



THANK-YOU NOTES

Career Skills Handout Series

Do I need to send thank-you notes?

It is a good practice to send thank-you notes after any interviews, whether on-campus, in-office, call-back, or informational interviews. A carefully crafted, error-free thank-you note can reinforce the positive impression you create in the interview. A minority view maintains that thank-you notes are high risk, low reward, and applicants should therefore eschew them. Although employers weigh poorly written thank-you notes against you, you don't land jobs playing defense. Write strong thank-you notes.

What form should my thank-you note take?

Hand-written thank-you cards are all but universally well received by interviewers. Whether on a conservative, professional-looking thank-you card or on personal stationery, hand-written cards take extra effort and are associated with the utmost courtesy. When prepared correctly, they are safe choices. Employers who may never print and save an email are more apt to hang onto physical cards.

This is not to say that sending one's thank-you via email is without merit. A tipping point was reached years ago that changed the typical application process from snail mailing materials to electronically sending materials. If, as is commonly the case, you applied for the position via email, were informed of your selection for an interview via email, set up your interview appointment via email, and perhaps even expect the employer's decision concerning your application to come via email, sending your thank-you note via email can't be fairly criticized as lacking the thoughtfulness of a hand-written card.

Because looking for a job is a business activity—not a social activity—one school of thought is that your thank you “note” should be a typed thank-you *letter*. In some instances, typing a letter is particularly well suited to the task at hand—for example, when an interviewer asks you to forward additional information, such as a transcript or writing sample. Then your thank-you letter doubles as a transmittal for your additional documents.

To which interviewers do I send thank-you notes?

Sometimes you will be interviewed by more than one person, even in initial screening interviews. In call-back interviews, you can expect to meet with several interviewers, whether en masse or seriatim. When you face a panel of interviewers or interview with a series of people, it raises the issue whether to send a thank-you note to every interviewer or some fewer number. When the number of interviewers doesn't exceed three or four, you should manage to write individualized, substantive

notes to each interviewer. When the number of interviewers is greater, but you feel it would be arbitrary to favor some interviewers with thank-you notes and others not, and you are prepared and inclined to send all your interviewers thank-you notes, do it. But when your head is swimming after a call-back interview session in which you were introduced to many attorneys, some of whom formally interviewed you and perhaps others who talked to you on the fly, you can feel confident simplifying the task by sending a thank-you note only to the attorney or administrator responsible for setting up your interviews or for seeing to it that your interviews went smoothly. In that note, mention the names of the others with whom you interviewed, and ask the addressee to extend your thanks to the other interviewers.

What should my thank-you note say?

Personalize your thank-you notes by referencing topics you discussed in your interviews. To help you remember what you discussed, once you are beyond the watchful eyes of the employer, for example in your car, jot down what went on. Express heightened interest in the firm. Add information you might have forgotten to share during the interview. Readdress a question you could have answered better—but don't belabor things. Your thank-you note should be short—four or five, up to ten or so, sentences. Indicate your willingness to provide additional information. Once you have expressed your appreciation, you have done your utmost to persuade the employer to choose you.

Don't write the same thing to multiple interviewers. The value of your note will be deflated when interviewers compare and see that you wrote the same thing to each. Expect all your notes to interviewers at a given employer to wind up in one file on you. Only individualized notes reflect positively on you.

How soon after an interview should I send a thank-you?

When interviewers receive your thank-you notes, they may have already decided your fate. If they decided they like you and want to sponsor you to their employers, proper thank-you notes confirm you are professional and courteous. (And, of course, poor notes allow you to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.) If interviewers decided you did not pass muster, your notes probably will have no practical effects. Your thank-you notes have the greatest likelihood of influencing hiring decisions when employers have yet to decide whether you are a viable candidate. The most favorable result is when your thank-you notes advance your candidacy and prompt employers to move you from maybe to yes. Increase the likelihood your notes will help you by sending them promptly. Unless you need time to gather information the employer requested, get your thank-you in the mail by the evening of the day you interview.

Hand-written thank-you note to Heather Barth, Hiring Partner, Blue, Barney & Bibbs LLP

October 6, 201X

Dear Ms. Barth,

Thank you for talking with me and coordinating my call-back visit to Blue Barney. Meeting with you and your colleagues to discuss a summer associate position heightened my already tremendous interest in your firm. I enjoyed our discussion of your antitrust practice. I read the article you recommended, "Mountainous Mergers," and was fascinated by the various approaches courts have taken to define a "relevant market." I look forward to litigating in this area and to helping defend clients against overbroad framing of the relevant market. I was also excited to learn about Blue Barney's participation in the District Attorney Loaner Program. I am eager to gain trial experience and, once an attorney, I would certainly want to take part in the program.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. Please extend my thanks to John Rivers, Charles Hardwick, Diane Goff, and Phillip Hyde who broke from their busy schedules to interview me, and to Recruiting Secretary Paula Siba for her help scheduling my visit. If you think of any additional information that would be helpful, don't hesitate to ask. I look forward to hearing from you.

Mike Maloney