

WELCOME TO 2008!

References: An Important Piece of Your Job Search Puzzle

Reference checking is typically part of the final stage of the interview process. This occurs when finalists are selected or when the candidate is made an offer contingent on references. References are checked to determine more about the candidate's fit and skills, and to validate information and impressions gained during the interview process.

Most employers ask for 3-4 professional references. In some occupations (e.g., social work, elder services, day care), personal references may be required in addition to professional references.

Who can you use as a professional reference?

- Former/current supervisor or manager
- Former/current co-workers
- Manager in your most recent/current company for whom you completed a project
- Vendors or suppliers
- Customers
- Colleagues

All of these people are able to talk about your KSA: knowledge, skills, and attitude – your job content knowledge and skills, as well as “soft” skills, those aspects of your personality, motivation, and way of doing things that become your unique differentiators. All of these categories relate to your ability to do the job for which you've interviewed.

Personal references are people who are able to talk about your personality and soft skills. For example, if you volunteered for an animal rescue league in your community, another volunteer might share evidence of your compassion. A teacher at your son's or daughter's school might talk about your patience and enthusiasm when you helped out at their annual crafts fair. The president of a professional association of which you're a member might talk about your creativity in recruiting speakers.

Reference letters can be used to bolster your candidacy. Do not send a list of references or reference letters with your resume and cover letter, unless asked for. You can bring letters of reference to an interview. These letters are valuable; however they do not take the place of a reference list of people the employer can call.

How should my reference list be set-up?

Your reference list should be on a separate sheet of paper – references should not be listed at the bottom of your resume. Your contact information (i.e., heading) should duplicate your resume. Then, center the word “references” (in capital letters).

Then, use the examples below for your list:

James Mason, Quality Assurance Manager

Debco Manufacturing

978-827-1000 (w) / 978-365-0812 (h)

jmason@debco.com

Jim was my supervisor for three years

Janice Saunders, Customer Service Manager

Honda North

978-887-1234 (w)

Janice_s@hondanorth.com

Janice was my co-worker who scheduled auto techs and reviewed customer evaluations of service.

Keep in touch #1: If you’re recently unemployed, get contact information (including home phone and/or cell phone numbers) of your manager(s) and co-workers. Some people have found themselves in the unfortunate situation of not being able to supply references from their most recent employment – because the company closed or moved, or their manager and/or co-workers were also let go.

Keep in touch #2: Keep your references informed throughout your job search. If you have an interview, notify your references immediately to let them know about the position, the company and the name of the person you interviewed with. Get in touch again if you make it to a 2nd round of interviews or the finalist stage. Avoid having your references be surprised by a phone call or e-mail. You want them to be as informed about the position as you are. You want them to know why you’re interested in the position and what you see as your key skills and strengths – why you feel you’re a good match. All of this information helps them to prepare to provide a thoughtful and solid vote of confidence.

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FEATURED WORKSHOP

Not sure what the next step is in your career? Thinking of making a career change, but don't know what you want to be when you grow up? Already have some ideas, but want to take see what a career assessment tool will show?

Beginning in February, the North Shore Career Center of Lynn will begin offering a monthly workshop on the ***Self-Directed Search (SDS)***. The SDS is a widely used career assessment tool that shows how your interests and skills align with specific occupations, job functions, and organizational cultures. This tool analyzes this information in the context off six distinct occupational themes, developed through many years of research. Your results can provide new ideas for careers or career paths you hadn't considered, as well as validating a decision you've already made. Overall, the tool provides information to help you crystallize career options and create a focus to shape your career direction.