

Best jobs for women in 2015

Dental hygienist, event planner and public relations manager have been named among the best jobs for women in the new 2015 CareerCast report on the Best Jobs for Women.

“Because technological jobs are such a bedrock of the 21st century economy, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) employers would be wise to meet growing demand through the active hiring of more women,” says Tony Lee, publisher, CareerCast. “While STEM fields are notorious for lacking gender diversity, some of the best jobs for women are bucking the trends.”

Biomedical engineering is a still-burgeoning field and one in which women are having a much more profound impact than in other STEM fields, especially since women make up 39% of graduates in biomedical engineering, reports IEEE.

Actuary, statistician

Similarly, 40% of all enrolled students in statistician programs were women last year. In fact, careers powered by mathematics that rely heavily on statistical analysis, such as actuary and statistician, dominate the top 10 of the report.

Almost 58% of advertising and promotions managers are women, and a whopping 79% of event planners are women, reports the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The stats are similar for education administrators, 63% of whom are women, and market research analysts at 61%.

Health care is the other industry most at the core of the 21st century economy, and women are well represented in the sector, including in such highly ranked jobs as dental hygienist and occupational therapist. Not only do women make up the majority of the workforce in these two professions, but they are two of the highest projected growth fields in health care over the next eight years.

The complete list is available at www.careercast.com/jobs-rated/best-jobs-women-2015.

— Postmedia Network

CHOOSE YOUR REFERENCES WISELY

JOANNE RICHARD

Special to Postmedia Network

You are only as good as your reference.

A reference check often determines who is chosen for a job — “they can make or break future careers,” says Raffi Toughlouian, branch manager at Robert Half, a staffing agency.

But what if you don’t have a slew of references? Minimal work experience leaves many job seekers limited to whom they can ask to be a reference. Usually two or three strong references are needed.

“If you are unable to get all work-related references consider asking a professor or someone that has volunteered with you or that you were accountable to when you volunteered,” says Marty Britton, of Britton Management Profiles, a pre-employment screening service.

It is essential to provide references that can speak to

both your interpersonal skills and your work skills, stresses Britton. Ensure that the professor you provide can speak to both how well you did in their class and to your interpersonal skills. “Often there is a major project in the course that the professor can speak to and if it involves a presentation then that can speak to details of your work and your presentation skills.”

A professor that assigned a group project or group assignment in class would also be a good reference; they could speak to your team skills and perhaps even your leadership skills, adds Britton, of brittonmanagement.com. “If you sat at the front of their class and were an active participant in class discussions that will be reflected in the answers provided by the professor.”

Another acceptable reference is someone you volunteered for or with: “Ensure you have volunteered with them ongoing for a period of

time and that has witnessed you working in some capacity and can therefore provide some details on your work accomplishments and work ethic,” adds Britton.

The bottom line: Maintaining and cultivating contacts throughout high school, university and any jobs you hold is essential to surviving the reference round in the hiring process.

So work on getting top-notch references with tips from Toughlouian, of roberthalf.com.

■ **Network.** Networking gives you the chance to not only get and give advice, help and/or expertise to others, but also allows you to develop professional relationships that can be used as references down the road, says Toughlouian. Online social networks make it easy to stay in touch with contacts that may be able to endorse you one day.

■ **It’s important to leave any role you’re in on the best terms possible — doing so helps to ensure that your boss now is willing to be a reference in the future, he says. Give your manager as much notice as you can. “Two weeks is standard, but if you’re in a job with a lot of responsibility, it can be nice to give even more notice.”**

■ **Provide references with a copy of the job description and your resumé. “Your referrals can put their responses into context if they know what job you are seeking. Also, if they know what’s on your resumé, they can more easily speak to your skills and abilities.”**

■ **Refresh their memories. “It may have been awhile since you’ve worked with an individual, so it helps to discuss some specific examples of the accomplishments you made to help him or her recollect your successes and strengths,”** says Toughlouian.

■ **Keep them in the loop. As soon as you refer someone to a potential employer, alert them that they may receive a call. Then be sure to follow up with a “Thank you” after they’ve put in a good word for you, stresses Toughlouian. “This gesture will go a long way the next time you ask to use them as a referral.”**

■ **Choose your references wisely: Some referrals may be more relevant than others for a particular position, says Toughlouian. “For example, if you are fortunate enough to have a reference who is in the same industry as the company that is thinking about hiring you, the person’s referral will likely hold more weight for the decision-maker.”**

joanne.richard@sunmedia.ca

A bad reference can sink you

Marty Britton, of brittonmanagement.com, conducts reference and background checks for companies, and the best reference is someone who can “provide detailed feedback on your work ethic and accomplishments as well as your interpersonal skills, team skills, communication skills and your relationship building skills.”

Often potential employers will base their hiring decision on the feedback her company gets from references, says Britton. So if in doubt, go without — any reservations about a reference’s feedback, consider not asking them to be your reference.

A reference check examines in part:

■ **Your regular attendance and punctuality.**
 ■ **Accuracy of the dates of employment and your title on your resumé.**

“Leading the potential employer to believe you were a manager or a team lead when that was not accurate will likely be reflected in the answers we receive from a reference when we ask about your responsibilities in the position, your team skills and how you led a team,” says Britton.

■ **Would they rehire you? “Even if the reference did not hire you employers are interested in their opinion on if they would like to work with you again or if they would hire you if they had the opportunity,”** says Britton.

■ **Why you left the company. If the answers given by references do not reflect what was told to the potential employer there could be a negative outcome, she adds.**

