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Executive Outplacement • Career Assessment • Spouse Relocation • Retirement Programs • Entrepreneurial Counseling Career Transition Workshops • Mid-Career Check-Up • Accelerated Outplacement Programs

Managing Your References

One of the most important things you need to prepare is your list of references. While most references will give you a good to excellent report, there are some that without meaning harm can give an innuendo or hint that your work at the company was less than standard or the circumstances of your leaving were not good. Any such reference can easily terminate discussions with a prospective employer. Here are some essential points in organizing your references.

Your best references will support your claims made in your resume, adding credibility to your skills. Since you may be applying to a lot of companies, it is important that your references be aware of what specific skills and accomplishments you want emphasized.

Wherever possible, your reference meetings should be face-to-face so you have the time to discuss your career and review your resume. While this person may know you personally, he still needs to understand your accomplishments and what skills they demonstrated. Make sure to request permission from your reference to give his name to potential employers and what contact information to provide. During your meeting, you should try to get his permission to notify him whenever you give his name to a recruiter or company interested in your background. In some cases, your references may be too far away and you will have to do this by phone and e-mail.

Before you meet with your references, it is best to practice how you will approach each possible reference question listed below:

1. "How did you know the candidate?"
2. "What were the circumstances of his leaving the company?"
3. "Was he on any performance improvement plan? How did he do?" This may be asked if there are hints of any problems with your application.
4. "What are his strong points?"
5. "In what areas does he need improvement?"
6. "Would you hire him again?"
7. "What were his greatest achievements at the company?"
8. "Who else supervised him?" Be prepared, another supervisor may also be approached, even though he is not on your list.
9. "Did the candidate live up to your expectations?"
10. "How were his leadership skills?" This question will be asked if you are applying for a managerial position.
11. "Was he appreciated by his colleagues?"
12. "Was he reliable?"
13. "Anything else you can add about the candidate?"

While you are reviewing your resume with each reference, go over the skills you want to emphasize rather than letting him give a generic report. See if you can have your reference inform you when an inquiry is made about you. For more on this subject, consult *Super Job Search*, Third Edition, pages 101, 105 and 106.