

## About This Document

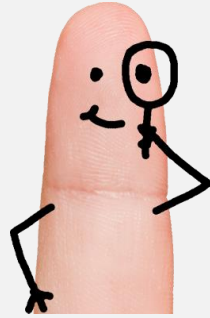
<b>owner</b>	HR
<b>access &amp; use</b>	All Staff
<b>what it is</b>	A comprehensive list of over 135 sample questions for conducting reference checks
<b>who uses it</b>	HR, Managers, and Staff involved in checking references.
<b>used with</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <i>CR-ALL-2820-M. Reference Check Form</i></li> </ul>

## Introduction

This reference document contains example questions to help you avoid ‘blank-page syndrome’ when it’s time to prepare for a reference check.

**Note:** The questions listed below refer to the candidate as a male, for example, “he” or “him”. This is simply intended to make the questions easier to read and should be regarded as gender-neutral.

If you require support or guidance to conduct reference checks, please contact CUSTOMIZER: Insert the title of the contact (not the name). Example: the HR Manager.



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## Warming up

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1. Would you please provide an overview of his role and his main responsibilities?
2. Would you share with me his reason for leaving?
3. If you were to create the perfect position for him, what would it look like? Also describe the company culture and the people around him.

## Position-Specific Technical Skills

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4. What would you say were his most significant wins in the role?
5. Describe for us the biggest challenge he faced in this role. How did he overcome or address it?
6. What would you say was his biggest disappointment in the role?
7. Did he work in an environment where he frequently worked alone?
8. What tasks did he enjoy most in the role?
9. What tasks did he enjoy least in the role?
10. Did he have a strong understanding of the sector, its challenges, and its opportunities? Was he well connected in the sector?
11. How would you rate his business acumen in the role? (For Assistants) For example, did he pre-read materials before his manager's meeting, highlight key points, and then brief his manager on the topic?

**Note:** Create specific questions related to the experience and technical skills required for the position.

## Computer or Technology Skills

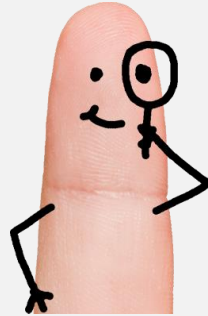
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12. Would you consider him an advanced user of technology? Can you please give 2 examples of his most advanced computer skills (Microsoft® Word®, Excel®, Outlook®, Internet, etc.)?

## Creativity

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13. Describe the most unusual or creative idea he came up with.
14. Think back to his most recent projects or assignments. What was one of his biggest breakthroughs? What was involved and why did you consider it a breakthrough?



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## Teamwork/Building & Maintaining Relationships

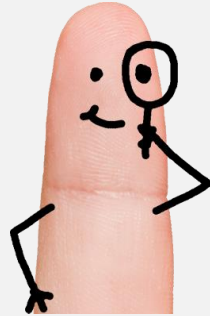
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28. How would you rate his ability to build relationships with key stakeholders? Whether internal (team members) or external stakeholders.
29. Did he ever disagree with a team decision or consensus? (If yes, what happened? How did he go about accepting and supporting the decision?)
30. Going back to his last working team, what role did he typically play on the team? (Leader, follower? How would you rate his ability to interact and participate in team meetings?)
31. How would you rate his ability to work as part of a team? (Did he complete the work assigned to him in a timely manner? If no, please explain what happened. How did he handle the situation?)
32. How would you rate his ability to compromise or guide others to a compromise?
33. Can you think of a time when he was part of a team that worked exceptionally well together? (What do you think were the reasons for its success?)
34. When was the last time he coordinated his work with others on a team project? (What was his most successful contribution?)
35. Can you recall a time when a colleague impeded his work progress, or held him up in completing a project. (What steps did he take to continue to move the project or work forward?)
36. How would you rate his ability to help build enthusiasm in others?
37. How would you rate his ability to manage opposing ideas in a meeting?
38. From your observation, how strongly does he feel that people should be held accountable for their performance? Could you tell me about a time when someone he worked closely with was not held accountable for their work? How did he react in this situation?

## Decision Making

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39. How much authority did he have when making decisions? Was he able to make decisions on his own, or did he require input and/or approval? Can you provide some examples of decisions he made himself and decisions that required input and/or approval from others?
40. How would you rate his ability to manage a problem or difficult situation, before it needed to be escalated to a higher level? (What actions does he take before escalating a problem or difficult situation? What are the general outcomes? In retrospect, how do you think he could handle problems or difficult situations differently, if at all?)
41. Has he ever made a decision that, in retrospect, may not have been the best? If so, what might he have done differently?



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55. What percentage of his work was strategic in nature?
56. Did he ever develop a strategic plan for an initiative or for the department/team? (If so, what were the components of the plan? Was it successful? Why or why not?)

### **Bias for Action/Results Orientation**

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57. What significant results did he produce during his tenure? Why was the organization a better place because of his work? What was his most significant achievement?
58. Did he have objectives for the next 6 months? (Can you please provide an example/examples? Did he achieve his objectives?)
59. Can you recall a time when he had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done? What was the outcome?
60. If you **had** to pick one, would you say he is more relationship-oriented or results/execution-oriented?
61. How would you rate his willingness to work hard? Could you provide an example that shows his willingness to work hard?
62. Can you recall a time when he challenged your idea or decision? What was the result or outcome? (If the person is unable to think of a situation, ask “Was there ever a time when he had to be assertive with someone in a senior position?”)

### **Quality**

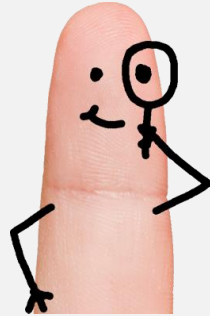
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63. Can you recall a time when his work was not up to your or the team’s expectations? (What happened? What action did he take?)
64. How would you rate his speed of execution? Did his speed of execution affect his attention to detail?

### **Project/Time Management**

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65. How would you rate his project management skills?
66. How would you rate his time management abilities? (Is he able to prioritize by staying focused on the most important tasks, while making time for other important, but less urgent initiatives or projects?)
67. Does he ask for assistance when unsure of a task, or when he is overloaded? Can you recall a time when he should have asked for assistance, but didn’t?



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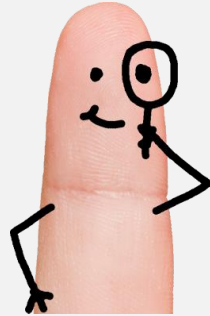


81. How has his management style developed during his time at the organization?
82. Would you describe him as patient? Can you provide an example?
83. Did he have a good grasp of his direct reports' tasks and responsibilities? Enough to understand if there were challenges with productivity?
84. How would you rate his ability to manage staff who ask for additional headcount or consistently communicate that their department is overworked? (Can you provide an example?)
85. What was his performance philosophy for his direct reports? Did everyone have to be an A player? Did he set a high bar? Were his standards and expectations high? Too high?
86. Was he skilled at building a team?
87. How would you rate his ability to implement a significant process or systems change into an organization? Was it successful? Why or why not?
88. Did he ever initiate fun with his team? Did he make time for celebration? How did he celebrate success?
89. How would you rate his ability to recognize hard work from his staff? How creative was he with the kind of rewards or gratitude gestures that he provided to staff? Can you give any examples of a reward or gratitude gesture that he provided to staff that was not funded by the organization?
90. If he had to start up a team of 3 on a desert island, describe the team you think he would bring with him.
91. What traits were most important to him in his direct reports?
92. What is the one trait that he will not tolerate in his direct reports?

## Leadership

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93. Do you consider him a leader? Why?
94. Can you recall when he first arrived in the organization and took the reins of an existing leadership role? What was his leadership style? What were the first impressions for his direct reports?
95. How would you rate his ability to make his own decisions when soliciting input from a number of different people? Did he ever decide to proceed against their advice?
96. On a scale of 1 to 10 — 1 being consensus-only (i.e., he doesn't make any decisions without input from a large group of individuals) and 10 being very autocratic — how would you rate his decision-making style? Can you provide an example of a time when he made a significant



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## Past Performance & Feedback

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115. In his last performance review, what was your overall feedback?
116. What 3 words would you consistently use to describe him? What are his top 2 character traits (not technical skills), and what would you say was an area for improvement? (Probe here when they list the traits.)
117. How would you rate his coping skills when faced with problems or stresses?
118. How would you rate his ability to receive constructive criticism?
119. Different levels of staff often have different views of us. What would administrative staff (who did not report to him — for example, the receptionist) say were his top 2 positive qualities, and 1 area for improvement?
120. What key performance factors does he use to measure his success?
121. Has he ever been disciplined for his behavior at work?

## Culture/Fit

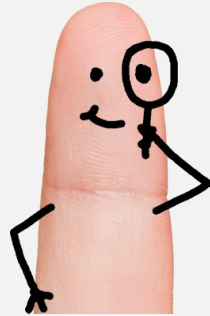
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122. What kind of manager can get the best out of him?
123. What management style does not work well for him?
124. In which type of working environment does he thrive?

## Miscellaneous

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125. Did he participate in any special professional development during his time at the organization? Did he read industry-related books on his own time?
126. Did he participate in any kind of professional development that was not funded by your organization?
127. How would you rate his resourcefulness?
128. Is he skilled at managing upwards? How did he do this?
129. Was he involved in any volunteer work?
130. What business person does he remind you of the most? Why?



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