

Attention College Grads! How to Use a Post-Interview Thank You Note to Land the Job You Want

Statistics show that, on average, only about 10% of college grads write a thank you note after an interview. So, should *you*? Absolutely! It’s a great way to distinguish yourself from the sea of other candidates, and it will help your individual personal brand stay memorable. In fact, if you’re in the “maybe” pile when you leave the interview, a well thought-out thank you could easily move you to the “yes” pile.

After contacting over 50 of the country’s top recruiters, I learned dozens of powerful tips that they suggest college grads consider during their job search.

Here are some of those tips for making your follow-up thank you note a powerful statement that will help you build your college graduate personal brand and land a great job:

Personalize it! If you send a “cookie-cutter” thank you that sounds like it’s the same one you send to everyone after an interview, you could easily be moved from the “maybe” pile to the “rejected” pile. So, no cutting and pasting! Mention something specific that happened in the interview to help the interviewer remember you. One company recruiter says, “It shows that you were listening and paying attention.” She suggests writing something like, “I really liked the culture of the company, and I feel I can contribute in that kind of environment because...”

Express your interest in the job. Be enthusiastic about it! Be willing to show your excitement and passion.

Remind the interviewer what you can offer. Mention why you believe you’re a great fit for the job. Veda Jeffries, Assistant Director of Counseling Services at Stanford University, says a well-written thank you note “gives you an opportunity to reiterate or point out a skill you may have overlooked during the interview.”

Don’t forget anyone. If you interviewed with more than one person, send each of them a separate thank you note.

Proofread, proofread, proofread! Triple-check the thank you note to make sure everything is correct — especially the interviewer’s name and title and the company’s name and address. Accountemps conducted a survey of 150 senior executives that was published in *USA Today*, and 40% of them said it would only take *one typo* for them to decide against a candidate for a job! Norman Saale, Chief Operating Officer at a multi-office accounting firm says, “A thank you note can provide an opportunity for someone to make a mistake, and bad mistakes can actually change the recruiter’s mind. If you’re not a great writer, it can work against you.” So, if you can’t write a great thank you note on your own, get someone to help you. You want your thank you to *get* you the job, not lose it for you.

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Timing is everything. If you know the company is going to make a quick hiring decision, send your thank you right away by e-mail. *But...* if they’re going to take a couple of weeks or longer to hire someone, you can stand out even more by sending your thank you note by snail mail. These days, receiving snail mail is pretty rare, so it can actually help you be remembered.

Use your best handwriting, and send your thank you note on a professional looking card. Shannon Boehm, Manager of Undergraduate Recruitment at a major retailer, says this about thank you notes: “I am far more impressed when I receive follow-up handwritten thank you notes instead of e-mails. Thank you e-mails are actually the most common for me to receive, and I generally just file them away. But handwritten thank you notes are posted up on my office wall. A generic one is not as impressive, but one that is well thought-out can make a candidate stand out.”

If only 10% of applicants write a thank you note after an interview, imagine the edge you will automatically have when you write yours! The odds are definitely in your favor. Again, just make sure that it’s written well and that it communicates your college graduate personal brand in the best possible way. If you do, you’ll be one step closer to landing the job you really want upon graduation.

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With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda’s career has spanned more than two decades and has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries. Now, as President of Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development.

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