ASK ELLEN – should one of my references contact a potential employer to recommend me?

10/31/11 Happy Halloween! Today’s question comes from a Palmer grad.

Q: I have a question about job hunting. My temporary position is almost at an end and I am in the process of applying for jobs. My current boss is trying her best to help me network and get a new position. My question is this: after I submit an application, should I ask my boss to send an email/letter/phone call to recommend me? I know she would do it, but I’m worried it wouldn’t be professional. What are your thoughts?

A: First, you are fortunate that your boss is so supportive and helpful with your job search. You must have made a very good impression during the temp gig.

I would say, if your boss happens to know the hiring manager or someone who would have decision making power for a specific job that you have applied for, and knows that person very well, then it would be OK for her to contact him/her and recommend you. The most effective way to do this would be if she emphasized *specifically* how you would excel in performing the duties of *that* job and maybe mention also a few ways in which you would be a good employee in general (flexible, reliable, honest, fast learner, etc.). I think e-mail would be best, something BRIEF and to the point, and ending with, “If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me”.

If she does not know the decision maker personally, it is best to have her serve as a traditional reference for you and/or write a letter of reference, when the employer requests those things (which may be when you apply, or may be during or after your interview).

Good luck to you!

FYI, readers: In case you missed it on the listserv(s), next Monday, Nov 7th, at METRO (Manhattan), there will be an “Inside the Hiring Process” panel discussion. Palmer adjunct Jean O’Neill-Uhl will be one of the panelists and I will be the moderator. The two other panelists are an info-pro recruiter and a special librarian. More info and registration: http://www.metro.org/en/cev/119

Great article from BusinessWeek on job search DON’TS: http://www.businessweek.com/management/selfdefeating-jobsearch-moves-to-avoid-07152011.html

Please keep the questions coming!

Thank you,
Ellen Mehling, Director, Westchester Program and Internships
ellen.mehling@liu.edu