

Effective Correspondence: Cover, Thank-You and Acceptance Letters

Well-written, personalized cover letters and thank-you letters are important tools in any job search. An effective cover letter illustrates how you are a good match for the job, and a thank you letter is an important follow-up tool which shows that you are a gracious and professional team player.

The Cover Letter

The purpose of the cover letter is to tell the prospective employer what you can do and why you feel you are qualified to do it. A well planned cover letter is just as important as an impressive resume, and together they form an important resource in a job campaign. Your letter is a reflection of you and how you approach your work.

A cover letter generally consists of three paragraphs: the opening, which states why you are interested in the position; the middle section, which discusses your strengths and how they relate to the position; and the closing, which identifies the next steps. Remember, keep it brief and to the point.

Opening

- The opening should catch the reader's attention in a businesslike manner; avoid gimmicks or catchy phrases. Here are some sample openings:
 - Reply to a job listing: *"I am writing to apply for the sales position advertised on your website."*
 - Name a mutual acquaintance: *"Professor Jane Smith, chairperson of the accounting department, has informed me that your firm is looking for an accounting major who is interested in tax accounting."*
 - Refer to a news item: *"A recent Business First article indicated your plans to open a branch office in Columbus."*
 - Summarize your outstanding qualifications: *"Retailing experience in a department store similar to yours, business knowledge, plus a sincere interest in these areas have helped me to learn the basic requirements for running a department efficiently. I would like to contribute the practical skills I have acquired by becoming a part of your management training program."*

Middle

After you have caught the reader's attention, you must present your relevant qualifications for the job. After studying the job description carefully, select and emphasize key points in educational credentials, work experience and personal qualities that are relevant to the job. This is your opportunity to differentiate yourself and emphasize key skills and attributes that make you stand out.

- Demonstrate you understand the problems the employer needs to solve through filling the job opening. Do this by reviewing the job description and researching the company and connecting your education and work experiences to the problems revealed in the job description
- Show that you have both a broad business background and depth in a particular major.
- Highlight how education has prepared you for the job you seek.
- Explain how elective courses reinforce and diversify your qualifications.
- Give examples of how you've supplemented academic experience with internship or part-time work experience.
- Give examples demonstrating you can handle responsibility and manage your time well.

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- Show that you have the ability to work well with other people.
- Show desirable personal qualities, such as leadership, responsibility, organizational skills, etc.

Closing

The last paragraph of the letter calls for action without begging or commanding. Ask for an interview or inquire about next steps, and make action easy by indicating that you will follow up or by giving your phone number and e-mail address. Make sure your voice mail or answering machine has a simple, clear message for callers.

Important Points

- Prepare a separate, personalized cover letter for each position you apply to.
- Use regular business letter format.
- Most cover letters are sent via e-mail or uploaded electronically on the company’s website. Be sure to copy and paste your cover letter into the body of the e-mail rather than send it as an attachment, unless the employer specifically requests it as an attachment.
- Be brief. A cover letter should be no longer than one page.
- **Watch grammar and spelling. Your letter should be error free, so please be sure to have others proofread your letter. The Office of Career Management staff members are available to proofread your job search correspondence.**
- Don’t overuse “I.”
- Provide evidence regarding why you are a good match for the available position.
- If possible, close each letter with a statement of the action you will take, i.e., the specific date you will call to schedule an interview.

Thank You Letters

The thank you letter is perhaps the second most frequent type of correspondence with employers and should follow every employment or informational interview. It is important to send a letter expressing your appreciation and reconfirming your interest in a position. The letter has a number of purposes including summarizing your interest in the position and the company, correcting any negative impressions or clearing up confusing issues that may have surfaced during the interview and stressing relevant points that strengthen your candidacy. After a company visit, where you may have been interviewed by more than one person, it is a good idea to send a thank you letter to each individual who interviewed you. This means you must get the names and titles of all who interviewed you during your visit.

Content

1. Thank the employer for his or her time.
2. Identify the specific position for which you were interviewed, along with the date and place of the interview.
3. Reiterate your interest in the position and why you fit well with the organization. To make your letter authentic, sincere and memorable, personalize the letter based on your interaction with the interviewer (e.g., I enjoyed our conversation about managing project teams, as that is one of my key strengths and a skill I strive to excel in.)
4. Close with your phone number and e-mail address, and indicate that you look forward to hearing from the employer at the time specified during the interview.

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Correspondence Regarding Offers

Although job offers are usually made over the telephone, you may want to follow up the conversation with a letter. Be sure to state any conditions you agreed to on the phone (starting or decision date, travel plans, etc.).

Acknowledgment of Offer

- Acknowledge receipt of offer.
- Express appreciation regarding offer.
- Notify company of date you expect to make a decision.
- Ask for any specific information you may need for your decision.

Acceptance of Offer

- Accept the offer.
- Notify of travel plans and anticipated arrival date, if applicable.
- Indicate that you look forward to receiving a contract or letter of offer with details.
- Review the details of the offer, including salary, start date and any other negotiated items.
- Express appreciation and pleasure in joining the company.

Declining Offer

- Decline offer politely.
- Express appreciation for the offer and company's interest in you.

A Note about Delivery Methods – Email or Postal Mail?

In this digital age, it is standard practice to send your job search correspondence via e-mail, unless an employer provides other specific instructions. In general, it is a good idea to write your letter in Word so that you can use the spelling and grammar check functions, and then copy and paste it into an e-mail. Don't forget to write a descriptive, compelling subject line for your e-mail correspondence. It is also fine to attach your letter to an e-mail and include a short explanation of the attachment in the body of the e-mail; however, you risk that a busy recruiter or hiring manager may not click on the attachment.

If you have a direct contact within the company, you might also consider following up your e-mailed cover letter and resume with a hard-copy via postal mail with a note attached emphasizing your continued interest.

Thank you letters may be sent via e-mail as well. In general, use your interactions with the employer as a guide. If all correspondence has been via e-mail, then an e-mailed thank you letter should suffice. Additionally, if you know that decisions for next rounds will be made quickly, then an e-mail thank you is essential. Some candidates prefer to send a personalized e-mail, followed up by a neatly handwritten note via postal mail.

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Additional Resources

Office of Career Management Graduate Student Career Search Resources page (please see Wetfeet and Vault guides on cover letters, as well as CareerBeam for additional information, cover letter samples, and a cover letter template): <http://fisher.osu.edu/offices/career-management/graduate-students/career-resources/>

<http://www.quintcareers.com/>

Please see the sample cover letters, thank you letters and acceptance letters below for additional ideas.

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Sample cover letter 1 – internship (e-mail format)

Date: March 10, 2009

From: Melissa Ramirez [Ramirez@mail.com]

To: Maya.Smith@tdc.com

Subject: MBA with Sustainability Focus Applying for Sustainability Internship

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am contacting you regarding the Sustainability Internship at The Dannon Company. I recently read and was inspired by Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus' *Creating a World Without Poverty*, which highlights Groupe Danone's innovative partnership with Grameen Bank to create a successful social enterprise. A company of the stature and recognition of Dannon has the potential to make a meaningful and lasting impact through its sustainability initiatives, not only in terms of cost-reductions with regard to, say, packaging or transportation, and doing the right thing by its shareholders, but also for its larger community of stakeholders; this is truly exciting.

As a first year MBA student at Ohio State University's Fisher College of Business, I am focusing on finance and sustainability, two disciplines that balance each other well to support the long-term viability of any business venture. Prior to my graduate work, I spent four years in the non-profit education reform sector in Washington, DC. Many of the organizations for which I worked were start-ups or undergoing large-scale change, and I have always thrived in entrepreneurial environments that demand an independent work ethic, versatility, and the ability to multi-task and learn quickly.

Since arriving at Fisher, I have pursued opportunities in sustainability that I hope to leverage during this internship. This past quarter I completed the core course for Fisher's sustainability minor, which was an excellent survey of how environmental considerations can successfully and profitably be incorporated into business decisions, especially with regard to supply chain and triple bottom line. I am also on the leadership committee for OSU's Net Impact chapter and we are currently planning our weeklong signature event titled: Change to Sustain. Recently, I was elected as President of one of Fisher's premier MBA-led organizations, Fisher Board Fellows, and serve on the non-profit board of the Center for Science and Industry here in Columbus.

It would be an honor to be a part of the legacy, and the future, of The Dannon Company. I believe in Dannon's array of wholesome products and its mission, and I would be excited to work with the Green Obsession Team on analyzing and planning for the sustainability of Dannon's operations. Within the next week I will contact you to confirm that you received my email and resume and to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time and for considering my resume for this position.

Sincerely,

Melissa Ramirez

123 ABC Street

Columbus, OH 43212

614-222-3344

ramirez@mail.com

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Sample cover letter 2 – full-time position (hard-copy format)

771 Roland Court
Westerville, Ohio 43082

October 12, 2009

Ms. Maura Lee
Human Resource Generalist
Lancaster Pollard
65 East State Street, 16th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Ms. Lee:

It was a pleasure to meet you at the Lancaster Pollard information event on Tuesday. I was impressed by your firm and enjoyed the conversations I had with the members of the Lancaster Pollard team.

Prior to business school, I worked as a radiographer for thirteen years. During this time I developed a keen interest in healthcare and wanted to further my career with an MBA. This summer I interned with a local boutique investment bank specializing in healthcare. As a summer associate, I worked on several complex transactions involving nursing homes and a mezzanine loan to a hospital in Texas.

My goal has always been to have a career in healthcare where I could make a difference. Over the last year I have witnessed how the right capital structure is critical to the operations of a hospital or skilled nursing facility. As a forthcoming MBA graduate in Corporate Finance, I am strongly interested in a career at Lancaster Pollard where I can ensure providers have access to low cost capital to achieve their mission. I think that you may find my background unique; thus, I have included a couple of highlights that may be of interest to you.

Healthcare background: Thirteen years of healthcare experience beginning with my enlistment in the U.S. Air Force in 1994. My experience has been primarily clinical with a more recent focus this summer on investment banking.

Six Sigma: Greenbelt candidate expected completion June 2008.

Pursuit of excellence: Graduated with Cum Laude Honors as an undergraduate while working fulltime at Nationwide Children's Hospital in a leadership role.

I would appreciate the opportunity to interview with you for the Healthcare Associate position. I can be reached at 614-123-4567 or blakely@mail.com. For more detailed information on my experience and skills, I have enclosed a copy of my resume. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Allen Blakely

Enclosure

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Sample thank you letter

655 Providence Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43214

January 29, 2010

Mr. Joseph Borgenson
Staff Assistant
General Mills Corporation
P.O. Box 1113
Minneapolis, MN 55440

Dear Mr. Borgenson,

Thank you for taking the time to interview me for your Distribution Intern position while you were recruiting at the Fisher College of Business on January 28. I enjoyed meeting you and talking about how my skills and abilities can benefit General Mills. I also enjoyed learning more about the specifics of your internship program.

I am very excited about your Distribution Internship program. As I stated in the interview, I feel my academic courses in Transportation and Logistics plus my ability to manage my time effectively to reach individual and team goals will enable me to make a contribution to General Mills through this program. I have attached the syllabus for our Operations Design course, which you requested during my interview.

I hope to hear from you the week of February 17 as you indicated in the interview. If you should need any additional information or would need to contact me sooner, please call me at (614) 555-0100 or email me at zeroski.10@osu.edu.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Zeroski

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Sample Acceptance Letter

Jane Fieldstone
878 First Street
Columbus, OH 43212
614-888-7777

May 29, 2009

Anil Patel
Johnstone Pottery
87 Washington Street
Smithfield, CA 08055

Dear Mr. Patel,

As we discussed on the phone, I am very pleased to accept the position of Marketing Manager with Johnstone Pottery. Thank you for the opportunity. I am eager to make a positive contribution to the company and to work with everyone on the Johnstone team.

As we discussed, my starting salary will be \$85,000, with a bonus of \$10,000. Health and life insurance benefits will be provided after 30 days of employment. I understand that the company also offers a 401(k) plan with company match as well as three weeks paid vacation.

Thank you again for the offer. I am excited about joining your team and I look forward to starting employment on July 5, 2010. If there is any additional information or paperwork you need prior to then, please let me know.

Thanks again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Fieldstone

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