Five tips to help you make the most of your references

After hours and hours of searching for positions, focusing your resume, and scoring an interview, you are still not done! Potential employers often want an outside opinion on your work habits, skills, and qualifications. Carefully consider your personal references. Make sure your references do not shut the door on your chances for employment.

1. Choose your top 3-6 references
   Select people who can speak about the skills that are relevant to the job you are applying to. It is more important to select someone who knows you well than what their job title is. Good choices may include: former or current supervisors, coworkers, customers, vendors, colleagues, coaches, mentors, and professors. Personal references are often less impressive but may still be able to give you a good recommendation however, do not include family members. Tailor your reference list for each job, similar to how you tailor your resume for each position.

2. Ask for permission
   Before including someone as a reference, ask for their permission. Occasionally, someone will tell you they may not be the best reference for you. Wouldn’t you rather know this before the employer called them? This will also give them a heads up that they will be receiving a phone call or email. If necessary, remind your references to focus on: how they know you, the time frame of your relationship, how you would qualify for the job, and positive qualities they know about you. Sending a copy of your resume may also be helpful. Be sure to check with them to confirm their contact information and if they have a preferred method. For example, you will need to provide the person’s name, title, organization, and two ways to contact them (phone number and email address).

3. Provide a reference list when asked
   Employers may not ask for references until later in the hiring process however, you should have a list prepared. References should be on a separate sheet of paper, with the same header as your resume and cover letter. Check for typos! One wrong digit or letter could prevent them from being contacted.

4. Keep references up-to-date about your job search
   As appropriate, keep your references up to date about your job search. They are often excited to hear of your successes, and it is polite to let them know when and from whom they might receive a call.

5. Properly thank references
   Thank your references at the end of your job search. Although a handwritten note is usually best, a personalized email is also an acceptable way to say thank you.

Example:

Samuel Taylor
(Contact Information)
Use the SAME header from resume and cover letter

References
Employment
Steve Bright
Manager, DSU Facilities
Supervisor
Phone Number
Email
Address (optional)

Jana Stanton
Manager, Advantage Eye Care
Trainer
Phone Number
Email
Address (optional)

Education Contacts
Dr. Ralph Jones
College of Business
Dixie State University
Mentor
Phone Number
Email
Address (optional)

TIP! Include at least two forms of contact information. Email and phone number preferred.