USING REFERENCES EFFECTIVELY

"References available upon request"

Does this look like a familiar phrase on your resume? Have you put any thought into who you will ask for a reference? How many references do you need to have? Can you use family and friends? After all, they know you the best and can let a potential employer know that you are a very hard worker. The following tips and suggestions will answer these and other questions you might have concerning the use of references in your job search. A Sample Reference Sheet is also included to help you in formatting and preparing your List of References.

TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

Most employers will eventually request your references before extending a job offer. The strongest references come from previous employers who can vouch for your knowledge and skills, your integrity, and your enthusiasm toward work. Your best bet is to get a reference from an immediate supervisor, manager, or co-worker. The higher the title, the better. Your reference should know who you are and what you did. Of course, you should always ask for their permission beforehand and inform them of your job objective. You might also give them a copy of your resume, so they have something to refer to when contacted by an employer.

Request references only of those people who think positively of you. If you know that your current or previous boss won't give you a decent recommendation, provide the name of someone else in the chain-of-command who will. Maybe your boss's boss, another manager, or a supervisor who is familiar with your work. Don't use family members or friends unless they can truly speak to your work-related skills and qualifications.

Generally speaking, you should only use business references unless the employer asks for personal or character references. Other potential references may include your professors, leaders of organizations or clubs, clients, customers, or others familiar with your work. They should all be professional contacts.

Never include your references on your resume. Instead, prepare a separate sheet with the heading, "Professional References" or something similar. (See Sample Reference Sheet). You should list 3 to 5 references under that heading. Be sure to include your name, address, etc., at the top of the page - just as it appears on your resume. Unless otherwise requested, use work addresses and phone numbers. For each reference list the name, title, company or organization, company address, and work phone number. If the person's title or company does not indicate your relationship, include in parenthesis after name (e.g., former supervisor).

Your Professional References should not be sent in the mail/fax/email with your cover letter and resume unless the employer specifically asks for them at that time. Employers typically ask for references after an interview, so be sure to take a copy of your reference sheet with you to your interviews. It should be on the same paper as your resume - and as with any other job search correspondence, take the time to make sure your reference sheet is of the highest quality.

PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, and PROOFREAD again.

SAMPLE REFERENCE SHEET

IM A SAMPLE

1234 North 55 Street Bellevue, Nebraska 68005 (402) 292-2345 iasample@aol.com

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

Name

Position
Title
Company
Address City, State, Zip Code
Company Phone Number

(Examples) Bernard E. Langer

Director, Human Resources Attaboy Company 7833 Avenue G Omaha, NE 68134 (402) 738-4467

Dr. Sandra P. Doolittle

Chemistry Professor Bellevue University 1000 Galvin Road South Bellevue, NE 68005 (402) 293-5543

Gregory J. Throckmortan (Former Supervisor)

General Manager lowa Western Beef Company 234 6th Avenue Council Bluffs, IA 51510 (712) 355-7865