

2. Ask the questions.

They might ask:

- What sort of work did the consultant do for you?
- How long was the project?
- Would you contract them to work for you again?
- What sort of work would you say they should never do?
- If you had to name one negative thing about their services, what would it be?
- Can you give me an example of why the consultancy services they provided were good for your organisation?

3. Take notes while the referee is talking.

They should write down what the referee is saying, so you can use the information later.

4. Thank the referee and hang up.

***checklist of key questions to ask referees if you are asking them to write you a reference***

Sometimes when you ask for written references people don't know what to say. These key questions may get them started on a reference for you:

- What personal and professional qualities make these my services different from others?
- What are some of the tangible benefits you received from me?
- Can you give an example of why my services were good for your organisation?
- Would you contract me to work for you again?

## **a chapter summary**

Using your existing networks to find out about your market and sell business is a simple strategy. To avoid being tarred with the 'network marketing' brush of trying to sell something to your friends, you need to be very clear that you are seeking advice and not selling.

Asking for advice, seeking references, and asking for referrals to other people are all ways to get exposure to the market, find out how it works, let people know that you are in business, and create relationships. It can be a slow selling strategy but is a great way to pick up prospects and build a reputation.

Being successful in consulting is as much about how clever you are at marketing as it is about your ability to deliver the goods. Your reputation sells as much as your competence, especially since clients often have no way to measure your ability before buying. The more people who know you as a seeker of new information, a customer-focused service provider, an ethical person, the better it is for your consultancy.