Writing a “Thank You” Letter

If someone helps you in your career search, be sure to formally thank them. If you receive assistance from someone and fail to extend your sincere thanks, you might unintentionally damage your relationship.

However, saying “thank for career help” poses unique issues for serious career seekers. Often, key people contacted in your search campaign are new to you or have limited experience with you and your social skills. Mutual friends who introduce contacts to you will expect you to observe the necessary “thank you” ritual. A referral interview may not call for another face-to-face meeting in the near future, so your thanks must be put in writing.

Here are ten ways to ensure that your written thanks to any search “helper” work hard for the process and honors established cultural standards.

1. **Send your letter within 48 hours of the initial contact.** Any later, and you will have missed the opportunity to maximize the impact of your letter. A prompt letter conveys that you have a good sense of business protocol, timeliness, and an active professional search process. Your timely response will indicate that you will repeat that considerate behavior and not be an embarrassment.

2. **Tailor your thanks to the recipient.** As in all writing, it helps to relate to the reader. “Thank you,” “Thanks for your help,” “I sincerely appreciate your assistance,” “Your help is greatly appreciated” are all acceptable responses. Use your own words, but be sincere.

3. **Brevity is nearly as important as timeliness.** Don’t “wow” the recipient from with your verbal skills, and don’t try to repeat your meeting or interview. Keep your word count under 150 and make the paragraphs short, sentence structure simple, and format easy to read.

4. **Focus on content.** Remind the help of why you met, what you gained from the meeting, next steps you are taking from recommendations in your meeting, and how the input has given you positive direction. Avoid hyperbole and superlatives.
5. **If the helper agreed to take an additional stop on your behalf, confirm it in your letter.** Avoid the presumptive close: if offers of an introduction or additional assistance were not made, do not fabricate them. Be careful not to ask for additional help unless you are certain that door was opened to you.

6. **Express recognition that the helper’s time spent with you represented valuable minutes freed from a full schedule.** Time out of a busy day is worthy of thanks, even if the help offered does not contribute to your immediate job search.

7. **Following a positive meeting, assume that the helper is interested in the outcome of his or her suggestions.** It is acceptable and considerate to promise a status follow-up as you move through the action steps discussed together. But, once you promise that, you must follow through.

8. **Encourage the helper to call or email you if additional suggestions come to mind.** Make it as easy and painless as possible to contact you by giving your email, pager, home phone, or fax numbers.

9. **The only thing worse than not sending a thank you note is to send one with the helper’s name, title, or organization misspelled or other spelling errors.** Spelling, proper grammar, and correct use of language may seem like minor points, but they are not. If use of the English language is not one of your strengths, use a friendly proofreader-and thank them too.

10. “**Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks**” is too dramatic, but a thank you reprise in closing is acceptable. “Thanks again for all that you have contributed to strengthening my career search…my campaign…my sense of important next steps…my referral network…and/or introducing me to Mr. John Smith.” Then, once you have reread your note, make certain it sounds like you.
Sample Thank You Letter

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip Code
Your Phone Number
Your Email

Date

Name
Title
Organization
Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Mr. /Mrs. Last Name:

It was very enjoyable to speak with you about the assistant accountant executive position at the Smith Agency. The job, as you presented it, seems to be a very good match for my skills and interests. The creative approach to account management that you described confirmed my desire to work with you.

In addition to my enthusiasm, I will bring to the position strong writing skills, assertiveness and the ability to encourage others to work cooperatively with the department. My artistic background will help me to work with artists on staff and provide me with an understanding of the visual aspects of our work.

I understand your need for administrative support. My detail orientation and organizational skills will help to free you to deal with larger issues. I neglected to mention during my interview that I had worked for two summers as a temporary office worker. This experience helped me to develop my secretarial and clerical skills.

I appreciate the time you took to interview me. I am very interested in working for you and look forward to hearing from you about this position.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Typed Name