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A client seeks advice from Career Confident director Helen Green, right, and, below, Hender Careers principal consultant Paul Bell. Main picture: Wayne Taylor

CHOOSING THE RIGHT REFEREES IS VITAL TO A JOBSEEKER'S CHANCE OF SUCCESS

Recruitment advisers say there are new protocols for jobseekers when they list references with job applications.

With so many jobseekers in the market this year, it is also more important than ever to choose the right referees to speak highly of you.

Career Confident director Helen Green and Hender Careers principal consultant Paul Bell give their top tips for sourcing your best career advocates:



WHO TO ASK

It may seem obvious, but jobseekers must choose referees who they are sure will provide them with a positive reference.

Green says they also need to know the jobseeker well, flaws and all.

“Your referees should be able to speak about your achievements, strengths and areas in which you may need further developing,” she says.

“If they cannot speak about these adequately, the referee phone call may become uncomfortable for them, which ultimately reflects poorly on you, the candidate.”

Typically, at least one of your referees will be your most recent or current supervisor. But if you left the role on difficult terms and you do not want to list them, Green advises you to be honest, positive and provide alternatives. Assume nothing.

WHO ELSE TO ASK

Young people with limited work experience, those who have lost contact with referees or selfemployed workers can still suggest helpful options.

Consider a longstanding former client to whom you provided a service relevant to the job you are applying for, a representative at an organisation you volunteered for or played sport at, or a manager of an adjoining internal division who knows your work well.

“If you are a candidate for a senior leadership role, why not also consider putting forward someone you have managed or mentored ... as evidence of your leadership style,” Green says.

HOW MANY TO HAVE

It’s good to have at least three people who can support your job application, but aim to have a wider group of contenders so you can select the best to put forward for each role.

“This helps you match the referee to the job and avoids over-reliance on the same person,” Green says.

PROVIDE REFEREES ON REQUEST

Bell says there are advantages to stating references are “available upon request” (AUR). They include being able to keep the resume concise so more space can be used to provide other information. He says only providing referee details when at the pointy end of the application process can help if you are applying for roles without your current employer knowing. “Usually you will need to provide two or three referees, however, you may be in the fortunate position of having six or seven – for

example, three people who you have reported to, a couple of clients or external stakeholders who can attest to your capabilities, or someone who reported to you who can attest to your leadership skills," Bell says.

"AUR allows you to then discuss these options with the recruiter/ employer and allow them to choose who they would like to contact.

"You will have an opportunity to contact your referees to inform them of the upcoming call and to discuss the role capabilities in greater detail.

"You may even want to send them a copy of the position description."

GIVE REFEREES A HEADS-UP

As well as asking someone to be a referee, update them when applying for jobs so they know they may receive a call.

"Keep in regular contact with your referees and provide them with relevant background and intel on the role you are applying for," Bell says.

"Thank them after they have gone through the process for you."

Green says it can help to provide referees with an updated copy of your CV and to remind them of your key contributions during the time you worked or volunteered together.

Getting in touch also can help ensure you have their current contact details. "Asking your referees how they would like to be contacted and the best time to contact them saves time for the recruiter and makes you look efficient," Green says.

IF YOU FEEL YOUR REFEREES ARE DUDDING YOU

If you have reached the referee stage multiple times with no success, when asking for feedback, specifically ask if there were issues with the referees.

"Ask whether they believe you would benefit from putting forward alternate referees to speak on your behalf," Green says.