

The thank you note: Struggling to survive

Five years ago, I had a client who was nominated for Middle School Teacher of the Year in one of the Louisiana parishes. After the interview with a four-person selection committee, I encouraged her to write a thank you letter to each of the committee members. She took my advice, wrote and sent the letters before the end of that day. As Paul Harvey used to say on his radio show as he was concluding one of the many meaningful stories he shared, “Now for the rest of the story.” Two of the four committee members responded with their own “thank you” notes — both indicating my client’s letter was the first they had ever received in the more than 10 years of participation on the selection committee.

Well, as you may have already guessed, my client was selected Middle School Teacher of the Year for her parish. Of course, I can only surmise, but I still truly believe her thank you letter gave her a competitive edge over the other two candidates and made a lasting impression.

I love technology, believe it’s beneficial and, in so many situations, an absolute necessity. However, in our digital, mobile age, it is depressing how few people take the time to write a thank you note that can show thoughtfulness, help build relationships, make a lasting impression or give a competitive edge, especially during the job search process.

So, “when should I write a thank you note,” you may ask. Certainly you should write one following a job interview. Basically, thank you notes are written to express gratitude — for a gift, special time spent with you giving advice or being helpful and other acts of kindness. If you belong to a professional organization and are in charge of scheduling speakers on a pro bono basis, be sure to send those individuals a handwritten thank you note thanking them for taking part of their valuable time to come share information with your group.

Sending a handwritten or email note is the next issue to consider. At Emily Post, they still believe there is a place for the handwritten note, as do I. It can be as short as three or four sentences, yet it adds a bit of polish that is difficult to achieve in a text or email. With that being said, though, there is key logic behind emailing the “after-the-interview” thank you note/letter. In many cases, time is of the essence because decisions may be made quickly (as in my client’s case) or the hiring manager may be traveling and not in the office to receive the mailed, handwritten note in a timely manner. Certainly, it is acceptable to follow up the email note with a handwritten one on a quality personalized or plain correspondence card or note stationery. There are stationery stores online with a diverse selection.

When writing a thank you note, keep it short — reflect on what the person did to help you, what it meant to you and how it impacted you or your business; then simply recap your appreciation. Send the note within 24-48 hours after the occurrence. The same time frame applies for the job interview thank you note. The content is a bit different though. Express your appreciation for the interviewer’s time, reinforce your enthusiasm for the position/company, highlight your



key selling points and mention information that was not addressed, but relevant. Generally, three paragraphs should be sufficient. Be sure to proofread.

Heather Wiese, owner of Bell'Invito, a luxury stationer in Dallas says it well, "If you want to stand out, to be more polished, probably the easiest thing you can do is write that thank you note."

For more information on Dr. White's programs and publications, visit www.successimages.com or call (225) 769-2307.

Recommended resources:

- "The Right Words for Any Occasion" by New Seasons
- "Writing Thank-You Notes: Finding the Perfect Words" by Gabrielle Goodwin & David Macfarlane
- "101 Ways to Say Thank You: Notes of Gratitude for All Occasions" by Kelly Browne & Dorothea Johnson
- "Best Interview Thank You Letters" by Don Georgevich