

EXHIBIT 5.6**Guidelines for the
Appropriate Use of
Reference Checks**

1. Ask for and obtain only job-related information.
 2. Do not ask for information that may be deemed illegal.
 3. Applicants should provide written permission to contact references; this may be included on the application form.
 4. Individuals who check references should be trained in how to interview them, probe for additional information, and accurately record reference information.
 5. Reference information should be recorded in writing.
 6. Use the reference-checking process to confirm information provided by the applicant and to identify gaps in the employment record.
 7. Consider using preemployment information services, particularly for sensitive positions.
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Reference checks are widely used, but their usefulness is decreasing. Some organizations advise their employees to provide only minimal information about former employees, such as job title and dates of employment, to reduce the liability of the referring organization to lawsuits from the hiring organization (through charges of negligent hiring) or the applicant (through claims of defamation of character). Exhibit 5.6 provides some basic guidelines for the appropriate use of references.

JOB INTERVIEWS

A job interview is used for virtually all positions, largely because information from the application, references, and other documentation is inadequate. Interviews are sometimes given the greatest weight in hiring decisions but may present problems with reliability and validity.

- ◆ Because applicants are not usually given interview questions in advance, they may not have the opportunity to prepare answers that would showcase their abilities.
- ◆ Often questions are not standardized, and interviewers might ask different questions of people applying for the same position.
- ◆ Where multiple interviewers are used, their questions, interview style, and interpretation and scoring of answers may vary.
- ◆ Untrained interviewers may ask legally dubious questions, such as inquiries about plans for marriage or starting a family.

Even with these shortcomings, the interview can be an effective and efficient method of acquiring information about applicants. Furthermore, it can be a valuable

**CRITICAL CONCEPT****A Successful Interview Process**

The job interview is a common method of assessing applicants. To be used successfully, interviews should

- focus on assessing applicants' ability to carry out the essential functions of the job,
- be planned in advance,
- use questions that all interviewers have agreed are important, relevant, and job-related,
- not include questions that are potentially illegal, such as inquiries regarding religion or marital status,
- use the same set of questions for all applications for the same position,
- be pretested prior to beginning interviews with actual applicants,
- allow time for the interviewee to ask questions,
- include a planned time after each interview to score and assess applicants, and
- be conducted by individuals trained in interviewing techniques.

recruitment tool because it allows the interviewer to highlight the positive features of the organization and job.

Job interviews can be unstructured or structured. **Unstructured interviews** are not standardized and have less formal structure. Unstructured interviews may be subjective and can be less reliable than structured interviews. However, their flexibility may help interviewers probe for unique information on applicants that may be missed in a structured interview format.

In a **structured interview**, questions are clearly job related and based on the results of a thorough job analysis. Situational, experience-based, job-knowledge, and worker-requirement questions are most commonly posed during a structured interview.

Situational questions ask applicants to describe how they would handle a hypothetical work scenario. **Experience-based questions** ask candidates how they have previously handled a situation that is similar to a situation they may encounter on the job. Following is a scenario and related situational and experience-based questions. The applicant characteristics being assessed by this question are the ability to handle a stressful situation, ability to deal appropriately with the public, and professionalism.

Unstructured interview

A technique in which questions are usually open-ended and guided by applicant answers and interviewer preferences.

Structured interview

A technique in which questions and related constructs (and sometimes, preferred answers) are developed in advance. The same interview structure is typically used for all applicants for a position.

Situational question

A type of behavioral interview question in which applicants are asked how they would handle specific situations that may arise on the job.

Experience-based question

A type of behavioral interview question in which applicants are asked to relate how they handled a specific type of job experience in their past.