

FAQs about Thank You Letters

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FAQs About Thank You Letters

Nearly every career book advises jobseekers to send thank-you letters after being interviewed, but how many do? In the aggregate, **only about 5 percent of those looking for jobs perform this simple yet crucial ritual.** Thus, it's time to address some of the frequently asked questions about thank-you letters.

Doesn't it come off as wimpy or even desperate to send a thank-you letter? Won't the employer think I'm sucking up?

No. It's a very rare employer who isn't pleased to get a thank-you letter. Most consider it just common courtesy, a way to differentiate you from the pack, proof that you're really interested in the position, and a way to keep your name in front of them.

Will a thank-you note make or break my chances of getting a job?

Well, probably not in most cases, but it could. Why take the chance? One of my former students told me that after he was hired for his first job out of college, his boss told him that he had wavered between my student and another finalist for the position. But then the boss got a thank-you letter from my student, and it made all the difference. Because of that simple gesture, my student got the job.

Should it be a typed business letter or a handwritten social note?

Studies show it doesn't matter. The important thing is doing it. Tailor your letter to the culture of the company and the relationship you established with the person who interviewed you. If you feel the interviewer and the company call for a formal business letter, send that. If your rapport with the interviewer dictates a more personal touch, send a handwritten note.

What about an e-mailed thank you?

Career experts are not in total agreement about the propriety of e-mailing a thank you, but again, the company's culture should guide you. If people in the company use e-mail heavily, your e-mailed thank you will seem right in step. It's also a fast solution if you know the company will be making its hiring decision quickly. Even if e-mail fits in with the company culture, however, it's a good idea to follow up your e-mailed thank you with a hard-copy version.

So, if "just do it" is the byword, I don't have to put that much effort into it, right?

Wrong. We've heard of candidates on the verge of being hired getting suddenly discounted from consideration because they sent sloppy, poorly written thank-you letters, riddled with typos, misspellings, and grammatical errors. Writing skills are important in many jobs, and employers don't want to have to teach candidates remedial skills. Spellcheck, proofread, and have someone else read over your letter before you send it.

Can I just borrow a sample thank-you letter from a book and adapt it to my interviewer?

Well, "borrowing" is one thing.. But be sure to borrow just the basic structure, and perhaps a few key phrases; don't plagiarize the whole thing. We know of one employer who instantly recognized that a thank-you letter he received had been taken word for word from a text he was familiar with.

If I interview with several people, do I have to send a thank you to each one?

That's the best approach. You can make it essentially the same letter to each, but vary at least a sentence or two to individualize the letters in case your recipients compare notes.

How soon after your interview should you send a thank-you?

The rule of thumb is to send it within 24 hours of the interview.

Should I bother with a thank-you note if I know the hiring decision will probably be made sooner than I can mail a thank-you letter?

The key word here is "mail." If mail is too slow for the hiring decision, find a faster way: e-mail, fax, air-express, or hand-delivery. In fact, if the interview was local, hand-delivery of the thank-you letter can make a super impression.

What if I do receive an offer faster than I can send a thank you?

Send it anyway to thank the employer for the interview and the offer. Your letter can also accept or decline the offer. An acceptance letter can re-state your understanding or the terms of the offer (salary, benefits, vacations days, starting date, paid training, etc.); that way any discrepancies can be red-flagged by the employer and straightened out before you start.

Is there anything you can do to make an even better impression with your thank you?

Find a way to personalize it. If you notice that the interviewer collects elephant figurines, for example, write your thank-you note on a note card with an elephant picture on it. Or send a clipping of an article you think the interviewer would be interested in.

References

Hansen, K. FAQs about thank you letters. (n.d.) Retrieved July 29, 2005 from http://www.quintcareers.com/thank_you_letters.html.