

Six Things Every Job Seeker Should Know

Over the past 30 years, Third Age Inc. has been hired to assist companies with executive searches to find candidates to fill their most prominent positions (such as CEO, CFO, COO, Executive Director and Nursing Home Administrator). Since Third Age has been in business since 1971 and is now one of the oldest firms in the United States to specialize in providing consulting services to long term care and continuing care facilities, it is well-positioned to assist companies with this difficult process. Due to the volume of Third Age's consulting, management consulting and marketing work, as well as the background of the individuals working within the firm, we bring extensive knowledge of the critical issues and challenges that are affecting the continuing care, long term care and assisted living fields to the search process.

As a direct result of assisting with several executive searches last year, I have spoken with hundreds of references provided by candidates for a range of high level positions. It is through this volume of reference check calls that I have determined the "six things every job seeker should know." Whether you are actively job hunting or you anticipate ever being in the job search process again in the future, you should read on to be sure you aren't overlooking any key points for your own professional references.

1. When you "dust off your resume," don't forget to update your professional references. You don't want to miss out on a job opportunity simply because you haven't taken the time to update this information. Confirm that all information is correct before passing it along to a prospective employer, such as: name (marriages and divorces can change this), company, title, business phone, email address and/or cell phone.
2. Make sure your references "know" they are being used as a reference. It may seem like a "no-brainer," but there have been times when I've contacted someone for a reference check and they don't have anything positive to say about the candidate. So, if you can't be 100% certain that someone will vouch for you and provide a recommendation, do yourself a favor and keep them off your list.
3. Update your references as frequently as you update your resume. Meaning, if you've worked 3 or more jobs since the last time you worked with someone on your reference list, look to your most recent places of employment for a reference or two. If someone

doesn't know where you're working now or even what state you're residing in, they may not be the best person to provide a reference for the type of job you're interested in today.

4. In most cases, keep college professors and "first job" employers off your list. If you are a seasoned professional, identify people who know you and are familiar with your work as such.
5. In this highly connected society we live in, there's no excuse for not contacting your references and letting them know that someone may be calling them for a reference. Not only is it good to stay in touch with the people who you have identified as your "own personal cheerleaders," but actually I have found that people really don't like being caught off-guard. They like it even less if they haven't heard from the person in several years and didn't know they were job-hunting at present.
6. And lastly, ask yourself "who can best speak about my most recent roles, my strengths, weaknesses and accomplishments?" There are occasions where I've been interested in learning more about a candidate's "character," but typically I am trying to learn something substantial about the person's abilities and accomplishments to date.
****ADDITIONAL TIP**** If you know of particular areas of need or interest in the position you are applying for, alert your references to highlight that area. For example, "financial strength," "relationship building," or an "ability to work well with a Board" are specific comments that may align well with the job requirements and could be more helpful than a general comment such as "he/she has great communication skills."

I hope these tips are found to be useful. As I said before, some of them may seem like a "no-brainer," but in this fast-paced world we live in, sometimes it's the smallest details that are overlooked. But, if those "details" could make a difference between getting hired (or just simply getting called for an initial interview) or not, it's well worth taking the time to review your own reference list.

Best of luck in your next job search!

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