Choosing the best person to hire is a multi-step process involving information from a variety of sources. Let’s go through each resource in turn.

**Resumes**

Resumes are the first line of defense. So screen them twice. First, screen for obvious facts that rule out a candidate. For example:

- Does the candidate meet basic requirements?
- Does the candidate have proper degrees or certification? In the right state?
- Is the school or institution properly accredited?
- If salary expectations are indicated, are they beyond the limits? So low as to cause question?
- Is the candidate in the right geographic area or planning to move?
- If it’s an unsolicited resume from an employment agency, is the company willing to pay the fee?

Second, look for a potential match. Evaluate credentials in terms of job duties and desired traits and attributes. Consider the candidate’s stated job objective in the context of this opening. Also look for positive patterns of employment, such as:

- Where has candidate worked and for how long?
- Does work history suggest staying power?
- Do changes of titles and positions reflect advancement and growth?
- Are there any gaps in employment that are hard to explain?

Look at the presentation of the resume itself. Is the appearance clean, neat, and attentive to detail? Is the structure clear, well-organized, and logical?

Does the writing use correct grammar and spelling?

Finally, look for hints of personality traits and attributes from the candidate’s interests and activities. Beware that some interests and activities might suggest a candidate’s race, religion, disability status, etc., and this information should not be considered in the hiring process.

**Application Forms**

Application forms supplement information that may be missing from the resume, and they are often more accurate and up-to-date. Application forms should include a statement signed or acknowledged by the applicant that the information is complete and accurate. In addition, they’re uniform, which makes it easier to compare candidates side by side. Go over your company application form ahead of the interview process to get familiar with each section and to see if the information is different than that on the resume.

**References**

Former supervisors are the best sources of information, because they have been in the position to evaluate the applicant’s performance. Ask references specific questions about performance, including:

- Dates of employment, salary, reason for leaving, would you rehire?
- Strengths, weaknesses

**Tip**

- Apply all screening devices uniformly and objectively to all candidates.
Legal Issues in Hiring

When checking references:

- Be consistent: If you check one candidate’s references, check all in the same way.
- Get the candidate’s agreement (via application form) that you may contact the former employer, and let the contact person know you have the candidate’s agreement.
- If you eliminate a candidate because of a bad reference, document the business reasons for doing so, especially if any protected group suffers disproportionately.

If you use a third party for reference checks or background checks, the company must comply with applicable federal and state notice and authorization requirements.

When using tests:

- Properly validated tests that predict job success are legal.
- All tests must be administered consistently (given under same conditions, with the same written instructions, same text to type, same recorded voice to transcribe, etc.)
- All tests must be evaluated as objectively as possible.


- Major projects worked on, responsibilities
- Relations with superiors and subordinates, etc.
- Attendance, punctuality

If checking character references, ask open questions without talking about the company or position.

Pre-employment Tests

Follow your company policies regarding what tests are appropriate and when to test. In general, test early in the hiring process if the test relates to the performance of an essential job function. Test after narrowing the field if it’s not an essential function.

Some medical and other tests are post-hire, pre-employment tests. Inform candidates about them.

Tip

- Ensure that any inquiries about criminal or problem behavior meet legal standards.

Other Sources

Compare notes and impressions with everyone who makes contact with candidates when they come to interview. Check with those who interviewed formally and those who had unscheduled, informal contact.

Check with agency recruiters, if used, and ask them how this candidate compares to others they’ve sent and why they recommend this candidate. Check with technical advisors, if used, and ask if this candidate is qualified to handle the job.

Weighing All the Variables

If your company uses a rating form or other evaluation system, follow it faithfully. In general, keep notes and use a consistent comparison system. Notes should only reflect the candidate’s qualifications for the job. Ensure that a candidate can meet all the parameters of the job, including salary, starting date, etc.

Avoid taking the first candidate who seems a reasonable choice. But don’t drag the search on so long that you lose good candidates to other offers.