Thank-you note could seal the deal

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The world of business may be fast-paced and at times, quite cut-throat, but good manners still count for quite a bit.

In fact, those who show proper etiquette in the workplace often distinguish themselves because they have shown grace and style when many others seem to have forgotten it – or never learned it in the first place.

Take, for example, those pesky thank-you notes that you used to avoid. Now, they are critical to your reputation in the business world as a mature, thoughtful, professional being.

When do you send a thank-you note? After a conversation that netted some helpful advice or insight, after a professional dinner where someone else picked up the tab, after receiving help from a colleague to plan a conference, etc. But always, always send a thank-you note after a job interview.

This is one of the most critical steps that often is forsaken by job candidates who may feel that a spoken “thank you” after an interview does the trick, or even a hurried e-mail message after an interview.

A written thank-you will be added to your interview file. It will stick in the mind of the interviewer and will give you a last chance to create a good impression.

But remember: A thank-you note is not powerful unless it is well done. In fact, a sloppy, ill-conceived one may leave the lasting impression that you’re not a good job candidate.

Pointers on writing that top-drawer thank-you note:

- Keep it short but not too short. “Thanks a lot for the interview,” isn’t enough. Try something like, “I just wanted to thank you again for the opportunity to interview with the XYZ Company on Sept. 10. I enjoyed meeting you and the other members of your team to discuss the position of systems analyst.”

- Then describe something specific that will place you solidly in the interviewer’s memory.

- In the second paragraph, restate qualifications and experience.

- Keep it perfect. The note should be typed, with no spelling or grammatical errors, on quality paper. Sign your letter, with your typed signature beneath it.

- Be timely. Send the note within 24 hours of the interview.

- Shine your star one more time. In the last paragraph, express enthusiasm for the job and a commitment to do your best.

- Search your memory. If you feel that you forgot to mention something critical in the interview, use your note to go over the point.

- Follow up. Tell the interviewer that you will call in a few days to check on the status of the job.