

What to do when you left your last job under a cloud

We all hope it won't happen to us, but sometimes we have to cope with having a "blip" on our career record – which may or may not have been our fault. Either way, a tarnished record will make it harder to find your next job. So what should you do?

Firstly, it's important to realise that you need to manage your own expectations about what is possible. A lot depends on what the blemish entails – if its specific, seeking work that is materially different can give you a greater chance of success. If the problem is more generic and would give a future employer cause to question your trustworthiness, you will need to re-build your reputation again.

Most employers will ask for references and whilst the information supplied is often purely factual data, the formal "reason for leaving" will be something your old employer is likely to share. To manage this potential obstacle you need to have a mature explanation for what happened. It is helpful if you can provide a prospective employer with the context in which the difficulty arose (so they can better understand your actions or why your employer thought you had stepped out of line, even if you didn't). Be sure to communicate what you learned as a result of the experience. Typically at least two references are required, usually your last employer and one other. If the former does not supply a positive one, ensure your second reference is strong and if possible back this up with another good reference (business or personal).

If it looks hopeful you will get your new role, be proactive about sharing the past difficulty by explaining why you left your last employment. If you try to hide this, your new organisation may think things are worse than perhaps they are. Anticipate their concerns before you relate your story and be ready to demonstrate how you will manage any potential risks, should you be employed by them.

If you really did mess up big time, then you will need to start again – sometimes temping can help as the agency rather than the employer will do the reference checking and they might be prepared to allow you to prove yourself. If you can develop a good track record as a temp, then you may be able to get the agency to provide you with a reference.

How you handle your past will be an individual judgement, but honesty (packaged appropriately) is usually the best policy. If you mask the truth and it later becomes a problem, your employer is likely to consider it a breach of trust and you will lose another job. Think about the long term, put yourself in the employers shoes, what do they need to hear to be able to trust that you will be a valuable employee ?

For further information please contact: Michelle Lucas at www.coachU4success.co.uk

Ends

T: 07717 122 950

E: michelle@coachU4success.co.uk

W: www.coachU4success.co.uk