

Strategic references are important for your job search



Written by

Driadonna Roland
Staff Writer

11:42 PM, Mar. 19, 2011|

Job seekers like to deem themselves "proven leaders" with a "track record of success." References can lend credibility to those claims and are as critical to job preparation as the résumé and interview, local hiring experts say.

A good reference is someone who can provide recent examples of an individual's work ethic, job performance and character. They must be chosen strategically.

"Think of references as an indirect presentation," said Matt Taylor, director of AP Professionals of Rochester LLC.

He recommended having a minimum of three references, and not more than five. If at least two of them are former supervisors, that's even better.

"Managers are going to want to understand from a peer what it's like to work with that individual," Taylor said.

Younger job seekers may not have former managers, but teachers, coaches, mentors and even fellow members of volunteer organizations can provide the information potential employers are looking for.

The common practice is to list on one's résumé: "References available upon request." But waiting to provide references until after the interview could be too late, said Tracey Aiello, leader of The August Group, a local networking organization that aims to get people back to work.

Bring reference letters to the interview to serve as "social proof" of your contributions, Aiello advised. Many people don't think to ask for such testimonials until they need them, but after you're no longer with a company, they could be harder to get. It's wise to collect as many as possible while still employed. Having such evidence can also be an asset for the more modest job hunters who have a hard time tooting their own horn.

"A lot of people are not good at telling

Advertisement



Fast, convenient,
AND affordable

Save on select
Wireless*
All-in-Ones,
Photo Printers
and Lasers

Save Today

Limited time offers

Shop Now >

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

people how great they are," Aiello said. "They might say, 'I saved the company a million dollars, but I was just doing my job.'"

Reference letters are equivalent to having another person in the room who can say these things for you.

Aiello said he's learned from hiring managers that references add dimension to the typical application materials they receive.

"Most résumés read more like a job description," he said. "They (employers) never read how good a person is at what they do."

There are several major no-no's when it comes to compiling references. Potential employers are looking for an objective opinion, so listing relatives as references should be avoided, said Peter Pecor, executive director of RochesterWorks!

Also, keeping references well informed of the job search is critical. Make them aware of the kinds of jobs you have applied for. Never list someone as a reference without asking their permission and letting them know to expect a phone call soon.

If an interviewer asks for references, a candidate should be able to expand upon whom they have selected and the reasons they have chosen that person.

"Even if they're not followed up on, the fact that this person is willing to vouch for you

says a lot," Pecor said.

Some companies have strict policies about the kinds of information they share about former employees. For instance, they may verify that a person worked there but may not give details about performance and behavior. This is a difficult situation to work around, but Taylor said bringing a job performance review or even a group presentation to an interview can provide insight on tasks completed and offer a manager's perception of their work.

The bottom line: References are still an essential part of the job seeker's tool kit. "It's better to have them than not," Pecor said.

DROLAND2@DemocratandChronicle.com

Tips

Always ask permission before listing someone as a reference.

Do not list relatives.

Advertisement



Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

momslike me.com
where Local moms meet

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics

If you post your résumé online, don't include references' contact information.

Always give a reference notice before potential employers contact them.

Advertisement



Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have *some* rules!

momlike me.com
where Local moms meet

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™