

After the Interview: 8 Key Steps to Land the Job

Turn your employment luck around this year with these post-interview tips from job experts

By Joel Schwartzberg – January 5, 2012



follow-ups to your first interview that may help secure your second. But, if you think it begins and ends with a simple thank you note, think again. Below, job specialists share important tips for making a successful post-interview impression.

1. Give Thanks

"You can send [a thank you note] by e-mail, snail mail, or the pony express. Just make sure that you send one," says author and human resources recruiter Abby Kohut. "Leaving the relationship with the interviewer on good terms will always serve you well."

Yet, in the epic debate over email versus hand-written thank-you notes, manual writing seems to have the upper hand. "I have employers tell me all the time what a difference a handwritten thank you note makes," says Lynne Sarikas, executive director of the MBA Career Center at Northeastern University. "Those are the candidates they remember, and if they're having trouble deciding between two candidates, the thank you note can tip the scale." (Note: if your handwriting is only decipherable by your spouse, go with email.)

Tom Gimbel, president & CEO of LaSalle Network, a Chicago-based staffing and recruiting agency, says, "The employer will not always remember what you said in your interview, so use this as another final opportunity to prove yourself," he says. "Thank the employer for taking the time to meet with you, reiterate your interest in the position, and express your excitement in next steps."

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Business consultant Richard O'Malley says originality is key. "Don't send a thank-you note; send a great follow-up. Be specific, be funny -- just don't be 'expected'," he says. "Too often, applicants just do what is expected and bring themselves back to the pack after having separated themselves in the interview."

Most consultants also recommend thanking everyone you meet, not just those who interview you. Ronald Kaufman, executive coach and author of *Anatomy of Success*, says, "Send a note to anyone who was particularly helpful to you, such as an administrative assistant, and be sure to make each note unique." Kohut agrees: "You wouldn't want your interview team to compare notes and discover that you didn't think your meeting with them was interesting enough to write about."

2. Show Off Your News Sense

Saying thanks is not the only opportunity for communication with a potential boss. Heather Huhman, founder and president of the content marketing consultancy Come Recommended, advises job seekers to forward the hiring manager interesting relevant articles. "Read industry publications and pick an article on which you have an opinion and believe the hiring manager will also enjoy," she says. "The easiest way to send it is via email with a short note about why you're sending it."

If you're familiar with the company (and you should be if you want to work there), you can also send unsolicited ideas and suggestions. But don't be critical of what the company is doing or suggest anything controversial. The point is solely to illustrate your strategic approach, creativity and strong interest, not how you'd run the company.

3. Make That Connection

Leverage what author and human resources consultant Dianna Booher calls your "relationship capital." She recommends offering to link your interviewers with others who can do something for them, including potential clients, strategic partners, sources of industry information, and job candidates (not for your job, duh.)

Other connection boosters: Ask to be added to company newsletters and other communiqués, and take advantage of industry events. "If your industry has a networking event in the near future, ask the hiring manager if she will be attending," says Huhman, "Gently remind the hiring manager by sending a 'hope to see you there' email with details about the event and why you think it would interest him." And, oh, show up.

4. Remember: Spelling Counts

Keep in mind all the ways follow-up notes with your potential employer can be assessed. "Recruiters like me know that career coaches help candidates write their cover letters and resumes, but rarely does anyone seek advice for a note," Kohut says. "For us, they're a sneaky way to learn about the real you -- your true spelling and grammar ability and your creativity shine through."

"I've personally had candidates lose job offers because they emailed letters that had not been proofread and were full of errors," says Bruce Hurwitz, president and CEO of Hurwitz Strategic Staffing. "I also know of occasions when a bad interview followed by a good letter actually repaired the damage and got the candidate the job, so what a person does after an interview is critical."

5. Keep Researching...

You should know well the company you're hoping to work for, not only for your happiness and security, but also to seed conversations with potential employers. If you haven't done it already, this is the time to double check that match.

Look up the company on Wikipedia or get specific information from [Yahoo Business](#) or [BizJournals.com](#), making sure to check out relevant news headlines as well as basic information. You can also look up executive names on [LinkedIn](#). You may have more in common than you think, including colleagues.

Why so much research after the fact? Because, if your first interview was a good one, you'll ideally be called in for that crucial second meeting with the person you'll be reporting to should you land the job. And, with he or she having whittled down candidates to two to three people at this point, you want to do everything possible to become the top pick. Staying abreast of the company's happenings and industry news to align them with your experience is a good way to make an even stronger impression.

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6. ...and Patiently Waiting

What do you do after sending a perfect follow-up? Wait.

"Exercise as much restraint as possible not to call or email the hiring manager for at least one week," says Kohut. "Delays happen and trying to rush the process may be detrimental to your success as a jobseeker."

Huhman advises job seekers to keep emails or phone calls to one per week, paying close attention to timelines shared by the hiring manager. "If you don't hear anything back after contacting the individual three to four times, it's probably time to move on."

However, don't simply "check on the status" of the opening when reaching out. "Make each and every point of contact with the organization meaningful," says Huhman.

Clark Baumgartner, director of human resources for D&B Supply, says that too many of the same follow ups create a negative impression. "Coming across as desperate is not a redeeming quality," he says. "And if the company is interested, you're now in a poor position to negotiate."

7. Mind Your Social Networks

Even if you haven't heard back from your future professional home, they could still be Googling you as they make their final decision. "If your social media does not reflect the skills you presented during the interview, be sure to update Facebook, LinkedIn and anything else that's floating around out there about you," says Sherry Beck Paprocki, co-author of the *Complete Idiot's Guide to Branding Yourself*.

In other words, don't post anything online you wouldn't be comfortable saying to your boss' face, including your previous employers, what advocacy groups you support, and your Neil Diamond obsession.

8. Know Your "Magic Number"

Salary typically doesn't come up in the initial interview, so use this down time to decide on your "magic number". Sites like [Salary.com](#), [AOL Jobs](#) and [SimplyHired](#) can help. If you use another online salary reference, just make sure to check the date -- salary information shouldn't be older than your wallet. Knowing the standard salary for your next job is a separate issue from what you're currently making -- and key to getting what you want.

Keeping busy after a job interview may not make a substantial difference in getting the gig... but it may. And you know what? It sure beats worrying.

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