

# Thank you Notes

## Why write a thank you note? What should it communicate?

Thank you notes are a powerful and underused tool in any interview process. Use them often and strategically.

### 1. Gratitude for his or her time

Writing a thank-you note is a demonstration of gratitude for giving you, the candidate, the opportunity to interview in a very competitive market.

### 2. Thinning the Crowd

It is estimated that only 10 to 20 percent of interviewees write thank-you notes. This creates an opportunity for you to stand out from the crowd, to be in the 10 to 20 percent of candidates who are guaranteed a second look and thought because they made a persuasive impression and showed good courtesy through a thank-you note. Additionally, there are multiple stories of recruiters being torn between two candidates for a position, and the fact that one of them wrote a thank-you note broke the tie.

### 3. The Close

The most important benefit of writing a thank you note is another chance to close the deal. Your thank-you note puts you back in front of the interviewer. Allude to the interview with new thoughts on discussed issues, reiterate your strengths and how they fill their expressed needs, and ask for the job.

## Handwritten Versus Typed

The thank-you note can be handwritten or typed. If you handwrite the note, use professional stationary that complements the rest of your interview package. Do not use cards with anything cute (kittens, flowers, your alma mater's shield, unprofessional looking THANK YOU). Simple white or bonecolored cards or letter paper is preferred.

While many human resources directors prefer a hand-written thank-you note, there is a downside. Handwritten notes do not provide a lot of space to get your point across. Your note will need to be brief and articulate. Plus, you will need to make sure to use your best penmanship. When a small sample of New Orleans human resources directors was asked if they prefer handwritten versus typed, they all said that thank-you notes are so rare, that they are impressed whenever they receive them – handwritten or typed.

It is better to type your thank-you note in a business professional style using the same format you designed for your cover letter, resume, and reference page. This will give you room for at least three thoughtful paragraphs. Follow up with the professional you met at the career fair or in a class presentation. Everyone you meet can be an active person in your network.

## Mail Versus Email

Typically a typed thank you note that is mailed through the postal service is preferred; however, in some unusual situations, an e-mailed letter might be more strategic. A few of these considerations are letters to high tech firms, letters to recruiters who are traveling, and letters for positions that are being decided the same day. Please see reasons below as to why one may not want to email a thank you note.

## CONSIDER THE EMPLOYER'S TIME INVESTMENT

Consider what the interviewer has done for you before you show up for the interview. Job postings can receive dozens, if not hundreds, of resumes. Someone read through all those resumes, and stopped to read your resume more thoroughly; next someone called you, probably getting involved in a fierce game of phone tag to set up an interview; the interviewer committed an hour of time from their busy schedule to meet with you; and many other time-consuming activities before you ever walk through the door. Investing in five minutes to write a thank-you note to let the interviewer know how you appreciate the acknowledgement of your skills and potential does not sound like a huge effort any more, does it?

## What to Say?

Paragraph one: Reiterate how excited you are about the opportunity and thank the interviewer for the interview.

Paragraph two: Document how you fit the company's needs, culture, or goals. Reemphasize a brilliant moment from your interview, reference additional information that you have thought of since you left, or submit any additional materials you promised to supply to them, such as a reference page or a writing sample.

Paragraph three: Ask for the job and offer any additional information to help them make their decision.

## Be Careful with E-mailing

There are numerous reasons not to e-mail your thank-you note:

- E-mails appear lazy. They are simple to compose and do not take the same amount of effort as a typed and mailed note.
- It is easy to get an e-mailed thank-you lost amid the hundreds of e-mails the interviewer may receive that day. A mailed note will demand more attention and respect from the interviewer.
- E-mails tend to be full of typos. It is much easier to proof a document once it is printed. You definitely do not want your hard-earned image of a polished, detail-oriented professional ruined because you typed "your" instead of "you're" and you did not catch it until the send button was hit.
- With typed and mailed thank-you notes, you can use the same professional design you used on all your other correspondence. This provides a consistent, professional image for you.

*The power of thank you notes extends beyond your professional life. Learn to use them. This is an easy, yet potent activity that can help you nurture your much needed network for your social and professional lives. Plus, it is just good manners.*

## "NO THANK YOU" NOTES

- Let them know how much you appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the position.
- Briefly (no long details) explain that while it is a marvelous opportunity, your personal goals are pointing you in another direction (you may want to highlight one or two of your goals or skills; just keep it very short).
- If you are interested in this company, but not this position, politely explain your goals and ask them to keep you in mind for future openings.
- Wish them success in their search for the best candidate.

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October 24, 2008

Mr. Lex Reardon  
Regional Sales Director  
Pfizer U.S. Pharmaceuticals  
146 Main Street  
Harahan, LA 70125

Dear Mr. Reardon:

My goal throughout college has been to work in pharmaceutical sales, and, now that I have met you, I am even more confident it is a career path for me. Thank you for meeting with me earlier today to discuss the sales position for Terrebonne, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard Parishes and sharing information on your goals and Pfizer's culture.

You mentioned that as you rebuild the southeast Louisiana region, you need someone with experience opening new accounts. As we discussed, I won numerous awards in prospecting and cold calling during my internship with Telecom. I love a challenge, especially when it comes to relationship building. The territory development statistics you requested from the presentation I created for Telecom's senior management are enclosed. Please let me know if you have any questions.

With your leadership and Pfizer's training program, I believe I can parlay my past success into building a productive territory for Pfizer. I will contact you next week to find out if I made it to the next round of interviews.

Sincerely,

Audry Allain  
Encl: territory development spreadsheet

# A FEW WORDS ON SAYING THANK YOU

## **When Do I Send the Thank-You Note?**

Write your thank-you note as soon as you get home from the interview and mail it the same or the next day. The salient points of the interview will be fresh on your mind, and you will be able to write a more meaningful note. Also, it demonstrates your understanding of strategic timing and your lack of procrastination. But most important, a thank-you note written and mailed immediately after the interview has a better chance of getting to the decision makers before the decision is made. Their receiving your note two weeks after the interview and three days after they made an offer to another candidate does you no good at all.

## **But they are making their decision tomorrow...**

Hand-deliver your thank-you note. The next morning wake up early, put on your second best interview outfit (you never know who you will run into), and hand-deliver the thank-you note. You can leave it with the receptionist. The effort will not be lost on the interviewer.

## **But I interviewed with more than one person...**

Then you will write more than one thank-you note. Each person will have an opinion about your hiring, so impress each one, differently. Make each thank-you note individualized toward your separate meetings or different issues. Do not send the same note to each; they may compare notes.

## **It is my third interview with this person; Do I send another?**

One or two thank-you notes is plenty during the process. After you have sent a thank you note for the first and second interview, a well written, pristinely proofed e-mail will suffice.

## **But I do not want the job...**

Write a thank-you note anyway. It is a very small world and strange things can occur. Here are some real-world examples of strange occurrences:

- They have another, more compatible, position come up. You have closed the door on the first job with class and panache. They may remember you and alert you to the new position.
- They know of another position at a different company and they think you would be perfect for it. If you end the relationship with a thank you note, they will be more likely to think about connecting you with their colleague or friend.
- You may take another position, but this company is a future client for you. They will be more likely to remember you and help you.
- The person who interviewed you may one day come to work at the company whose position you accepted. You have a good first impression from day one.

