



## Seven Tips for Developing References

"References upon Request". Every job seeker knows the importance of having good references. Even with the more commonly occurring instance of HR departments only confirming dates of employment and status for rehire, references are still a very important part of the job search.

So how do you "develop" your references? Most people think you just write down a few people's names and contact information that can attest to the fact that you are a great person, a good employee, and won't run off with the office supplies. Totally wrong! Developing good references actually requires some thought and work.

### **Tip 1 - Consider the field**

When deciding upon whom to name as your references, it is important to think about who you select. Director supervisors and people who have true knowledge of your work performance make the best references. Higher-up execs, while perhaps having more important job titles or better name recognition might well say "Joe who?" when contacted for a reference because they don't know who you are or only have a passing exposure to your work performance. That would be embarrassing!

### **Tip 2 - Ask Permission**

Always talk to those whom you plan to name as references in your job search! You don't want your reference to be caught off guard when contacted. Also, get their permission and make sure you have the correct contact information for them. Some might prefer to be contacted by email while others prefer a home phone or cell phone number. Mailing address for references is not necessary.

### **Tip 3 - Are They Competition?**

An old recruiters' trick is to use an under-qualified candidate's resume as a "backdoor" to qualified candidates - the references. Good references should have direct knowledge of your work performance but ideally should be in a slightly different functional line of work than you. For example, a recruiter might contact a National Sales Manager from XYZ Company only because he is hoping to get access to the VP of Sales (the candidate's supervisor) in hopes of luring him/her away.

### **Tip 4 - Who Knows Whom?**

When a recruiter or employer is checking references, they know the references that are listed by the candidate are going to have good things to say about the candidate. Let's face it - who is going to list someone that would say BAD things? That is why hiring professionals ask the following question of most references: "Who ELSE other than you has direct knowledge of Joe's work performance? Can you give me their number or email?" It's not so much who YOU name as a reference but rather who your reference names as a reference. To counter this, ask anyone you ask to be a reference the same question "If asked, who else would you recommend as a reference for me?" If your references name someone who you think would not be very glowing in their report, take the opportunity to steer them away and suggest an alternate person.

### **Tip 5 - Get it in Writing**

Save yourself a lot of trouble and have your references write letters of recommendation for you. In fact, anytime you have a great achievement and receive accolades, ask your supervisor to give you a "pat on the back" in writing. Save these for the future! They are invaluable.

### **Tip 6 - Preserve Privacy**

Never, ever publish your references' names or contact information in your resume or on the web. First of all, references should never appear on a resume simply because it is not the place for that information. References are provided during the interview, usually a second interview and it is always

great if you have it prepared in advanced and can leave the data. Something tangible by which the interviewer can 'remember you'. Putting your references' names, phone numbers, emails and addresses in an online database or in a resume that is published online is simply not something you should do.

#### **Tip 7 - Keep it Professional**

Your references should be professional people who have direct knowledge of your work performance. The "character reference" is pretty moot. Hence, do not include a pastor, a friend, a neighbor or a family member.

Before you start your job search, make sure you have your resume in tip top shape so you land interviews, and your references developed and ready to go so you are prepared on those interviews. Your references need to know if you are conducting a confidential job search or an open one so they do not accidentally let the cat out of the bag. Consider a thank you note to each reference after you win an interview as that is both courteous and will also keep them primed for the next time!

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