

## How contractors should handle client references

When you leave a contract, getting a reference can be a problem.

The end-client may not want to bother giving you references. The agency can't really do it because the agency doesn't know how you work.

So you may have trouble obtaining one. Trouble is, you may need a reference particularly if you are eager to move up the pay scale. You don't always need references to get another job, but you might. So it is good to ensure that you can get one if you need it.

### From The Agency

"Agencies can't be expected to provide contractors with references about the quality of their work," explains Anne Fairweather, policy director at the London-based recruitment organisation the [Recruitment and Employment Federation](#). "They simply have no way of judging what you do, nor is it their job to provide such judgements."

But agencies do have some obligations in this regard according to the REC: they must provide confirmation that you completed a specific contract successfully along with the dates you worked. The agency should also be willing to state that the contract was effectively completed, and that your work did not provoke any complaint or raise any issues," Fairweather adds. If the agency won't comply, complain to the REC.

### From the End-Client

The best place to get a reference is from the end-client who both knows your work, and who has a certain amount of professional standing which gives the reference weight. If you've done a good job, and you've stayed on good terms with the end-client, you have every right to request a reference. incidentally, written references aren't worth anything; no one knows if they are authentic or not. The client should agree to provide either email or phone references for you when contacted by other agencies.

### What If You Can't Get One?

And what if the end-client won't give you a reference?

Well, we have to point out, if the client has some reason not to give you reference then the client has right on their side. If you didn't do a good job, and the client can prove this, you obviously can't expect anything from this one; go do a good job elsewhere and get a reference there.

But if you did a good job, you have a right to expect some cooperation from the end-client in this regard.

You should be aware, however, that neither employees nor contractors have any legal right to a reference under the terms of employment law. When you work for a company, they are simply obliged to confirm that you did so.

But as a spokesman for the the Department for [Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform](#) points out, when a company doesn't give you reference, it has the effect of implying that something was wrong with your work. Should you lose a contract because a company refused to provide a good reference, for no good reason, then you might well have good cause to sue the company for libel. After all, you then have to explain why you got no reference which sounds...odd, don't you think?

The best strategy, of course, is to make an amicable agreement with the end-client to ensure that this situation doesn't arise. Make a point to discuss the matter with your manager before you move on.

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Anne Fairweather-REC

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