

PUT THE POWER OF ENDORSEMENTS IN YOUR RESUME

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A great way to supercharge your resume – and make it stand out from the rest – is by including endorsements from professionals in your field. Endorsements can provide powerful third party testimonials that substantiate claims you have made in your resume. Hiring managers know that many candidates look great on paper but are often a disappointment in person. Endorsements can help alleviate such concerns. They speak directly to the reader and help convince him that you are the best candidate for the job.

We've all seen how endorsements work in other arenas. For example, the most effective television commercials use endorsements from well-recognized celebrities to build credibility with their audience. Why shouldn't you do the same?

Elements of a good endorsement

There are three important elements of a good endorsement: it must be credible, it should be specific, and it should be documented. Let's take a look at each of these elements in more detail.

Credibility. An endorsement from your next door neighbor doesn't carry much weight. But an endorsement from your former supervisor will make a good impression. So first make sure the person giving you the endorsement is a qualified professional in your field or in a field related to yours. The closer your working relationship with this person, the stronger the endorsement will be. Endorsements from former supervisors and managers are great. An endorsement from your current manager is even better. Just make certain that if you ask your current manager for an endorsement, he is fully aware and supportive of your job search intentions. After all, you don't want to jeopardize your current job before you land another. You could also obtain good endorsements from clients, co-workers, and individuals you know through professional associations.

Specificity. A good endorsement should contain language that clearly illustrates why you are a good candidate. Ambiguous or irrelevant comments should be avoided. Nobody cares if you're a terrific guy with a great sense of humor. They will, however, be very interested to discover that you are highly reliable employee with an outstanding work ethic.

Documented. Don't rely on trying to remember that conversation you had with your sales manager three years ago over lunch. Give him a call. Instead, remind him of the conversation, and ask him if he wouldn't mind putting some of the points you discussed into writing. Let him know that you would like to use it as an endorsement on your resume. Most people, especially those who you've had a strong working relationship with, will feel happy to provide some positive words. The important thing is, get their words in writing and ask for permission to use them.

If you haven't already done so, you may want to start a file for compiling the endorsements you'll gather to keep them handy at all times. You probably already have materials you can use. Letters of recommendation, written performance reviews, and emails are all possible sources of good endorsements. Comb through these carefully and highlight any passages that might be material for a good endorsement.

Putting it all together

Now that you're convinced endorsements can work magic for you, it's time to put it all together. Let's say you've received a letter of recommendation from your former manager. The first time you read it through it makes you swell with pride. The second time you read it you realize it contains a lot of extraneous information. So now it's time to put on your editor's cap and extract those golden nuggets that will grab the reader's attention and make you shine as a candidate. Until you do this you just have raw material which must be refined into two or three lines that best convey the particular qualities you want to emphasize. Let's look at an example of how a paragraph from a letter of reference might look.

When Peter first called upon our company we were giving most of our business to ACME Distributors. They were less expensive and well known in the industry. But he was persistent, polite and always professional. Finally I decided to meet with him. He identified my needs and showed me how, in fact, he could actually save me money. Clearly, he had done his homework so I decided to give him some business. I realized soon afterwards that it was a good decision. Peter has serviced our account for the last five years and I now give his company all of our business. He is very reliable, our employees love him, and most importantly, he saves me a lot of money.

Now let's look how the endorsement might look after applying the editor's pen.

Client: *"When Peter first called upon our company we were giving most of business to ACME Distributors. But he was persistent, polite, and always professional. He identified my needs and showed me how he could actually save me money...I now give his company all of our business."*

– Harvey Miller, CEO, Ready Made Manufacturing, Inc.

It's short, succinct, and to the point. It addresses some key qualities about Peter and flows naturally, as if the person giving the endorsement is speaking directly to the reader.

How many endorsements to include in your resume

There's really no standard as to just how many endorsements to include in your resume but keep in mind, you don't want to overwhelm the reader. There's something about a grouping of three that always seems to work. It has a nice balance and can give enough variety to present a well-rounded picture of yourself.

You may also want to include some variety in the endorsements you select. The first way to do this is by the nature of your relationship with the person giving the endorsement. It could be a former manager, a customer, or a colleague. The second way to provide some variety is by the content of the endorsement. You might select one that addresses your personal work ethic, another that cites specific accomplishments, and yet another that focuses on your capabilities. By applying some variety in your endorsements you avoid appearing two dimensional.

Let's go back to Peter and see what other endorsements he might use in his resume to add some variety.

Manager: *"He has a tremendous work ethic, incredible passion for the business, a positive attitude, and is viewed as a great resource by the team. Peter is very creative and has a global, company-wide vision for generating growth."*

– Jill Schaffer, Area Manager, A-Plus Products Co.

Wholesaler: *"Peter and I have worked aggressively on developing our base of widget manufacturers. To date, as a team, we have achieved \$1,825,000 in closed business. His demonstrations, advice, and support have been crucial to our success!"*

– George Miller, Regional Marketing Manager, Global Enterprises

You want to give your endorsements their own category under the heading "Professional Endorsements". This should be the last category on your resume. Many times the reader will scan your resume before reading it thoroughly and it's the beginning and end that typically get noticed first. So rather than ending your resume with the timeworn "References shall be furnished upon request", finish it boldly by adding a few powerful endorsements. Not only will you convey a confidence in your abilities, you'll project a degree of professionalism that will make you stand out above most other candidates.

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