

A Simple Thank You
The Secret Weapon for Opening Career Doors
By Sarah Michel © 2005

From the moment Kim walked through my door, I knew this was not going to be a typical networking interview. When she called, referred to me by a friend of mine, she said all the right things to persuade me to make time in my busy schedule to meet with this recent college graduate who was trying to expand her network.

During our meeting, she was organized and prepared. She had obviously done her homework, as she knew quite a lot about my business and community involvement. She took notes during our meeting and frequently referred to her list of intelligently prepared questions. Kim never asked the dreaded, dead end question, “Do you know of any jobs or anyone who might be hiring?” As tempting as that question is to ask, the answer is usually, “No.”

Instead Kim asked all the right questions, such as: who would I recommend she try and connect with; what professional associations would be good for her to look into; what books would I recommend she read; and what recommendations did I have for a young woman entering the workforce? These thought-provoking questions resulted in leads, ideas, connections and opportunities that I was able to provide for her.

A few days after our meeting I received a hand-written thank you card from Kim. It was a simple note card, with the words “thank you” printed on the front. I discovered that this was the same thank you card she sent to each person she met with during her journey into the working world.

In her note she thanked me for my time and updated me on the progress she was making on the leads I gave her during our initial meeting. I was so impressed by this gesture that I immediately picked up the telephone and called two of the contacts I recommended to her and personally encouraged them to meet with Kim.

Shortly after we met, I was not surprised to hear that she beat out more experienced candidates to land a wonderful position as director of a new start-up, non-profit organization affiliated with Princeton University. She interviewed with more than 10 people for that job and she wrote an individual thank you note to each and every one of them. Think that made a difference for Kim? I’m willing to bet yes!

Many times when I recruited and hired for two large healthcare systems in Colorado and Texas, the one thing that raised a candidate over

another equally qualified one was a simple hand-written thank you note. I stapled every note I received, which were not many, to the hiring file of that applicant and it became a part of his or her personnel record.

In the age of voice mail, text messaging, e-mail and faxing, the art of the “good old-fashioned” thank you note is being lost. I find myself sounding just like my mother when I nag my children, “Don’t forget to write a thank you note!” It’s so easy to just shoot off an e-mail or leave a voice mail because it’s more convenient.

Recently I heard Dan Burrus, a popular futurist speaker and author of *The New York Times* best seller “Technotrends,” who specializes in predicting trends in business and technology, say that the next “big thing” is going to be the hand-written thank you note. He said that with all the modern technology available at our fingertips, nothing would ever replace the impact of a hand-written thank you note. I believe he’s right. When was the last time you took five minutes to write a note of appreciation and gratitude to your network contacts or job interviewers?

Perfecting Connecting Action Steps:

- 1) Invest in some simple thank you note cards. They could have your name or company logo on the cover, but make sure the inside is blank for your written words to stand out.
- 2) Make sure you write an individual thank you note to anyone who has provided a lead, opened a door for you or took the time to meet or interview you. This is the least expensive marketing investment you will make to produce the most dramatic results.
- 3) If you travel a lot, keep a stack in your briefcase with pre-stamped envelopes handy so you can write a note while you’re on the plane and drop it in the mail as you walk through the airport.

Start perfecting your connecting with your network by showing sincere appreciation. A simple thank you will go a long way.