

Gain a Competitive Edge with Automated Reference Checks

Five ways to set your organization apart



Introduction

Competition for top talent is growing fiercer, and your organization wants better results today — not tomorrow.

Talent acquisition and human resources teams need to act more strategically than ever before to find qualified talent, reduce time to fill and be true business partners to hiring managers and others in your organization.

In this whitepaper, we'll explore how talent acquisition teams can gain a competitive edge by leveraging new data-driven approaches to build recruiting efficiencies, develop strong candidate pipelines and provide the kind of deep insight into candidate performance that will make your hiring managers see you and your team as more strategic partners.

Unprecedented challenges

The needs of talent acquisition teams can vary greatly by industry, but they have one striking phenomenon in common: the need to fill positions is growing, but the talent pool isn't. A recent report finds that, by 2030, more than 85 million jobs could go unfilled because there aren't enough skilled workers to fill them.¹

The demand to fill more positions faster is often at odds with the need to work more efficiently, straining the resources of even the best-run talent acquisition teams.

To remain viable, organizations need to find effective and efficient ways to compete for available talent. Automated reference checks can give the data and deep insight organizations need to make quick, more confident hiring decisions.



Reference checking as a strategic asset

For many teams, reference checking remains an inefficient and time-consuming task. Often the feedback you receive from references is little more than verification of your candidate's employment.

Today's automated reference checking solutions differ from traditional phone-based methods and can help you:

- **Speed the hiring process** with job-specific surveys to target the positions you want to fill
- **Evaluate a range of criteria** so that you can deliver deeper, more predictive insights about a candidate to assure a better fit with your hiring manager's needs
- **Provide detailed candidate reports** that can help your hiring managers make more informed decisions and plan onboarding activities



iCIMS SkillSurvey
customers have seen:

•
<2 days
average response time

•
Up to 5
references respond
per candidate

•
Up to 85%
response rate

5 ways to transform reference checking

1 Speed time to fill and increase recruiting efficiencies

Filling roles quickly is critical. Yet, research from the Josh Bersin Co. finds that time to hire is at an all-time high, taking an average of 44 days to fill an open position.² Digital reference checking is one way organizations can speed time to fill and gain efficiencies without sacrificing quality.

- **Automate the process:** Eliminate time-consuming phone calls that can take 30 minutes or more per reference. Recruiters can kick off the reference process in less than five minutes.
- **Stay ahead of the competition:** Fast turnaround time means you're more likely to fill roles while your competition is waiting for a call back.
- **Data-driven hiring:** Get feedback on candidate soft skills and behavioral competencies needed for success.
- **Faster responses:** Detailed candidate feedback reports are typically ready in less than two business days.

Reference checking transformed

Customers who use iCIMS SkillSurvey have seen results like these:

• A leading provider of diagnostic testing and services improved the retention rate of first-year sales reps to 90% — well above the national average.

• A top U.S. hospital with over 20,000 employees reduced time to fill by nearly two weeks and decreased turnover to 7%, well below its annual target of 15%.

• An electronic manufacturer decreased time spent checking references by 85% and saved nearly \$4 million in wages that could have been lost due to turnover.

2

Be a more strategic business partner

Talent acquisition is a relationship-driven business. To build better relationships with your hiring managers, you need to prove your value and contribution to the business. By adopting an automated approach to reference checking, you can deliver additional value to your hiring managers.

- Obtain feedback from managers, colleagues and direct reports on job-specific behaviors, including how a candidate communicates, whether they come to work on time and their ability to handle stress
- Deliver verbatim comments on strengths and potential areas for improvement
- Provide behavior-based interview questions
- Compare candidates in one report for more informed hiring decisions

Armed with deep insight into your candidates, you can provide your hiring managers with the tools they need to make great hiring decisions.

3

Build a talent pipeline

Building a network of active and passive job seekers is critical to keeping ahead of the game, but it's arguably one of the more difficult aspects of your job.

Having up-to-the-minute and confirmed contact information and critical job details for those references means you can easily build a passive candidate database and keep them engaged with automated email nurtures. Plus, you can create talent pipelines for in-demand roles like those in IT or engineering. With a broader network at your fingertips, you'll spend less time hunting for candidates with the right skill set and more time building your network of new connections.

4

Polish your talent brand

There's a truism about branding that's worth remembering: brand isn't what you say about yourself; it's what everyone else says about you. This includes your candidates. A strong talent brand can reduce cost per hire by over 50% and lower turnover rates by 28%.³ To improve your talent brand, think strategically about every step in your candidate's journey.

By leveraging automated reference checking, your candidates are kept up-to-date throughout the reference-checking process. They select their references, enter them into the system and sign in to see who has responded and when they might need to send reminder messages. Your candidate can be the steward of their confidential responses from references.

The value of the data you receive in a candidate report enables a more engaging process and leads to a more engaged interview. By transforming your reference-checking process, you're sending a message that you are a forward-thinking company that is ready to embrace new strategies to get the job done. It's a message that references, your hiring managers and your senior leadership team will hear loud and clear. In a recruiting environment where talent analytics are quickly gaining traction, that can be a game changer.

iCIMS SkillSurvey client research shows that involuntary turnover can be reduced by over 35% (in just the first year).



5

Champion diversity

Today, organizations can't afford to speak in a narrow voice to a limited audience. Look for an automated reference checking solution that offers multiple languages to widen your reach for capable and talented workers.

Of course, gender, race, ethnicity and Americans with Disabilities are all protected classes. Ask for evidence that your reference surveys — whether online or scripted — meet EEOC statutes and guidelines to support compliance. For data gathering to be valid, you must have evidence that the skills being assessed are related to job success. Surveys unrelated to specific job-related criteria are often targeted in lawsuits.

Research published in the International Journal of Selection and Assessment found that highly structured, quantitative employment references had no significant gender bias favoring male applicants over females.⁴

In response to these findings, iCIMS SkillSurvey's former chief analytics officer said, "Our research has found that structured and even semi-structured references go a long way in minimizing gender bias across industries and job types, making structured references a powerful tool for both recruiters and organizations looking to hire equitably and meet their DEI objectives."

The iCIMS difference

Developed on more than 20 years of experience in job competency modeling, iCIMS SkillSurvey is the only patented solution that automates the process of receiving feedback from references via job-specific surveys on at least 20 critical behaviors and skills.

- Insights are collected automatically and confidentially and have been scientifically validated to be more predictive than traditional self-assessments
- At least 85% of references complete the survey and offer candid input because they receive a system-generated email from someone they know – the candidate
- Results are EEOC compliant, and surveys are available in six languages, which helps to reduce language barriers
- Hundreds of job-based surveys provide feedback on the soft skills that make a candidate successful and help reduce turnover – things like work ethic, professionalism, leadership, attention to safety protocols, or the ability to work in a team environment

iCIMS SkillSurvey
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