

# Developing Quality References

When seeking a new position, great references are almost as important as a stellar resume. Your recruiter will ask you for references, and will coordinate contacting those references with their client.

What's the best way to develop your references? Can you just write down a few names and contact information of people who'll say you're a good employee who won't run off with the medical supplies? Not exactly.

Developing great, usable references does require some work, but it's not impossible! Here are a few tips to help you create an all-star list of references.

## 1. **Who Makes the Cut?**

When compiling your reference sheet, the first question you should ask yourself is the most logical one: who's on the list? Your first instinct might be to choose someone in your company with an executive job title or strong name recognition to people outside of the organization. But, the last thing you want is for a recruiter or hiring manager to make a phone call to this higher-up and hear a response like "Joe who?" For this reason, direct supervisors and others who have day-to-day knowledge of your work performance make the best references.

## 2. **Ask Permission**

You've done your investigative work and have your VIP list of strong, knowledgeable references. But, do they want to be on that list? Maybe not. It's vital that you get the permission of each and every one of your references before handing their contact information to your recruiter or hiring manager. Once they've accepted your request, you'll need to double check their contact information and find out how they'd like to be contacted - via phone or email. Make sure to also ask when they prefer to be contacted, so they aren't caught off guard when your recruiter calls.

## 3. **Find References' References**

Recruiters and hiring managers know that anyone you reference is going to say good things about you. Of course, right? You certainly wouldn't list a reference who would speak poorly of you. This is why hiring professionals often ask most references: "Who, other than you, has direct knowledge of Joe's work performance? Can you give me their number or email?"

So, be sure to ask each of your references the same question "Who would you recommend as a reference for me?" If they name someone who might not give you a glowing report, take the opportunity to steer them away and suggest an alternate person.

#### **4. Get it in Writing**

What's even better than email or phone references? Letters of recommendation. Written references will save you the time and energy that organizing phone references requires. Save yourself even more time by saving every "pat on the back" you get from your supervisor or colleagues throughout the years. When it's time to job search, these saved accolades will prove invaluable.

#### **5. Proper Presentation**

References should only be provided when asked. Never include them in your resume or send them in with job applications. Your recruiter will let you know when the references will be needed – for example, the client may request that the references are conducted prior to scheduling a site visit.

#### **6. Keep it Professional**

Your references should be strictly professional - choose colleagues or peers who have direct knowledge of your work performance. The "character reference" from an executive's friend or family member generally isn't very helpful for the hiring manager, so including one is unnecessary.

After you've landed your new job, it's always a great idea to send each reference a thank you note to show that you appreciate their help in getting you there.