

by Katharine Hansen

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 dictate 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. In fact we've provided some [sample interview thank-you letters](#) to show what thank-you letters should look like. 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.

A Free General Thank You Letter Sample

7 Apple Court
Eugene, OR 97401
503-555-0303

Mr. Archie Weatherby
California Investments, Inc.
25 Sacramento Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mr. Weatherby,

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the insurance broker position at California Investments, Inc., with me. After meeting with you and observing the company's operations, I am further convinced that my background and skills coincide well with your needs.

I really appreciate that you took so much time to acquaint me with the company. It is no wonder that California Investments retains its employees for so long. I feel I could learn a great deal from you and would certainly enjoy working with you.

In addition to my qualifications and experience, I will bring excellent work habits and judgment to this position. With the countless demands on your time, I am sure that you require people who can be trusted to carry out their responsibilities with minimal supervision.

I look forward, Mr. Weatherby, to hearing from you concerning your hiring decision. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John Oakley

A Thank You Letter that Stresses Fit

7 Apple Court
Eugene, OR 97401
503-555-0303

Dr. Steven Page
Rolling Hills School Health Clinic
5 Main Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Dr. Page:

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview me today for the social worker position.

I felt a wonderful rapport not only with you, but with the whole Rolling Hills School Health Clinic staff. I am more convinced than ever that I will fit in beautifully as a member of the team and contribute my skills and talents for the benefit of schoolchildren in the Rolling Hills district.

I can make myself available for any further discussions of my qualifications that may be needed.

Again, Dr. Page, I very much appreciate you and your staff taking so much time to talk with me about this exciting opportunity.

Sincerely,

John Oakley

A Thank You Letter that Builds on Strengths of the Interview

7 Apple Court
Eugene, OR 97401
503-555-0303

Dr. David Kresgee
Great Fault Labs
5 Main Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Dr. Kresgee:

I'd like to thank you for talking with me about the research- assistant position in your seismology lab. I truly appreciate all the time and care you took in telling me about the job and learning more about me.

I'm so pleased that you agree that my senior research project in seismology provides me with excellent experience for this position. I am eager to bring my passion for seismology to the research-assistant position, and I am convinced the knowledge and experience I've already cultivated make me the best researcher for the job.

I very much look forward to learning of your decision soon. Please feel free to contact me if you need more information about my qualifications.

Thank you again for the exhilarating interview.

Sincerely,

John Oakley

A Thank You Letter that Entice the Employer

Note: This letter is a bit lengthy, but it does a good job of summing up the strengths of the interview and enticing the employer with the idea that hiring this candidate means that more ideas and innovations cannot be far behind.

7 Shawnee Road
Short Hills, NJ 07078
201-555-0303

Ms. Sentra Nessen
Dayton Sumner Memorial Art Museum
203 Harbor Street
Baltimore, MD

Dear Ms. Nessen:

I want to thank you for taking the time to interview me yesterday for the position of assistant director of the Dayton Sumner Memorial Art Museum. You, Mr. Dawson, and Dr. Acquino exuded warmth, and I know we could all have an excellent working relationship.

As I further studied the job description for the position, I grew even more confident that I could take the museum to new heights of success. With the resources I've gathered, I am ready to hit the ground running with grant-writing. The 15 percent bonus for grants brought in is an excellent incentive, and I would devote a significant portion of my time to this important venture. I also have a number of great ideas for community and media relations and am excited by your interest in bringing more schoolchildren to the museum.

As I mentioned when we met, I would like to use my fine arts degree and journalism minor to enhance the museum's identity while at the same time meeting the needs and expectations of the community. I believe I can make a significant contribution to the fundraising effort, and I am particularly interested in exploring a corporate donor program.

I am convinced I could bring a new degree of organization to the museum, including sinking my teeth into making the workspace far less chaotic and far more functional. More importantly, I'd like to get communications on track so that newsletters and invitations are sent out on a timely basis. I have some ideas for making the newsletter more user-friendly. I feel it is extremely important to maintain close communication between the board and director, and I am committed to doing so.

Ms. Nessen, I thank you again for considering me for this position. I look forward to the possibility of working with you.

Sincerely,

John Oakley

A Thank You Letter that Mentions Interview Afterthoughts

7 Shawnee Road
Short Hills, NJ 07078
201-555-0303

Ms. Tess Bonwitt
Razzle Magazine
1010 Madison Avenue
New York, NY

Dear Ms. Bonwit:

I'd like to thank you for the time you spent talking with me about the marketing-research analyst position you have open at *Razzle* magazine. I am very excited about this position and convinced that my marketing training equips me more than adequately for the job.

I meant to mention during the interview that last summer I attended a three-week intensive seminar on SPSS, the foremost marketing-research software package. I know the job description mentions the ability to use SPSS, and I wanted to make sure you knew that I am extremely well-versed in the use of this software. Please contact me if you have any questions about my ability with this program or about any of my other qualifications.

As you know, my work-study position in the institutional research office here at Rutgers provided an excellent background for marketing-research work.

I look forward to hearing from you soon about the position, and I again thank you for meeting with me.

Sincerely,

John Oakley

A Thank You Letter Following Interview with an On-Campus Recruiter

7 Shawnee Road
Short Hills, NJ 07078
201-555-0303

Ms. Lacy Stilwell
Holbrooks, Inc.
100 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY

Dear Ms. Stilwell:

Thanks so much for talking with me today about the position in fashion merchandising at Holbrook's. I was truly inspired by the energy and dedication to the company that you brought to our interview.

I am positive that I have what it takes to bring the same kind of energy and dedication to your company. As I mentioned, Holbrook's has been my first choice for fashion since before I was a pre-teen. I bought the suit I wore to our interview at Holbrook's!

My education has equipped me for this job, and my enthusiasm will ensure my success. My internships with several local apparel stores have taught me a great deal about meeting the needs of target market segments.

I would like to take the next step in this process and discuss the position further with you at your office in the Long Beach store. I plan to contact your secretary on Friday to schedule a mutually convenient time to meet.

Again, Ms. Stilwell, I thank you most sincerely for your time, your energy, and the inspiration you gave me to launch my career at Holbrook's.

Sincerely,

Jane Oakley

A Free Sample Thank You Letter for a Career/Job Fair

3420 Last Tree Lane
DeLand, FL 32720
386-555-0345

Mr. Gary Barnett
Aerial Communications, Inc.
3407 W. MLK Jr. Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33607

Dear Mr. Barnett,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me at the Central Florida Career Fair today. I certainly appreciate your time and attention in the midst of so many students seeking jobs.

You were extremely thorough in explaining Aerial's customer service and marketing trainee program. Now that I have a better idea of what the position entails, I am even more sure that I would be an asset to your team and to Aerial.

My solid education from Stetson University's Marketing Department and the fact that I have worked my way through college show a work ethic and determination, two qualities you said were important to success at Aerial.

I look forward to an opportunity to visit Aerial's Tampa office and speak to you further about the trainee program. I will contact you next week to arrange an appointment.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Leddyfern

Free Sample Career Networking Thank You Letter

7 Apple Court
Eugene, OR 97401
503-555-0303

Ms. Barnett Jones
UPP Business Systems, Inc.
1000 SW 4th Avenue
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Barnett,

Thank you again for agreeing to be a member of my personal "network." This is an important time in my life as I take the plunge to change careers, and I truly value the advice of professionals like you who know the consulting field so well.

I especially appreciate your offer to introduce me to other professionals and consults in your network, which I know will be extremely helpful to me in establishing myself.

Barnett, I can't thank you enough for your willingness to help me launch this next phase of my career. I will be sure to keep you informed of my progress. And please do not hesitate to contact me if you think of any additional suggestions for expanding my network and establishing myself as a consultant.

Sincerely,

John Oakley