

ODDS AND ENDS: Thank You Letters, Reference Lists, and Writing Samples

Handout Series #13

THANK YOU LETTERS

You should send thank you letters after interviews as a matter of courtesy and professionalism. Employers do not necessarily expect them, but a well-written thank you letter is bound to reflect positively upon you. Applicants usually write thank you letters as a way to reiterate their interest in an employer, to provide additional information, and to clarify anything that was unclear in the interview. Expressing your appreciation is the final step before you can rest easy, knowing you did everything possible to get the job.

Reasonable minds differ on the issue of whether thank you letters should be typed or handwritten. Many believe that typed letters are more conservative and professional; however, some employers like the personal touch of a handwritten note. Regardless of whether you type or handwrite your letter, it should be well-drafted, free of spelling mistakes, and, if handwritten, neatly so. A typewritten letter should follow a standard business letter format.

You should write to one person at the firm or organization—usually the highest ranking person with whom you interviewed, a hiring partner, or a recruitment coordinator. If you have had significant contact with both the recruitment coordinator and a high-ranking attorney, it is also appropriate to write a letter to each. Within the letter, you should express appreciation to the other attorneys and human resources personnel with whom you met. While you may choose to do so, you do not need to thank them by individual name; a general acknowledgment is sufficient.

REFERENCES

Most legal employers will not ask for letters of recommendation, but will, at some point, request a list of references. For most employers, it is best to include a mix of law school professors and

people who have directly supervised your research and writing. You should include three to four references. Be sure to get permission to use each person as a reference and to spell each reference's name correctly on your list. You should provide complete contact information for each reference, including an e-mail if possible. It is a good idea to give your recommenders copies of your current resume and to keep them up-to-date on your application plans and progress. Finally, thank them for assisting you.

WRITING SAMPLES

Typically, writing samples should be five to ten pages in length, unless they are being sent to judges, in which case they should be eight to twenty pages. If, however, a particular job application indicates a different page range, you should follow those instructions carefully. In selecting a writing sample, if possible, choose a piece of analytical legal writing (e.g., an objective memorandum, a persuasive motion and points and authorities) from a class or from your previous or current employment. If you select something written for an employer, you must get the employer's permission in order to use the document. In addition, regardless of whether you have been asked to do so, and regardless of whether the document is a public record, you should redact all client/victim/defendant/witness names and any identifying information, including addresses or any other information that is so specific that it could identify the parties involved. If possible, rather than redacting (using a black marker or black strike-mark from your computer), which can destroy the flow of your document, change all the identifying details to fictitious ones.

You should perfect your writing sample before submitting it. Conduct several rounds of edits: structural (including transitions), paragraph by paragraph, and sentence by sentence. Be sure that you have used proper citation formats. Examine and perfect your grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. (If you do not already have a book like it, we recommend purchasing Diana Hacker's, A Writer's Reference. It costs about \$50.00 in the Bookstore, but if you use it as your writer's reference, it will undoubtedly prove worth its hefty price tag as it improves your writing style.) Finally, have your writing sample reviewed by someone else, unless your job application explicitly states that you are not permitted to do so. While CDO's career advisors are happy to talk through your writing sample selection process, we do not review writing samples. You may consider consulting a current or former professor, an upper-class student, a writing tutor, or an alumni mentor to assist you with this task.

Attach a cover sheet to your writing sample, clearly labeling it as your writing sample. In a brief statement, explain whether the sample was written for a class or for an employer. If written for an employer, be sure to indicate that you have received the employer's permission to use it. Finally, indicate the format of citation that you follow in the document. Many employers also request that you use a small header or footer containing your name on each page of the document so that your materials will be easy to reassemble in the event that they get separated.

SAMPLE COVER LETTERS

WARNING:

**DO NOT COPY THESE
DOCUMENTS.**

**WHEN, IN THE PAST,
STUDENTS COPIED OUR
SAMPLE DOCUMENTS,
EMPLOYERS NOTICED. IT
WAS EMBARRASSING FOR
THE STUDENTS WHO DID
THE COPYING AND
EMBARRASSING FOR
PACIFIC McGEORGE.**

MICHAEL P. MALONEY

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February 10, 2006

Heather Barth, Esq.
Blue, Barney & Bibbs LLP
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Dear Ms. Barth:

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to interview with Blue, Barney. I enjoyed meeting you and discussing your antitrust practice. Today, I read the article you recommended, "Mountainous Mergers," and was fascinated by the various approaches courts have taken to defining a "relevant market." I look forward to litigating in this area and to helping defend clients against the Department of Justice's overbroad framing of the relevant market.

I was also excited to learn about Blue, Barney's practice of assigning first-year associates their own cases and encouraging young associates to obtain trial practice through your District Attorney Loaner Program. I am eager to gain trial experience and would avail myself of any such opportunities.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. Please extend my thanks to the many attorneys who broke from their busy schedules to meet with me and also to Recruiting Coordinator, Paul Siba, for coordinating my day at Blue, Barney.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Maloney

MICHAEL P. MALONEY

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REFERENCES

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WRITING SAMPLE OF MICHAEL P. MALONEY

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