

# THE POWER OF THE POST-INTERVIEW THANK YOU LETTER

By Jeanne Knight

Just as resumes have undergone a dramatic change over the past 20 years, so too have post-interview thank you letters. Twenty years ago, a resume was typically a one page document that briefly listed a candidate's overall work experience and academic credentials. As the employment market changed and became more competitive, so did the resume. Today, they are powerful marketing tools designed to sell a candidate's skills, accomplishments, and expertise in order to give a job seeker a competitive edge over other candidates. The same changes can be said for cover letters.

Now, these changes also apply to the post-interview thank you letter. In the past, if such a letter was actually sent, it simply stated, "Thank you for your time; I'm very interested in this position." However, in today's market simply saying thank you is not enough. Candidates need to take this same concept of selling their skills and accomplishments and integrate it into their thank you letters. A well written and convincing thank you letter should be a powerful document designed to continue selling a candidate long after the interview is over.



So, how can you create thank you letters that present compelling reasons to further your candidacy?

First, in order to create a thank you letter with the most impact, it must be customized to each person with whom you interviewed. It also should focus on the issue that is most significant to that particular person and the company as a whole. What you include in your thank you letter will depend on your specific interview situation and what you discussed with each interviewer.

Here is a list of sections you should include in your thank you letters:

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## Reinforce Points from the Interview

It's difficult for a hiring manager to remember every detail of every interview they conduct with candidates. So, emphasizing the important points of your background, as they relate to the company and the specific position for which you are applying, will go a long way in distinguishing you from your competition. Even if

your specific skills and qualifications were discussed in the interview, take this opportunity to reiterate and further expand upon these experiences as they directly relate to the company's operations, current needs, and future goals.

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## Address Specific Challenges and Problems

If the hiring manager shared some of the challenges or problems facing their organization, relate how your experience is tied directly to their needs and the skills you have to help them solve these problems.

Suppose he/she indicated that morale is slipping within the department and that it's impacting turnover. Your thank you letter can describe how you led several key initiatives to raise the spirits of the members of your department.

Or, perhaps he/she discussed a work flow challenge the department is facing. Share your past experiences designing and implementing workflow changes that have led to greater efficiencies and increased productivity.

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## Communicate New Information

Everyone walks out of interviews at one time or another realizing there was something really important about their background or qualifications that wasn't covered during the initial discussion. Perhaps there wasn't enough time, or the interviewer's agenda didn't lend itself to discussing that topic, or you just plain forgot. Here's where the thank you letter comes in. It's precisely the tool to use to bring those achievements, experiences, project highlights, and qualifications to their attention.

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## Respond to Objections from the Interviewer

If the hiring manager communicated an objection to hiring you, address it in the thank you letter. For example, let's say the hiring manager was concerned that you've never worked in Atlanta, and therefore, don't have any professional contacts in that area. Use the thank you letter to explain how you previously entered new markets and immediately developed strong networks. That's one of the reasons you've been so successful in your previous positions.

Using the thank you letter as a competitive marketing tool means that they might sometimes be longer than one page. That's perfectly ok! There are no "thank you letter" rules that dictate these documents must be just one page long. What should dictate their length is the amount of valuable information you want to include. If the company has already extended you the opportunity for an interview, they're already interested in you. And, in most cases, they will carefully read any and all material you subsequently forward to them—including a powerful, well-worded, and compelling post-interview thank you letter!

*“I won’t send you anyone I wouldn’t hire myself.”*

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