

Survey: One in Three Job Candidates in Canada Removed From Consideration Following Reference Checks

Employers Most Interested in Gaining Insight into Applicants' Strengths and Weaknesses

Toronto, ON — It may be a job seekers' market, but candidates still need to have everything buttoned up for their search — including a solid reference list — or risk being passed over. In a new survey from global staffing firm Accountemps, senior managers in Canada reported they remove approximately one in three candidates (32 per cent) from consideration for a position with their company after checking their references.

Reference checks help employers get a stronger sense of whether a candidate will be a good fit, both in terms of skills and experience, as well as within the workplace culture. Specifically, senior managers surveyed said they were most interested in getting a view of the applicant's strengths and weaknesses and a description of their past job responsibilities and work experience.

"During the hiring process, reference checks can make or break your chances of landing a job," said David King, Canadian president of Accountemps. "Rather than approach references as an afterthought, providing ample notice and preparation are key to ensuring a positive endorsement that reflects well on your candidacy."

King added, "Anticipate questions about your strengths and weaknesses by discussing them with your references ahead of time. Make sure they can speak to how you're continuing to develop your skills and why your background makes you not only a great fit for the role, but an asset to the company."

King offered the following tips for candidates to ace a reference check:

- **Do your homework.** Invest as much care in choosing your references as you put into polishing your resume. Consider who could best speak to your abilities for the specific opportunity and whether their company policy would restrict them from doing so.
- **Ask first.** Don't let the hiring manager surprise your contacts — confirm their interest and availability to serve as a reference for you. If they agree, keep them up to date on the hiring process and let them know when to expect a call.
- **Be proactive.** Don't wait until a prospective employer asks you to provide a reference list. Early in the process, reach out to references and let them know you're pursuing a new opportunity. The more prepared you are, the more effective they can be.
- **Say 'thank you.'** Follow up by sending a note to let those who spoke to the hiring manager know how much you appreciate their time and endorsement. When possible, return the favour; your reference may need you to speak to their abilities in the future.

About the Research

The online surveys were developed by Accountemps and conducted by independent research firms. They include responses from more than 600 senior managers at companies with 20 or more employees in Canada.

About Accountemps

Accountemps, a Robert Half company, is the world's first and largest specialized staffing service for temporary accounting, finance and bookkeeping professionals. The staffing firm has more than 300 locations worldwide. More resources, including job search services and the company's blog, can be found at roberthalf.ca/accountemps.

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