

GET THE JOB

Carefully Consider References

When compiling a list of references for a potential employer, try to create a diverse list of contacts.

The Harvard Business Review recommends including current and former supervisors, colleagues, clients, subordinates, customers and vendors.

Focus on those who have provided positive feedback about past work or expressed gratitude for your assistance on projects. Co-workers whom you've successfully collaborated with in the past are particularly effective when selling your career story.

Here's a deeper dive into best practices when building a list of references:

CHOOSING WELL

Before listing someone as a reference, reach out and seek their permission. Familiarize yourself with the specific skills and qualities that the hiring manager is interested in, so you can select the most appropriate reference for the job. This will also help you with articulating the requirements for a successful cover letter.

For instance, if the prospective employer is interested in your leadership abilities, provide a reference who has worked under your supervi-



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sion. If the company is looking for information on your reliability, offer a current or former supervisor. If they want insights into your teamwork skills, connect them with a colleague who can share relevant portfolio samples and discuss your qualifications for the position. Informing your contacts that you are in the job search process may lead to

additional job leads.

FOCUSING IN

If you are asked to provide references after an interview, drill in on what this hiring manager is seeking in a candidate. That allows you to tailor your references and provide the most relevant information.

With that knowledge in hand, discuss what you would

like for contacts to emphasize. This presents an opportunity to highlight your strengths, the collaborative projects you've undertaken, and your professional abilities. Don't assume anyone's willingness to serve as a reference. You don't want to be an imposition. At the same time, informing them in advance allows your contact to prepare for the conversation

and consider what they will say about you.

Contacting them in advance also serves other purposes. You can request updated contact information, which is crucial in this process. You can inform them about the specific job you are applying for and explain your motivation. It may be beneficial to provide your reference with supporting documents such as your resume and the job posting you are applying to. By doing so, you're also helping them to a better understanding of your qualifications.

KEEPING IT QUIET

If you are currently employed and wish to keep your job search confidential, it's important to communicate that to the hiring manager. This is a common situation, but it also has an impact on your references, since you won't have any references from your current employer.

One way around this situation is to offer to provide references from your current company once a job offer has been extended. At the same time, if the hiring manager asks for a reference from your current supervisor and you anticipate a negative reference, it's best to be transparent about this. Inform your prospective employer while providing a professional explanation as to why.