

FOLLOWING UP

SENDING THANK YOU NOTES TO EMPLOYERS AFTER A JOB FAIR

by Denise Bissonnette

While sending thank-you letters is an essential step in effectively following-up with employers after a job fair, there are many misconceptions about this practice. Here is a quick Q & A with regard to sending thank you letters and four sample letters that incorporate the strategies suggested.

Why should I send thank you letters to employers?

Some job seekers feel that sending thank you notes to employers they have met at a job fair appears as desperate, or as way of sucking up. To the contrary, there are lots of good reasons to follow up with a thank you note and here five of them:

1. It is the rare employer who is not pleased to get a personalized thank-you letter, and far from appearing desperate, many consider it a common courtesy!
2. It is a way to differentiate yourself from the pack. You would be surprised how few job seekers take the time to follow up with the employers they meet at a job fair, (some sources report as low as 5%). This is a simple way of gaining an edge over those who don't.
3. Sending a thank you letter gives you an opportunity to express and reemphasize your interest in the company, a particular position, or other opportunities that you may have discussed at the job fair.
4. It is a way of reminding the employer of your connection or conversation and keeping your name in front of them.
5. If done correctly, it reflects your professionalism and the fact that you follow through.

Will a thank-you note make or break your chances of getting a job? In most cases, probably not, but the fact is, for the employer who is on the fence, that simple gesture could make the difference. The truth is that you have nothing to lose by going the extra mile and sending thank-you letters to employers, and a lot to gain.

What should be included in a follow-up thank you letter?

Typically, thank you letters should be kept brief, clear, and to the point. It is an opportunity to simply express your appreciation for the person's time, to restate your interests and/or qualifications, to reiterate your desire to be considered by the

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company, and in some cases, to suggest additional ways that you will be following up. Beyond the basics, find a way to personalize each thank-you letter. If you enjoyed a conversation with the person, refer to that conversation so that they remember you. If there was something that stood out for you about the company or the opportunities they offer, this is a great place to mention it, demonstrating that you were listening and attentive during your brief time with the person. Refer to your notes for additional information, ideas, or inspiration you may have received which you can make mention of in your thank you letter. (For examples, see the sample letters below.) You can also include another copy of your resume in the thank you letter, or other information that the recruiter may have requested at the fair, for example, a sample of your work or a list of references.

Should thank-you notes be typed or handwritten, mailed or emailed?

Most job search experts will tell you that it doesn't really matter; the more important point is to send them! We suggest that you follow your instincts and go with the style and manner of sending the letter that suits the person to whom you are writing. In other words, if the person was very matter of fact and business-like, it seems fitting to send a more formal thank-you letter, type it up, print it out and put it in the mail. However, if you made a more personal connection with the person, you may prefer to send something with a more personal touch like a handwritten note. Regardless, it is important that the letter be legible and free of spelling or grammatical errors. Be sure to ask someone whose opinion you trust and respect to proofread your thank-you letters before sending them! With regard to the manner of sending of them, it is customary to send them in the mail. Should you decide that you would like the person to receive the letter sooner than later, go ahead and email it, just be sure to follow up by sending a hard copy in the mail.

Who should I send thank-you letters to and how soon after the fair do I send them?

For all the reasons mentioned above, we suggest that you send a thank you note to everyone who took the time to speak with you, to answer your questions, or who shared information about their company, particularly those who work for companies or organizations for whom you have a keen interest. You can use the same basic structure with each, just personalizing it with a sentence or two so that the person knows it was written to him/her. Regarding when you send thank-you letters, the sooner the better so that your face is still fresh in their minds (and their faces are still fresh in yours)! Also, sending them promptly after the fair is a way of showing your enthusiasm.

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Sample One

May 22, 2011

David Miller, Operations Director
ABC Corporation
1114 Winter's Way
San Diego, CA 92122

Dear Mr. Miller:

I want to thank you for the information you provided me at the Focus on Talent event last week regarding your current opening for an Administrative Assistant with ABC Corporation. After reviewing the job description, I became even more excited about the position and have already submitted my resume and cover letter to your Human Resources department to be considered as a candidate for the position.

As we discussed, I feel that my education and background is a good fit with your company and that I would make a valuable contribution to the Logistics Department. After meeting with you and discussing the main components of the position, I am enthusiastic about this position and hopeful that I will have an opportunity to interview for the job. My references will attest to the fact that I have always been considered a dependable and loyal employee with excellent communication skills. I have a strong willingness to learn more about your company and would enjoy being a part of your team.

Thank you again for taking the time to share information with me. I met many wonderful people the day of the event, but our conversation remains a highlight of the day for me. Perhaps someday soon I will meet you again, but next time as a member of the ABC team rather than as a job seeker!

With sincere thanks,

Charlie Meyer

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Sample Two

Carla A. Sloan
1248 Poplar Ave.
Kankakee, IL 60901
(619) 933-2324

May 30, 2011

Ms. Cheryl Williams
Recruitment Coordinator
Kankakee Community College
1001 Sunrise Boulevard
Kankakee, IL 60901

Dear Ms. Williams:

Please accept my sincere thanks for the time and opportunity to meet with you at the Employment Fair on May 19th at the Holiday Inn. I have always had a keen interest in Kankakee Community College as a possible employer, and our conversation not only reinforced that interest, but affirmed for me that KCC might be a terrific fit. I have already set up an interview as a possible intern this summer, an opportunity I would wholeheartedly embrace! So, if you just happen to see a wide-eyed and enthusiastic groundskeeper around campus this summer, please stop and say "Hello". I would like to thank you in person for inspiring me to take the next step in becoming part of the KCC community.

I know that as a Recruitment Coordinator you talk to many, many job seekers at a job fair, and it must be tiring to fully engage with each person who stops at your booth. I just want you to know that you made me feel very welcome and I walked away knowing that I had just met a consummate professional. Thank you again for your time and attention and for inspiring me to apply for a summer internship! My fingers are crossed that I will see you again soon.

Sincerely,

Maureen Monet

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Sample Three

Rebecca Annable
3420 Baldwin Ave.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
831- 344-2234

Mr. Gary Owens
SPC Communications, Inc.
999 Swift Ave.
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Mr. Owens,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me at the UCSC Job Fair today. I certainly appreciated your time and attention in the midst of so many eager students seeking jobs.

You were extremely thorough in explaining your company's customer service and marketing trainee program. Now that I have a better idea of what the program entails, I am even more confident that I would be an asset to your team and to SPC Communications. My solid education from the University of Santa Cruz and the fact that I have worked my way through school show a strong work ethic and determination, two qualities you mentioned as important to success at your company. You also commented on my "handsome portfolio" – a compliment that renewed my confidence for the remainder of the afternoon.

I have sent my resume to Joanne Duffey per your recommendation, and will follow up with her next week. I am hoping to schedule a time to meet with her in person and look further into your company's trainee program. If you feel so inspired, I sure would appreciate it if you could put in a good word for me.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. It is my hope that one year I will be behind your booth at the Fair speaking as a successful veteran of the trainee program to other prospective students.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Annable

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Sample Four

May 19, 2011

Christina DaMota
Professional Recruiter
Nygard International
Kenaston Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB

Dear Ms. DaMota,

I only returned from the Career Symposium a few hours ago, but I was so anxious to write to you that I could not wait until tomorrow morning to draft this thank you note. As a student who is "fresh" in the work world, presenting herself for the first time to prospective employers, I just want you to know that you made my day by spending the time with me that you did. I know from your perspective it was only a few minutes, but it meant a lot to me for the following reasons.

First, where I have been somewhat fearful that my disability would be seen as a barrier in the fashion industry, you convinced me that it would be perceived as an asset at your company. It is one thing to hold out the hope that people will see beyond my wheelchair, but meeting a recruiter who showed such enthusiasm for my talents was truly an eye-opening experience for me. Secondly, I was concerned that my lack of experience in the work world would be a hindrance in this competitive market, but you gave me some great ideas about how to get my foot in the door and how to use my youth and eagerness to learn as a plus in my job search. The time you spent with me did a lot for my confidence, and for that I can never thank you enough!

On your recommendation, I am going to put together a portfolio. If you don't mind, I would like you to be the first person to receive it. I imagine I will have it completed in the next week or so, and my plan is to drop it off to you in person. If you are there, I would love to say "hello", but regardless, I will leave a copy of my portfolio with a personal note attached. I would appreciate any feedback you might have once you have had a chance to look at it, as I respect your opinion very much.

Thank you again, Christina, for your time, your advice, and most of all, for inspiring me to have confidence in myself as I look to enter the industry I have loved and followed since I was a little girl.

With sincere thanks,

Britney Wilson