How to Write a Thank-You Letter

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Writing powerful thank-you letters is not just a formality. Thank-you letters are marketing tools that can have tremendous value in moving your candidacy forward and positioning you above the competition. Although much of what you include in your thank-you letter may have already been communicated during your interview, there is nothing more effective than the written word to etch those thoughts into your interviewer’s mind.

Overcome Objections
If during an interview there were specific objections raised about your candidacy, use your thank-you letter to respond to and overcome those concerns. Demonstrate that the concerns are not an obstacle but an opportunity and you’re fully prepared to meet the challenge.

Example: You’re interviewing to be an executive for a well-established company in the Midwest. Although you’re extremely well-qualified, the CEO is concerned you’ve never lived in the area and have no network of local contacts. Eliminate those concerns by explaining your network of professional contacts is nationwide and, in fact, you know John Doe of Local Company X, have a long-standing relationship with an economic development director in the area, etc. These contacts will only serve to expand the company’s already-established network.

Reiterate Your Expertise
If the company communicated its specific needs, issues or challenges, use your thank-you letter to demonstrate how you can meet those needs.

Example: You’ve interviewed to be the CFO of a distressed company in need of immediate action. It needs a candidate with proven success in fast-track turnarounds and revitalizations. Highlight your experience in turning a company around and showing profitability.

Highlight Your Core Professional Competencies and Successes
If the company communicated its ideal qualifications for a candidate, use your thank-you letter to outline how you meet or exceed each qualification.

Example: You’ve interview for the position of EVP of technology and product development with a high tech venture, and company officials have clearly communicated four essential candidate qualifications. Help them see that you have those four qualifications by providing an overview of your career highlights.

How Long Should Your Thank-You Letter Be?
Of course, as with anything else in a job search, there is no definitive answer. One page is the norm, depending on the amount of information you want to communicate. Letters certainly do not have to be only one page.

Remind yourself that you already have the company’s interest or you wouldn’t have been interviewing, and use your thank-you letter as a tool to communicate valuable information. The entire job search process is marketing and merchandising your product—you. There is no reason why writing thank-you letters should be any different than any other of your job search activities.
Thank You By Email

Writing a thank you note after an employment interview can be the key to getting a job offer. In these days of email and online communication, is it appropriate to send thank you letters by email?

In most cases, yes. You can get your thank you letter out immediately, rather than having to wait for the postal service to deliver it. If the employer is making a quick hiring decision, time is of the essence. If there is no sense of urgency, you may still want to send a quick email thank you, along with a traditional letter or note. You’ll be reiterating your interest in the position sooner rather than later.

What to Include in Your Email Message

In addition to thanking the person you talked with, the thank you note reinforces the fact that you want the job. Use your letter to address any issues and concerns that came up during the interview. You can also view the thank you as a follow-up “sales” letter. In other words, restate why you want the job, what your qualifications are, how you might make significant contributions, and so on.

This letter is also the perfect opportunity to discuss anything of importance that your interviewer neglected to ask or that you neglected to answer as thoroughly, or as well, as you would have liked. Keep in mind though, that the thank you note should be brief and to the point. A couple of brief paragraphs are sufficient.

Group Thank-You Letters

What if you are interviewed with several people? Send individual messages to each person you interviewed with. Modify your message so each interviewer gets a unique thank you note. Ask for a business card at the conclusion of each interview – that way you’ll have the contact information for your thank you letters.

Proof Your Messages

Finally, remember to proofread – proofreading is just as important in email as it is in other correspondence. Be sure to check spelling, grammar, typos, etc. Also, keep a copy in your Out mailbox or cc: yourself so you have a copy of each message you’ve sent.