

JOB-SEARCH CORRESPONDENCE

In the job search you have three intertwined opportunities to showcase and prove your qualifications. Your resumes, correspondence, and interviews should be a unified presentation in which you detail your strengths in increasing depth and complexity. Job-search success comes from understanding the needs of the employer and from revealing yourself progressively, clearly and confidently as one who can fill these needs.

Taking the time to research the company, to prove your qualifications for the company and the job, and to communicate in an interesting, organized manner will give you a definite job-search advantage. Your correspondence reflects your style and personality and, most importantly, projects your professional image.

Whether a networking letter of introduction, a resume cover letter, a thank-you letter, or a job acceptance or refusal, the synergy of your carefully chosen words, excellent grammar and style, relevant content, professional format, and perfect timing is essential to a winning presentation.

COVER LETTERS

YOU CAN NOW INCLUDE A COVER LETTER WITH YOUR RESUME WHEN YOU USE EPACK RECRUITING!

While many letters you write will be to employers who are familiar with NC State and the College of Management, most will be to employers you target because of your personal interest.

In most of these cases, managers have no particular incentive to answer unsolicited letters. The responsibility is yours to write compellingly and convincingly in order to motivate employers to respond to your requests; the burden is yours to follow through and establish the contact and the relationship.

Whether letters are invited or uninvited, first impressions become lasting impressions. Your letter most likely will be your first communication with an employer, and, thus, is your symbolic representative.

Tone is important: be positive and confident, be complimentary but not obsequious, and excite the reader to want to know you.

Letters should be no more than one typed 8-1/2" x 11" page and contain three or four concise paragraphs. Type all letters on the same professional paper that you have for your resumes and use matching envelopes. Center the letter on the page and allow at least one-inch left and right margins.

Send handwritten thank-you notes for informal networking contacts only.

Edit and proofread all correspondence carefully for format, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and style.

Be aware that many employers skim the letter first for neatness and errors to determine whether they will even read your resume.

A form cover letter sent to 100 companies will generate a form response. A more workable and productive strategy is to target ten-15 organizations.

Then, homework can pay off. Before you compose your letter, research the organization and the job to understand the company or the manager's needs and priorities. Review the web site, the annual report, articles in the press, and the job description.

Address each letter to a specific person; check directories or call the company to get the appropriate name and correct spelling. If you cannot find an appropriate contact, try CareerSearch on the University Career Center website or call or e-mail the company's Human Resources Manager or College Relations Manager.

Use your one-page cover letter to establish goodwill and to define your personal advantages with the particular employer, to make a case for your fit with a particular industry, company, and job, and to try to get an interview or a referral to a hiring manager.

Focus on the employer's needs by highlighting your relevant accomplishments and strengths. Choose three or four of your best selling points, preferably skills, for emphasis in the body of the letter and develop specific, explanatory, vivid examples to support your claim.

In a cover letter for an internship, focus on relevant coursework, papers, and projects and transferable skills.

Timing of your letters is important. Be sure to make a follow-up phone call one to two weeks after you put the letter in the mail, asking if the employer has received and looked over the letter and if this moment is a good time to talk. You have now opened the door with this employer.

THANK-YOU LETTERS

Thank you letters following network contacts or job interviews may have a big payoff for you because many job-seekers omit this crucial step.

Employers often will make judgments from your letters about your comfort with professional courtesy and etiquette, specifically, how you will function within the organization and how you will deal with clients.

Immediately following an interview, send a thank-you letter to reinforce your readiness for the job and your value to the employer. Reiterate strong points from your interview and include information you forgot or need to correct.

Always be positive, agreeable, and professional. End with a strong, goodwill closing, confirming to the employer that you really want this job.

The standard rule is that the letter should be on the interviewer's desk no more than 48 hours after your appointment. Send individual thank-you letters to every decision-maker and to anyone with whom you spoke for 15 minutes or more. If relevant, mention the names of others whom you met briefly.

Make sure that the envelope is as formal as the letter inside.

Use a thank-you email or fax under very specific conditions, for instance, the employer wants to make a hiring decision immediately or the company is an informal tech start-up, but always be business-formal in your use of language.

In the RE line of an email, write the subject matter; i.e. Thank-you for Interview on September 28, 200x.

If you attach the letter in Word, the format will be correct, but many readers will not open attachments. If you type the letter in the body of the email,

appearance is important. Immediately follow this correspondence with a snail-mail thank-you.

LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

A letter of acceptance is your written “contract.” In an enthusiastic but straightforward letter, repeat all the specific negotiations: your starting date, salary, bonus, and any special negotiated perks, benefits, and arrangements. Include a goodwill message to your employer.

REFUSAL LETTER

The tone of your letter of refusal should be appreciative and polite, and the content should be brief and direct. Your goal for this letter is to maintain goodwill and to not “burn bridges,” so thank the employer for the offer and state that you have accepted another position.

EMAIL IN THE JOB SEARCH

Decisions about the use of email in the general job search are difficult. You need to know the preferences of your audience, such as accessibility and comfort with technology, formality of style, and personal frustration level over the amount and content of daily messages.

In general, during your job search, a multi-pronged approach is best, using email, phone, and snail mail moderately and strategically.

If you have a need to make your contact quickly, use email, but follow up with paper documents.

Remember to choose the words for your subject line carefully to attract the reader through the spam.

Your writing should be professional and careful, using tips from AUDIENCE STRATEGY and BUSINESS WRITING.