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*Executive Search and Selection Consultants*  
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**rpc international recruitment**  
**rpc interim**

# Information Guide No. 14

## References and Referees

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

An early approach to your chosen referees, to ask for their consent and willingness to act on your behalf, is prudent.

You should provide all of your prospective referees with a copy of your CV so they know what you are saying about yourself and can back up your points of emphasis.

The reference of most interest to a prospective employer will be the one that comes from your present or most recent employer. As well as seeking their consent to act as a referee, you should also ask to have your statement of 'reason for changing jobs' cleared.

These preliminaries will ensure that your referees will be fully briefed and willing to speak on your behalf, whenever and however they are approached. Although the expectation is that references will be taken up formally, at the stage when a job offer is pending, this is not necessarily the case. There are occasions when references are taken up 'unofficially', or when an informal approach is made (by telephone) to your most recent employer, without your prior knowledge or consent. However objectionable you may consider this practise, it cannot be prevented, but 'forewarned is forearmed'.

## 2. OBTAINING AND PROTECTING YOUR REFERENCES

There should be no problem about arranging for your last employer to act as a referee if you parted on friendly terms. However, if you have a problem about getting your immediate past (or present) employer to act as a referee for you, see if you can identify someone in a reasonably senior position who will agree to vouch for you, albeit only on a personal level.

You should always protect your referees, and retain their goodwill, by undertaking not to authorise approaches to be made until a job offer is pending. For this reason, information about your referees should never be included in your CV, you should decline to provide names, addresses and telephone numbers until you are reasonably sure that you are at the point of being offered a job, 'subject to satisfactory references'. This should prevent your referees from being faced by an excessive number of requests, although it is unfortunately necessary to point out that many public bodies are prime offenders in requesting references at the time an application is submitted.

## 3. 'REASON FOR JOB CHANGE' STATEMENT

Once you have formulated a satisfactory explanation for wanting to change jobs, it is important that you adhere to the same statement, without variation, in each and every interview you attend.

It is equally important that your present/previous employer confirms this statement as accurate.

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It is therefore recommended to clear your proposed statement of 'reason for changing jobs' with your (ex-) employer.

Providing you are on good terms, have a meeting to advise your present/previous employer with what you propose to say regarding your employment. If there is anything in your statement to which exception is taken, a revision can be agreed upon.

If, on the other hand, you are not on the best of terms with your previous employer, try writing along the following lines:

**Dear.....**

When attending job interviews I will be asked my reason for seeking another job.

In response, I intend to answer briefly and positively, as follows:

(Here set out the statement you intend to make)

I trust that this is an acceptable 'statement' from the company's point of view?

If there is anything you wish me to alter, please let me know as soon as possible, so that I may feel comfortable in interviews that my 'statement' will have your support in any subsequent reference check or related enquiry.

Likewise – if it is not possible, due of distance or other reason, to visit your last employer to sort out an agreed 'statement' – a letter on the above lines, but more mollified in tone, should help clear the situation.

In the event your previous employer is not contactable i.e. closed down, liquidated make this clear at the first opportunity.

#### **4. PROVIDING REFERENCES**

Although ideally the referee should be spoken to about the particular job being offered before being contacted by the potential employer, it is not always practical to do this, and you certainly do not want to stop the offer being made! As, in getting your referees' agreement, you will have obtained their general permission to be approached for jobs you may be offered, and not find yourself embarrassed even by the 'public sector' approach. If asked during an interview, by all means give the names, but say that, out of courtesy, you would wish to have the opportunity to speak to your referees first.

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