

# Jennifer gaston case essay



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Before elaborating on the hiring process of the new president and COO Olivia DeCarlo some theoretical aspects concerning the right hiring process have to be clarified. In order to ensure the hiring of the most suitable candidate the right recruitment and selection process is absolutely necessary as it controls the entry of new employees into the organization. Recruitment means attracting potential candidates to apply to fill vacancies.

Selection is the next step after the recruitment phase where potential candidates are selected out of a pool of candidates who were attracted to apply and afterwards the best candidates are selected and offered a job. There are three critical aspects a firm needs to fulfill before attracting suitable candidates. The firm needs to clearly define the employment need and then designing accordingly the job and candidate profiles with all the requirements a candidate has to fulfill and tasks and responsibilities he/she can expect from the position.

Only by a clear definition of job and candidate profiles the correct matching of vacancy characteristics with applicant characteristics can be secured. After the job and candidate profiles are clearly defined and suitable candidates attracted firms should follow several sequences of selection processes. Behind these sequences firms have to choose and use the most appropriate selection methods, making selection decisions, and in the end validating the results and decision made.

Most common selection methods are CV and application form screening normally used in the first selection stages to gain a quick, initial overview of the candidates. Additionally, references can provide a good background

check of candidates. Interviews are the most frequently used selection tool carrying a great deal of weight in the selection process, because they strongly help to determine the right person-organization fit.

In the case of the hiring process of the new president and COO Olivia DeCarlo, Jennifer Gaston, founder and CEO of the luxury jewelry company Aquamarine, has proceeded essential selection steps to ensure the right hiring, however, there are some areas of improvement. Jennifer Gaston developed in the beginning a set of responsibilities and roles required for the position. Additionally, she had concrete personal and educational prospects about the potential candidate and stated the importance of the cultural fit between the candidate and the organization and his/her team player skills.

However, Jennifer Gaston was faced with a lot of time pressure during the selection process, which was the reason why when offering DeCarlo the job vacancy job responsibilities were supposed to be further enumerated in the first months of employment. Thus, the selection process should be improved by clearly defining and especially finalizing position related tasks and responsibilities. Besides, a selection process for highly important job positions should not be influenced and rushed through because of time pressure to minimize the consequences and risks of a wrong hiring.

Moreover, Jennifer Gaston received the advice from a trusted advisor to consider Olivia DeCarlo as an appropriate candidate. As discussed, it is recommended to consider references giving a second opinion about a potential candidate. Afterwards, Jennifer Gaston screened DeCarlo's CV to get a clear overview and arranged a casual interview for lunch to receive a

greater insights about her as a person and her career. Thereafter, she settled a follow-up telephone interview conducted by an important member of the management team namely the lead designer.

A follow-up interview is an essential step in the selection process receiving further insights on the candidate and being able to compare interview results to ensure a consistent candidate evaluation. However, although Gaston and the lead designer believe DeCarlo is almost a perfect fit due to her great professional experience, industry knowledge, and personality traits like achiever and hard-working potential, both are questioning her potential being a great team player. Jennifer Gaston already made a mistake in the past hiring an individualist not fitting into the team culture.

Due to time pressure, Gaston decided not to further evaluate on this issue, which is a great risk especially regarding future teamwork in such important management levels within an organization. Therefore, a clear improvement would be to arrange another interview with a different important management member possibly forming a panel interview with a member from the HR department to clearly assess the personality and specifically the team working skills of Olivia DeCarlo in a personal, business environment based on a structured interview with a clear prepared set of questions.

In addition, an extremely important issue, which Jennifer Gaston did not include in the selection process, is the analysis of the reliability of the selection methods and their results to ensure a clear assessment of the potential performance of DeCarlo making the right final decision of hiring or rejecting. To conclude, due to time pressure many important steps in a

selection process such as the development of clear job responsibilities, the right assessment of key personality traits, and the reliability and validity test were not included and thus are major improvement areas.

If yes, to whom and what to delegate? In accordance with what was done with other questions, some theoretical background will be provided to reinforce the importance of reference checking as a stage in selection processes. So, references concerning applicant's background information provided by former professors, managers, coworkers, friends and acquaintances constitute a common discretionary instrument regarding selection sequence process<sup>1</sup>.

Before an interview, employers search for this kind of information among people who know the candidate, the reference writers. Although being widely used in some industries, this process is considered to be relatively weak predictor of future success on the job, in terms of reliability and validity. The reason behind this relies on the positivism included in the references provided which makes it harder to differentiate applicants. So, there are two main causes regarding the aforementioned issue.

Foremost, the candidate usually has the possibility to choose who will write the reference letter and, hence, can choose a person that better recognize its strengths and competences. Secondly, reference writers do not know who is going to read its letters of recommendation and for that reason they are afraid that giving damaging information about a candidate could come back to haunt them. Hence, it is of utmost interest that the employee does not give that much information beyond the job title and years of service<sup>2</sup>.

Generally, the reference checking process improves in validity terms when the recruiter search beyond the given reference list. Moreover, employers that tend to rely on this specific source of information, normally seek for a large number of references, between 10 and 12. Returning to the case, one of the steps that Jennifer Gaston took regarding CFO' selection process was, in fact, reference checking. By using this selection method, Gaston wanted to make sure about applicants past education and work experience by phone calling to the references provided by chosen candidate.

This way, she was able to verify the accuracy of elements provided in applicant' Curriculum Vitae, to predict its good performance within CFO' position by comparing with previous work situations and related successes and to detect any incongruence between information provided by the candidate's interviews and their real qualifications<sup>3</sup>. From what was explained above, this process of calling to different reference writers is fundamental in order to reduce selection errors that might arise if applicants to a specific position give biased information about themselves regarding key aspects required for that specific job offer.

It is also recommended that Jennifer Gaston do reference checking by telephone because approaching reference writers by telephone help to get a more interactive, open and anonymous exchange of information<sup>4</sup>. So, Jennifer would get a more flexible and without pressure conversation as a way to gather information needed which would facilitate her task. Reference checking might be delegated through McCallum, Gaston's lead contact at Search Right, which is probably the most suitable person from the interviews' panel because he has experience within this field.

Hence, he almost certainly did reference checking through his work path. By delegating this, McCallum might help Gaston in how to proceed with reference checking process. He probably could suggest her to call to different references within candidate's provided list and also try to find a person that know the candidate but that was not referred, in order to get a more unbiased and accurate view of its real competences. This is an enriching process because personal references checking can actually provide additional insight into the information given by the applicant and allow verification of its accuracy.