

LEVERAGING REFERENCES

POWER INTERVIEWING

PROFESSOR P



Preparing People for a Competitive Workforce.



Some argue that successfully navigating the interview process and landing the job is more art than science. We disagree. If your background matches the job specifications, and you believe you can add value and make an impact, there are steps you can take to outflank the competition. One such tactic involves deploying and strategically using your references.

Outflank your competition with your references.

Every job seeker knows they will have to hand over a list of references at some point in the interview process. Companies usually ask for references later in the process, where they have little impact. Often, hiring managers get a list of names and then play an endless game of phone tag. This gives your references little room to make a meaningful statement for you.



Use references that could be an asset for the company.

A strategy that works very successfully is to have one of your clients or references contact the hiring manager during the interview process. This strategy offers the highest impact after the second interview or face-to-face meeting. For example, a high-level sales executive once had an excellent face-to-face interview. After the meeting, the candidate took it upon himself to ask three of his best clients to contact the hiring manager. The three references who contacted the hiring manager could potentially become new customers for the firm. The hiring manager was very impressed. What hiring manager would not want to hear great things about you from an influential or respected professional?



When you deploy this strategy, you must do it tactfully. Note the following example:

Steve,

My name is Tom Sullivan, and I am with John Doe Enterprises.

Last week I got a call from Randy Anderson. I have been a client of Randy's for years. He told me he was interviewing with your firm and he asked for my advice. I told him I have always held your company in high regard and suggested he pursue the opportunity. You should know that Randy is both hardworking and dependable.

He would make a great addition to your team, and I look forward to doing business with him in the future.

Best,

Tom Sullivan

You can easily argue that you can't call your reference and ask them to contact the people you are interviewing and instruct them on what to say. However, you can guide them into endorsing you. Notice how Tom Sullivan stated that Randy called to seek his advice. When you contact your references, ask them their opinion of the company. Everyone loves to give advice and provide their input. This allows you to ingratiate yourself with your references. Once you have done so, you can make the following statement and guide your reference into giving you a strong endorsement.

Note the following example:

Bill,

I really appreciate your advice and input. I hold your opinion in high regard. I am very excited about this opportunity. I would be very grateful if you would provide me with an endorsement. This would mean a lot to both me and my family.

Randy

This tactic sends the message to the hiring manager that you have a personal relationship with someone who thinks highly of the organization and could be a new client. What hiring manager wouldn't want to receive such a message?

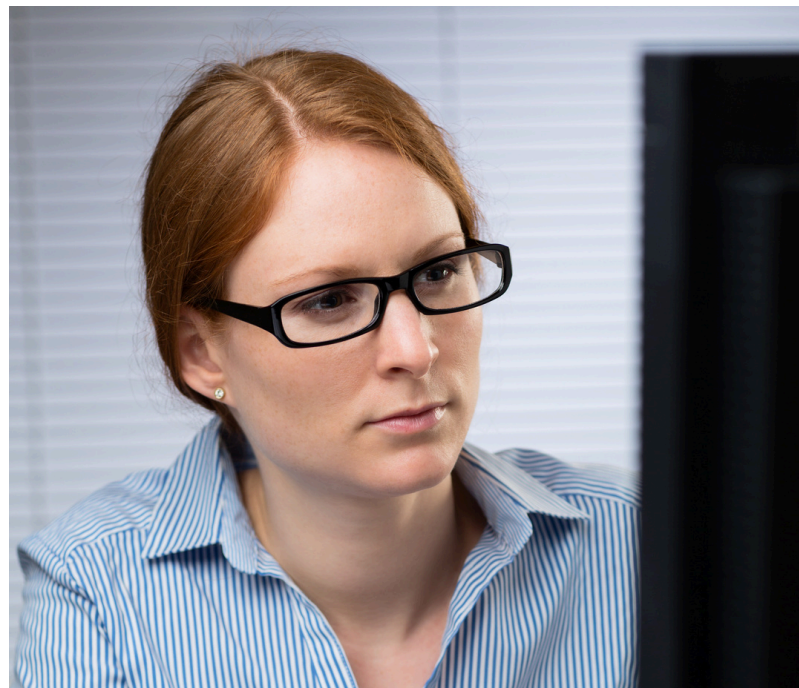
Deploy your references as a way to stay top of mind.

Using influential and respected references is critical. Utilizing references who could become a client for the firm is even better. Think about it like this. How did you hear about your favorite restaurant or musician? Chances are you had a respected friend or someone who carried influence tell you about the restaurant or the musician. The role of your advocates and referral sources is no different. These people can position you as the candidate of choice with the hiring manager.

You can use your references strategically throughout the process to give you the edge over your competition. Not only will the hiring manager think more highly of you, but this strategy will also allow you to stay top of mind post-interview.

Avoid having a friend or casual industry acquaintance contact the hiring manager. Instead, put yourself in the hiring manager's shoes. They do not want to hear from Uncle Johnny. Hiring managers want to hear from people with whom they have conducted business. They want to hear from references who could be an asset to the firm or prove that YOU can be an asset.

Remember, people only buy products to solve a problem. A company will only hire you if you solve a problem. Using references who can vouch for your abilities and accomplishments will be able to prove to the hiring manager that you can solve their problem.



HR Employment Reference Request Form

[Explain the reason for your call and verify the below information with the reference, including the reason for leaving. Note any differing or new information below.]

[Verify that the applicant has provided permission before conducting reference checks and complete this top section initially from the candidate's application, resume, or interview notes.]

Candidate Name: _____

Reference Name: _____

Company Name: _____

Dates of Employment: From _____ To _____

Position(s) Held _____

Reason for Leaving _____

- Please describe the type of work for which the candidate was responsible.
- How would you describe the applicant's relationships with co-workers, subordinates (if applicable), and superiors?
- Is the candidate more of an individual contributor, or are they more team-oriented? Why do you think so?
- Was the candidate in a lot of high-pressure or stressful work situations? If so, how did the candidate handle these situations?
- How would you describe the quantity and quality of output the candidate generates?
- What were the candidate's strengths on the job?
- What were the candidate's weaknesses on the job?
- What is your overall assessment of the candidate?
- Did the candidate have any warnings or discipline regarding unexcused attendance issues (frequent absences, tardiness, etc.)? [Do not ask about or discuss medical issues.]
- The candidate has applied for a position as a _____ with our company. Would the candidate be a good fit for this position? Why or why not?
- Would this individual be eligible for rehire at your organization? Why or why not?
- Is there anything I haven't asked about that someone considering this person for a job should know?

Completed by: _____ Date: _____