

NEWS RELEASE

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Few Job Seekers Use References for Competitive Advantage Update Your References Week, May 1-5

OKLAHOMA – National Update Your References Week, May 1-5, is a reminder to all professionals to update their references annually.

“With the Oklahoma unemployment rate at a low 4.2 percent for March 2006, it is quickly becoming a job seekers market,” said Pam Fountain, president of Principal Technologies, a professional staffing firm that specializes in recruiting and employing accounting, IT and engineering professionals locally. “Keeping an updated list of references means job seekers can be ready when the opportunity presents itself.”

There are several reasons a person should update their references. Reference contacts often move or change jobs and it reminds former supervisors who you are. The conversation a potential employer has with a reference contact can leave a significant impression – for better or worse.

“In my line of work, I definitely see a need for more attention to be placed on references,” said Josie Strickland, Vice President and search consultant for Principal Technologies. “It’s not unusual to see someone miss a job opportunity because they don’t have their reference contacts in order.”

While references are intended to draw attention to favorable aspects in employment history, if not updated properly, they can do the opposite. If a potential employer has trouble tracking down a reference because they are no longer with the company or talks to a reference whose memory is foggy about the candidate’s professional skills, it can look suspicious and cost the candidate a job.

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“Update Your References Week” – ADD ONE

Principal Technologies offers several tips for updating your references:

- 1.** Make sure all names, companies and contact information are up to date.
- 2.** Notify references that they may be receiving a reference call. This will ensure they aren't caught off guard. Letting the references know the type of position you're applying for and what skills the potential employer may be looking for will give the reference an opportunity to formulate a more tailored response.
- 3.** When you call to inform a reference that someone may contact them, remember this can be a networking opportunity too. Offer to send them your updated resume. Sometimes the best job leads are found this way.
- 4.** With college graduation right around the corner, there will be many new graduates applying for jobs. If you have a lack of experience or professional references, include classmates that may have worked with you on a group project, professors, community leaders and volunteer coordinators.
- 5.** Hold on to performance evaluations or any type of written commendation. This will help in case a former place of employment goes out of business or you are prevented from staying in touch with a former supervisor.
- 6.** Request a letter of recommendation from each employer upon leaving the company.
- 7.** In today's legalistic society, companies must be guarded about what information they can reveal about a former employee. Very often, a reference is limited to employment dates without the ability to verify why the employee left the company or re-hire eligibility, much less specific strengths and weaknesses. As former supervisors and peer workers change companies, they are in a better position to give a more in-depth reference, where as those still employed at the same company are often restricted by company policies.
- 8.** Offering references without being asked shows you are proactive and confident. There is also a chance that the employer will know someone on your list.

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