



Obtaining Professional References

Interviews are an integral part of the hiring process, but they can only tell an employer so much about how you function. To gain an outside perspective, an employer will ask you for references and you cannot afford to be caught off-guard. A good reference will be able to verify your abilities, vouch for your character, and is an essential part of the interviewing process.

Bosses, managers, professors that knew you well, internship leaders, or even volunteer leaders can all make for solid references. Avoid listing friends, family members, or co-workers, as it is best to give references who can speak to your work performance. The more a reference can speak to your technical ability and workplace attitudes, the better.

Before giving out anyone's contact information it is essential to contact them and not only ask if you can list them as a reference, but go over the position you are applying for. Especially if the reference is someone you haven't worked with in a while, it is also important to go over areas that an employer may ask them. Remind them of what you worked on together, so that when they are contacted they can give the most accurate representation of your abilities.

Although a letter of recommendation is helpful for a college application, if a job interview progresses to your references the company will probably want to call them. Their tone, enthusiasm and demonstrative examples of your work ethic all come into play when a company considers the value of a reference.

As this area can be tricky for those of you newly entering the workforce who cannot call on previous managers or supervisors to vouch for you, we would like to make ourselves available for any questions you may have regarding professional references. Also if you are unsure of how to coach a reference on what they may be asked, we can offer more advice on the things we most commonly hear about from employers.