

Thank You Letters

One of the first questions students and alumni ask is whether it is imperative to write a thank you note following a meeting with an attorney. Will it *really* be the deciding factor in whether they hire you or someone else?

Possibly. The same standards apply for a thank you note as for the initial cover letter. If it contains grammatical or typographical errors, is poorly composed, or reflects poor judgment (sending a funny Hallmark card, for example!) it could result in knocking you out of the race.

Conversely, even if it is perfect, it will not ensure that you get the job. The goal is to reinforce the decision made during the interview to offer you the job.

A thank you note should be sent immediately after meeting with an attorney for any reason: an informational interview, a job interview, lunch or even coffee. It is important to acknowledge the information, as well as the gift of time, that the person has given you.

As reflected in the samples attached, a thank you note need only be 3 short paragraphs or it can be longer if warranted. It should convey the following sentiments:

- Your gratitude for the time they set aside for you to discuss X.
- Summarize a few key points discussed and what you gained from hearing their perspective if it was an informational interview;
- If it was a job/clerk interview, reiterate in 1-2 lines why you maintain a strong interest in joining their law firm and what you bring to the position;
- Conclude by reiterating your appreciation and state a plan-of-action if there is one [*I look forward to hearing from you when a decision has been reached on my candidacy; or I will keep in touch with you during law school as we discussed; or I will follow-up with XYZ as you suggested.*]

The last question frequently asked regarding thank you notes is whether they can/should be emailed, faxed, hand-written or typed. There is no “right” answer. It is a decision you must make based on your impression of the attorney.

The most conservative approach is to type and mail a thank you note on plain bond paper. If a certain tone of warmth and friendliness was established during the meeting, or if it is a person you know well, a hand-written note on a plain bond note card is fine, assuming your penmanship is attractive.

However, some attorneys are quite comfortable with using the computer, a fact easily gauged by asking some general questions about computer use in their office or practice. This can cut across age and gender lines. An e-mailed thank you note may be perfectly acceptable. However, it should be in business format and contained in the body of the email. Do not attach it as a Word document.

Sample Thank You Letter (After Interview)

Gillian Filmore

2345 Lawyerly Street
Aurora, CO 12345
(303) 555-12345

March 22, 2007

Linda Tompkins
Hiring Partner
A-Z Law Firm
444 Water St.
Denver, CO 80219

Dear Ms. Tompkins:

It was a pleasure to meet you yesterday to discuss a [summer clerkship position] [associate position] at the A-Z Law Firm. My interest in your firm was significantly strengthened after visiting with the other attorneys and learning about their practices.

Mr. Thompson, Ms. Shear and Ms. Whitcomb described their respective practices in employment, commercial and real estate law with refreshing candidness. I appreciated their honesty about the rigors of law practice in a small firm. I am quite accustomed to working under pressure and juggling different projects. In college, I held a full-time job while maintaining a strong B-average. Moreover, my commentaries on current political issues were frequently featured in the campus newspaper, *The Bull Ship*. In law school, I was a staff editor for the Transportation Law Journal, participated in Moot Court, and was a member of the Doyle Inn of Court.

A-Z Law Firm is exactly the type of organization I have envisioned myself joining: a small, general practice law firm where I will have hands-on experience early in my career. I understand that you are still interviewing other candidates and that a decision will not be made until the end of the month. Thank you for considering me for the associate position and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Gillian Filmore

Gillian Filmore

Sample Thank You Letter (After Informational Interview)

Samuel (Sam) C. Student

1234 Colorado Blvd.
Aurora, CO 80015
303-666-5555
sstudent07@student.law.du.edu

October 26, 2006

Jennifer Beam
Attorney-at-Law
1278 Havana Street
Aurora, CO 80202

Dear Ms. Beam:

Thank you very much for the time you spent with me last Friday describing your family law practice. I feel that learning how to develop my legal career from experienced attorneys such as you is an important part of my education.

I appreciated hearing about your career path, and was very impressed by your strong opinion that one's legal career begins on the first day of law school! Clearly, the internships you chose as a law student and your subsequent clerkships enabled you to improve your research and legal writing abilities, as well as your knowledge about the issues inherent in domestic law matters.

Thank you for affirming my "career electives," as you so aptly called them. In addition to being a student member of the Rhone-Brackett Inn of Court, I also interned for the Honorable Michael Martinez in the Family Court Division of the 2nd Judicial District. Currently, I am participating in the Child Advocacy Law Clinic of the Rocky Mountain Children's Law Center. Thank you for sharing with me the names of other family law practitioners. I will be interested in learning their perspectives on the rigors of the practice.

In closing, please feel free to call me if there is ever a possibility of a position in your office, or if I could do some spot research for you. I have enclosed another copy of my resume for your convenience. Again, thank you for your helpful advice and words of encouragement. I hope that our paths cross again soon.

Sincerely,

Sam Student

Sam Student

Enclosure

Sample Thank You Letter (After Informational Interview)

Jane Student
123 Pontiac
Denver, Colorado 80220
(720) 657-3843
jstudent07@student.law.du.edu

October 16, 2006

Gayle Joyce
First Assistant Attorney General
Colorado Attorney General's Office
1525 Sherman Street; Floor 5
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Ms. Joyce:

I enjoyed meeting you yesterday and wish to thank you for talking with me about your career in criminal law. As I mentioned, I am meeting with attorneys who are practicing in areas of law that interest me. Your perspectives on the national and regional trends in criminal prosecution, as well as qualities you look for in a potential employee, were extremely informative.

I appreciated your candidness about the importance of gaining as much practical experience as I can during law school, e.g. participating in moot court, writing competitions, or one of the many clinics here at the law school. Your advice to give serious thought to the type of work environment that I would enjoy, as well as setting long-term goals (to be modified as I gain experience and clear preferences), was most helpful. After hearing about how you "built" your resume, I understand the importance of thinking about these issues as I begin my career.

Additionally, I enjoyed hearing about your own experience as a student intern in the Attorney General's office and how that helped lead you to your current position. I was unaware of the fact that the Attorney General's office rarely hires recent graduates. That alone is a strong argument in favor of interning in the office during law school so that I might get to know the attorneys in the legal department.

I know how busy you must be, and I am sincerely grateful for the time you gave to me. I will keep you posted on developments in my law school career and subsequent job search.

Sincerely,

Jane Student

Jane Student

Sample Thank You Letter (After Panel Presentation)

Sally Smith

1234 Colorado Blvd.
Aurora, CO 80015
303-674-8490
ssmith08@student.law.du.edu

September 6, 2007

Arthur Quinn
Attorney General's Office
620 Sherman Street
Denver, CO 80222

Dear Mr. Quinn:

I wanted to drop you a note of thanks for coming to the University of Denver Sturm College of Law last week to speak to us about your area of practice. I thoroughly enjoyed having the opportunity to hear you, along with the other panelists, talk about the opportunities available in state government.

Your career in the Natural Resources and Environmental Section of the Attorney General's Office sounds fascinating and is the type of career that I'm interested in pursuing. My undergraduate degree in Environmental Sciences, coupled with my recent intern experience at the EarthJustice Environmental Law Clinic at the Law School, has cemented my interest in pursuing a career in environmental law. As I begin my career, I am cognizant of the importance of building my resume with experience that will ultimately lead me to a position such as yours. To that end, I would appreciate the opportunity to come and meet with you in your office to discuss the particulars of your career path. I have enclosed my resume for your information.

Thank you again for your participation in the Career Development Center program last week. I will follow-up with your office next week to see if we can arrange a convenient time to meet.

Yours truly,

Sally Smith

Sally Smith

Enclosure

Sample Thank You Letter (After Meeting at Career Fair)

Maura Wiggins

1200 S. Broadway, #123
Denver, Colorado 80111
(303) 555-3333

30 March 2007

Constance C. Talmage, Esq.
Colorado Lawyers Committee
1875 Lawrence Street, Suite 200
Denver, Colorado 80202

Dear Ms. Talmage:

I enjoyed speaking with you last week at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law Career Fair. I sincerely appreciated your special consideration of my application for the Hill & Robbins Fellowship despite my being a first year law student. I am confident that my background and experience in public interest law would be useful to the Colorado Lawyers Committee.

Your comments gave me a good understanding of the mission of the Colorado Lawyers Committee, as well as your expectations for the fellowship position you are seeking to fill. As we discussed, my experience as an intern at the ACLU of Pittsburgh taught me the enormous impact that public interest groups can have. Because I am interested in working toward beneficial systemic changes in my new community, I know that interning with the Colorado Lawyers Committee would certainly assist me in this endeavor.

I look forward to speaking with you further about my candidacy in the near future.

Sincerely,

Maura Wiggins

Maura Wiggins