

***Don't Let a Reference Check Bounce
In a Tight Market, Recommendations Loom Large***

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Job hunters need good references

Your boss is your best bet

Positions are scarce and market is flooded so employers can afford to be pickier.

In the job hunters' market of just a few years ago, when companies were expanding and hiring so swiftly, the practice of checking references went out of fashion.

Now jobs are scarcer and the field is flooded with applicants, so employers can be pickier. And with budgets tight and higher profile corporate scandals keeping employers on edge, hiring Manager cant afford to make mistakes. As a result, "checking references is back in vogue," said John Challenger, Chief Executive of Chicago outplacement firm, Challenger, Gray and Christmas Inc.

IN this job market, if you're fortunate enough to get to the final stage of the hiring processes, the last thing you want is to sabotage your chances by handing over a mediocre reference.

"You want someone you worked for," said Joe Basile, a partner at the suburban career search firm Spectrum Group LLC. "The best reference is your direct boss."

But if you don't have a good relationship with your most recent supervisor or are still employed and don't want your boss to know you're on the prowl for a job, "you want someone who knows you, knows your worked, knows your skills and can address issues like do you show up for work on time, are you a team player, those kinds of things," said Ellen Fancher-Ruiz, a counselor at suburban Northern Virginia Community collage.

Someone other than your boss who has worked with you and had supervisory responsibilities, a peer with whom you've worked closely, or a supervisor from the job before your most recent one all may be a good references, Fancher-Ruiz said. But she stressed the importance of using someone who has filled the "boss" role.

Once you've compiled your list of desirable references, ask each for permission to be used.

Finally, don't use the name of someone "important" – a high level executive, industry luminary or other lofty acquaintance – unless that person has a meaningful connection to you.