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## Building Effective References - A Neglected Job Search Strategy

Strategically building usable job references is something often neglected by jobseekers during their job search processes. Many believe that including some references in a resume is sufficient. Others believe references are to be thought about only when an employer asks for references. And still more believe that resumes and degrees count more than references.

None of such assertions are helpful in a **job search**. References play a vital role in securing both interviews and jobs and fumbling to find references often proves costly – just because everyone else, too, has resumes and degrees – references, and the way they are presented make a real difference in raising job prospects.

Building references is a process throughout your working life, and to this social media like LinkedIn have brought in a new flavor. While traditional reference letters from past employers are next to mandatory, many drawbacks in a resume or in traditional references can be effectively tackled by public recommendations on your LinkedIn or other social network profile, where previous and present colleagues and co workers and managers can put in a good word.

### Traditional Job References

Traditional job references include past employers, managers, and people in supervisory capacity who are able to give letters in writing for you. Copies of such references can accompany cover letters or resumes.

Something to remember when building your reference list is to mark those references who are ready to provide a phone number for cross-checking and verification, and people who would respond to queries by potential employers.

Next, you need to filter your list of references by those who really know you and your work and can talk authoritatively about your strengths and weaknesses and would be able to satisfactorily answer any question a potential recruiter might have.

### Who can be references?

Viable references would almost always include two categories – references on work, and references on character or personal integrity. Sometimes they might overlap, and sometimes they might be different.



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The word of your former college professor can work well as a reference for character of personal integrity as well as the word of a reputable neighbor. They may not know anything about your work life, but the word of a neighbor bank manager who has seen you grow up and knows you personally can work wonders.

References on work are a must for those who have previous work experience and they can vary from employer, supervisor, and manager to colleagues and co-workers.

### **Whom not to include as references unless absolutely essential?**

Try to avoid including family, personal friends, and people with whom you have a personal relationship on your list of references unless you run out of alternatives.

Try to avoid those whom you know are too busy or difficult to contact.

Try to avoid very old references who might have a difficulty to recall you, unless you have kept up the relationship, and those references carry real weight.

### **Build publicly referable references:**

As mentioned earlier, it is a good idea to ask previous colleagues, employers, managers and others who have shared a work relationship with you to put in recommendations on your LinkedIn or other similar network profile. Such recommendations are public, cannot be easily retracted, and require little cross verification.

All that said and done, do always remember to keep up good relationships with past work and study places and get written reference letters when you leave a job. Good luck with your job hunt.