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Interview Follow-up Letter

Even if you are not 100% sure you want the job you've just interviewed for, you should always take the time to write and send an interview follow-up thank you note. Quite often when there is a tie between two candidates for a position, it is the candidate who showed the greatest interest during the interview (by asking for the job) and just as importantly followed up with a professionally written thank you note that breaks the tie and gets the offer.

The following is a suggested format for writing a thank you note to your prospective employer after your interview has been completed. Always send the thank you note promptly. Overnight express is the best bet because it shows on your part, a high level of enthusiasm, commitment and the willingness to invest a few dollars to communicate a clear statement of interest. The thank you note is also going to be the first thing a person opens and will be remembered over other competing candidates.

So, write three short paragraphs.

FIRST PARAGRAPH: WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE EMPLOYER?

Here is where you want to remind the employer of some of the main benefits you could provide if they were to hire you. During your interview, there were points of agreement between you and your potential employer that are worth noting. When the hiring manager said Ah, Aha or I agree with you or yes you do have the experience to help us in that area, these are what I mean by the "points of agreement".

Don't focus on possibilities or projects too far into the future. Focus on short-term projects and activities or projects where you can hit the ground running. Identify recognizable goals or skills you know your potential employer agrees you could accomplish or provide as a valuable asset to the company. Then outline them in a point-by-point manner usually hitting on 3 to 5 key points.

SECOND PARAGRAPH: WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Here is where you tell the employer why you want the job.

When you interview for a position, one of the key questions the employer is thinking about is, why does this person have interest in this job?

One of the first screening questions employers use to determine whether or not they will even interview a person (who's at least qualified on paper), is "Why is this person looking now and why did they leave all their past employers?" Answers to these questions can tell an employer a lot about the way you think and what motivates you. And these answers can commonly be just as, if not more important, than the compensation and experience qualifiers.

So it goes without saying, employers want to make sure the person they hire is interested in the job for the right reasons.

Hiring, from the employer's point of view can be a very stressful experience. The employer is under internal pressure and scrutiny to hire people who will get along well with other employees. The employees need to be able to deal with all the corporate politics involved in their office, represent the company professionally to customers, eliminate (or at least) avoid the myriad of risks associated to all sorts of legal litigation but just as importantly, perform the job as outlined. Hiring can also be very expensive, so the employer wants to be sure you're the right fit for the long term. You're an investment in time and resources and the employer wants to be proud they made the right decision to ask you to join the company.

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So reasons like, I'd like to be closer to home, I've been out of work for 6 months and need a job, or I can't stand my boss or job any more, are all valid reasons why you might be looking, they're just not what the employer wants to hear.

The employer wants to know that you're interested in the job because you feel you could really fit into the corporate culture well here. They want to hear you say that you see solid opportunities, where through contributions you could advance and develop new skills. You enjoy and would be challenged by the responsibilities of the position and really like the employer and people you met during the interview process. These are a few examples of reasons you might want this job. And not just any job that would be better than the one you have now or at least until something better comes along.

So outline your reasons for interest in a point-by-point manner usually hitting on 3 to 5 key points.

THIRD PARAGRAPH: ASK FOR THAT NEXT STEP IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS AND OR THE JOB.

When do you ask for the job? Early and often! Remember ties are broken by asking for the job. Especially if asked with enthusiasm.

You can ask for the job with a statement as simple as: I am really excited about this opportunity and hope to hear from you soon.

Or in an intermediate level close you might say: I am hoping to hear from you soon and as I am quite busy and sometimes hard to reach, if I don't hear from you in a week I'll give you a call on the following Monday.

A hard close might sound like this: It's been a long time since I felt this comfortable about an opportunity and want you to know that I am looking forward to entertaining an offer and would like to begin discussing preliminary details as soon as possible.

FINALLY, SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

Sometimes first and second interviews don't always provide you with answers to all of your questions. That's OK though. As long as you get an offer. Once you get an offer the tide turns. Up until the employer makes a decision to hire you, you have very little leverage to push for confidential or sensitive information or to ask tough questions about politics, vacations, work hours etc... to aid you in your final decision.

With an offer in hand, you now have a position of strength. Getting an offer puts you in the drivers seat and gives you the right of first refusal. With a decision made the employer becomes motivated to answer all your questions thoroughly and will feel much more comfortable bringing you in on the inner details of the company because they feel you're worth trusting and worthy to share more intimate details with, because they expect you'll shortly be joining the team.

No one's got the right to push you, let alone the ability to force you to accept an offer, so if you still have questions now is the time to outline them. Be prepared to ask all of your remaining questions during the offer stage. Also, complete your process of questioning the company quickly so as not to drag out the acceptance process more than a day or two after the offer is made.