



**Job Placement Office**  
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## Your References Win Job Offers!

Inquiring minds want to know, and no minds are more inquiring than those about to hire you. Rest assured, **you will be investigated**. As a rule of thumb, the better the job and the higher the pay, the tougher the screening process. If you are up for a good job at a visible company, your references and past employers will be checked in great detail. Your list of references is simply the beginning of the investigation a prospective employer will conduct.

When a prospective employer has completed the first round of interviews and you are among the top candidates, the next logical step is for the company to check your references and interview those individuals to whom you reported. Your references and recommendations from past employers, because they can make or break your chances.

**Remember:** About half of all references that get checked range from mediocre to poor, so it is very possible that the great job you lost had nothing to do with your skills. References and past employers won't call and warn you that they are not going to be complimentary.

Here are some ways you can maximize the tone and accuracy of your references.

### **1. Make sure your records are correct.**

Occasionally an interviewee looks bad because his former HR department did not have the same job date and title information in his file as he did on his résumé. Data entry or communications errors are not unusual, so check with your HR department to ensure that their records correspond to yours. Conflicting data will be perceived as a big negative to a prospective employer.

### **2. Maintain active and positive relationships with your references.**

Stay in touch over the phone or over coffee. Keep the reference up-to-date about your progress, and make sure you have the most up-to-date information about them. If the reference's title (or name) has changed, or if they've left their position and you've provided old information to the prospective employer, it doesn't look good.

### **3. Advise a reference about an important opportunity.**

To avoid burning out your references, you don't need to call about every single job opportunity. However, if a particular position is very important to you, call the reference and give them details about what the company may be looking for.

### **4. Know reporting relationships.**

Even though you've given the senior vice president's name as a reference, the prospective employer may resort to calling the director you reported to because she can't reach the senior VP. Even though you have not given that person's name as a reference, it is on the application that you probably filled out. You may want to advise your former boss about the potential for a reference check and explain what the company is looking for.

### **5. Don't rely on relatives or letters of recommendation.**

You are well advised not to let Uncle John regale a prospective employer about your antics as a youth. Also, although letters of recommendation can be helpful, information such as titles and even names can change over time. Make sure that the information on your letter of recommendation is correct by contacting the reference periodically.