

The Power Reference

BY MIKE EVERS

Most people think of references as a list of three people you hand over to a prospective employer after the company has decided it wants to hire you. But there is another reference you may want to consider—The Power Reference.

The Power Reference is someone with influence who can make a difference for you much earlier in the process. In rare cases, it will be a star, like a well known Fortune 100 general counsel or a U.S. Senator. But a famous name isn't necessary.

The essential ingredient in a Power Reference is the relationship between that person and the hiring decision-maker who receives the call. The relationship between you and the reference does not need to be as strong as you think. In fact, all you need the Power Reference to say is this: "I don't know Mike well, but based on my (fill in the blank) experience with him, Mike seems like a solid person, and I recommend that you take a look at him."

To find a Power Reference, research the employment history of the general counsel or CEO who holds the keys to the position you want. Do you know someone who your future boss will recognize? If you are reconnecting two people who have a positive history with each other, they will both appreciate the effort on your part and enjoy the phone call. Let them catch up on old times. Then, the next day you most likely will receive your phone call—the one from HR asking you to come in for an interview.