe Bloggs as a referee, you can get their consent in writing (email is fine) to contact him for a reference. So, if Joe Bloggs was someone who had worked with or managed the person, with consent you should talk to him to him about the person.

### Real life story:

Jack applied for the shift manager job at a local dairy. We asked the candidate's

previous manager for a reference check on Jack. The manager who Jack listed as a referee explained that Jack had stolen from them, and that they were taking criminal charges against him.

### What should I ask?

What you want and need to know is that the information the person has given you in their CV, and told you at interview is correct and accurately describes them. This is where you can follow up on any thing that concerns you, and gives you a chance to determine their strengths and weaknesses. It is not usually the skills that you need to verify, it is who the person is at work. The type of reference check you want to make will depend on the role you are employing for, but it about behaviours more than skills. For example, you may want to confirm the dates they worked, the key responsibilities they held and their strengths. You may also want to ask about a specific initiative or project they have told you at interview they were successful in managing. A generic list of questions you might like to consider for a reference check is on the link below.

[LINK](#)

### Written references

These are last century. With technology it is easy to fake references and use stationary without authority, so it is important not to rely on written references. If the last position the person held was overseas, it is still important to make contact with the previous employer via email or phone to ask the important questions about 'fit for work'.