
JOB SEARCH LETTERS – OVERVIEW

Office of Career & Professional Development
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A powerful letter can open doors and influence how a potential employer views you. Letters are opportunities to show how well you write, advocate and persuade. Five basic types of letters are involved in the job search:

1. Cover letters – Application and Prospecting letters
2. Networking letters
3. Thank you letters
4. Acceptance letters
5. Withdrawal / rejection letters

IMPORTANT NOTE: How to submit?

Check to see if the employer indicated a preference for a form of communication on the posting (if available). “Letter” below refers to posted, emailed or otherwise submitted communications. When using email or submitting through a website, use the same level of formality as you would in a posted letter. Include the address block, the date, and triple check your spelling. Spell-check the subject line as well. We advise attaching the cover letter to an email, rather than writing into the body of the email, unless you emailing a contact for an informational interview, in which case a less formal email is fine. If you attach it, make sure to **PDF your attachment** (otherwise your edits may show to the reader.) Before you email, make sure to open any attachments to verify you’re sending the right documents, and send a blind copy to yourself to confirm what was sent and to make it easy to resend if necessary.

1. COVER LETTERS: “APPLICATION” and “PROSPECTING” LETTERS

Application Letters - This letter responds to a specific job listing and should demonstrate your enthusiasm for the position and illustrate how your skills and qualifications fit the requirements. Show how you match the job’s stated and implicit requirements. Link major components of the job to your past experiences. If the listing doesn’t contain the employer’s name (a “blind posting”, such as frequently found on Craigslist), your letter will be more generic.

Prospecting Letters – These are letters to employers who have not posted a job. Similar in format to the application letter, prospecting letters must be addressed to a particular individual.

If you can, establish a contact with an organization *before* you send a prospecting letter. If someone suggests a potential employer to you *and has agreed that you may use his or her name*, mention that person’s name upfront in your letter (e.g., “Clarence Kay recommended that I contact you.”) Or, ask your connection to contact the employer in

advance of your letter. This is a decision which is best assessed by the contact person, so follow his or her lead as to the best course of action.

2. NETWORKING LETTERS

Networking letters are designed to obtain an informational interview, *not* a job interview. They should communicate your interest in obtaining information about the targeted individual, the practice area, or organization, and the reason you are interested in obtaining that information (“As a second year law student at UC Hastings, I am developing an interest in antitrust litigation.”) As a general rule, don’t attach a resume to this type of letter because doing so signals that you are applying for a job. Of course, bring your resume with you to an informational interview but don’t produce it until the interviewer agrees to review it or until you are asked for it.

Informational interviews also can be arranged over the telephone. Prepare the questions you would ask at an informational interview in advance of such a call, just in case the person says, “Hey, I’ve got some time right now, what would you like to know?”

Do not email a list of questions to someone, in lieu of an in-person or phone interview. This is inconsiderate of that person’s time (responding thoughtfully over email takes a lot of time), and you forgo the opportunity to establish a connection (much easier done in person, or over the phone).

3. THANK YOU LETTERS

When to send? Thank you or “follow-up” letters express your appreciation for the time someone spent with you, show your continued interest in working with the organization, and allow you to share more qualifications or enthusiasm. Thank you letters should be sent **no later than 24-48 hours** after the visit.

Personalize your letters by including specific references to the conversation(s) you had with that individual (“Your description of your work involving the responsible development of the South Bay waterfront fascinated me. I look forward to being involved with similar proactive work someday myself. P.S. I hope your son feels better.”) This shows not only your attentiveness to what the person had to say, but also helps remind the individual who you are!

How many? When you interview with more than one individual, consider writing to each separately. This can be a personal and effective touch which demonstrates that you are prompt, thorough and complete. On the other hand, writing to all twelve people with whom you interviewed may not be feasible, and certainly presents a greater opportunity for errors. Another approach is to write to the person primarily responsible for your interview or the one with whom you had the most contact. If you do, request that she express your appreciation and enthusiasm to the others with whom you met. You also might consider leaving brief voice mail messages for the other attorneys with whom you met.

Handwritten or emailed? Some say that handwritten letters can convey genuine personal appreciation. Others say that a thank you letter is a business letter and thus warrants a more business-like communication (i.e., typewritten). Whichever method

you choose, make sure your style and choice reflect the culture of the organization you are targeting, and that the letter is error-free.

4. ACCEPTANCE LETTERS

This letter is used to accept a job offer and confirm the terms of your employment (salary, starting date, etc.). It often follows a telephone conversation in which you discussed the details of the offer and terms of employment or a formal written offer. Your letter is a contractual acceptance of a contractual offer. Treat it as such and close with an appropriate expression of your enthusiasm to be joining the group.

5. WITHDRAWAL / REJECTION LETTERS

These are letters used to either reject an offer of employment or to notify employers with whom you have outstanding applications that you have accepted another application. Express your appreciation for the employer's consideration of your application or the offer. In the case of an offer, indicate that you have carefully considered it. You do not need to include details of the offer that you have accepted or why you are rejecting this one. Remember, however, that the legal community is small and an employer you reject today may offer you a lateral move five years from now. Particularly with rejection letters, it's a good idea to preface your letter with a personal phone call to the recruiting coordinator or hiring attorney at the organization. This type of personal touch will make you memorable (in the good way).

Sample Networking/Information Interview Letter

Ineed Yourhelp
100 McAllister Street • San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 555-1212 • yourhel@uchastings.edu

December 12, 2015

Ino Itall, Esq.
Barnburner, Cropduster and Bannerflyers
800 Airport Road
Oakland CA 94816

Dear Ms. Itall:

Aviation law has long been my passion. I am currently a first year student at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law with a B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering from Union College and a commercial pilot's license. I am particularly interested in Lindburgh v. the FAA and have been following it closely.

If you have time, I would be very interested in speaking with you about aviation law, your career, and general opportunities in the field. Any advice you might be able to offer would be invaluable in helping me plan my career in this field. I will call your office to see if we could set up a brief time to meet.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Ineed Yourhelp

NOTE *how the writer introduces herself and hooks the reader in the first two sentences. She specifies how her background matches the firm's practice area. She also asks for an informational meeting, not a job interview. By not enclosing her resume, she makes it clear that she seeks advice and does not expect a job. The text of this letter could also go into the body of an email, without the letterhead and address block.*

Sample Thank You Letter Following an Interview

Andy Sipowicz

**100 McAllister Street • San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 555-1212 • asipowicz@uchastings.edu**

September 22, 2015

Harry Callahan, Esq.
Smith, Wesson & Callahan
800 Enforcer Road
Oakland, CA 94816

Dear Mr. Callahan:

I would like to thank you and the other members of Smith, Wesson & Callahan for meeting with me yesterday afternoon. I enjoyed learning more about your civil rights practice and your reasons for starting Smith, Wesson & Callahan.

Meeting with Vance Johnson, Martina Hingis, Summer Sanders, Ben Williams, and Dolores Claiborne provided valuable insights into the depth of the firm's civil rights practice. Please extend my gratitude to them for their time.

My interview confirmed and heightened my enthusiasm about starting my legal career at Smith, Wesson & Callahan. As I indicated during our meeting, I feel that my background as a community organizer, coupled with my strong research and writing skills, make me an ideal candidate for an entry level associate position.

Thank you for your consideration and for your advice on fun backpacking spots in the Sierras. I will look into your recommendations before my next trip to the mountains. I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Sincerely,

Andy Sipowicz

NOTE how Andy personalized this letter. He reiterated his interest and why he feels that he would be a good fit. Andy could have directed personal letters to the other people he met with; however, if he couldn't personalize letters to those people, it is acceptable to ask that the primary interviewer thank them for him.

Sample Thank You Letter Following an Informational Meeting

Andy Sipowicz

**100 McAllister Street • San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 555-1212 • asipowicz@uchastings.edu**

September 22, 2015

Harry Callahan, Esq.
Barnburner, Cropduster and Bannerflyers
800 Airport Road
Oakland, CA 94816

Dear Mr. Callahan:

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me yesterday afternoon. I learned a great deal about the field and enjoyed hearing about your aviation practice, including your work with Skydiving Aviation and other operators at major airports across the United States. I also appreciated the update on Lindburgh v the FAA. Our conversation confirmed that aviation law is the field for me.

As you suggested, I contacted John Rambo at Cessna, Piper and Bonanza . He kindly agreed to meet with me next week and he expressed his desire to catch up with you for lunch in the near future.

Thank you also for your suggestions on revising my resume. I enclose a copy which incorporates your ideas, and--should you hear of opportunities for a 2012 Summer Associate position in aviation law-- I would appreciate it if you would keep me in mind.

I will accept your kind invitation to keep in touch with you concerning my progress. Thanks again for your help. I look forward to speaking with you again.

Sincerely,

Andy Sipowicz

NOTE *how thoroughly this writer references the help that Mr. Callahan provided, and how Andy followed through on his suggestions. Andy also indicated that he would keep in touch.*

Sample Acceptance Letter

Audrey Avocat

**100 McAllister Street • San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 555-1212 • avocat@uchastings.edu**

November 22, 2015

Richard Barnburner, Esq.
Barnburner, Cropduster and Bannerflyers
800 Airport Road
Oakland, CA 94816

Dear Mr. Barnburner:

I am very pleased to accept your offer for a 2012 Summer Associate position at Barnburner, Cropduster and Bannerflyers. I understand that the position will start on Monday, May 16, 2016 in your San Leandro branch office and that the position will be full time until Friday, August 5, 2016. You indicated that the salary will be \$1000/week.

I am excited about the opportunity and I look forward to a mutually beneficial summer experience.

If there is any additional information you need, please contact me at the telephone number above.

Sincerely,

Audrey Avocat

NOTE *the brief, but gracious statement of acceptance and the reiteration of the salient terms of the offer.*

Sample Withdrawal Letter

Luke Duke

**100 McAllister Street • San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 555-1212 • dukel@uchastings.edu**

December 18, 2015

Edward Stevens, Esq.
Suhem, Billum and Keepum
100 Atlas Street
San Francisco, CA 94110

Dear Mr. Stevens:

I very much appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you and your colleague, Mary Jones, earlier this fall. Suhem, Billum and Keepum is doing some very interesting work in the area of product liability defense.

I am writing, however, to let you know that I have accepted a Summer Associate position with Cessna, Piper and Bonanza in Palo Alto. As we discussed, I have a particular interest in aviation law, and I believe that Cessna's work in the area of aviation product liability defense would give me some additional background to round out my experience. I remain very interested, however, in Suhem, Billum and Keepum's work, and I hope that I may stay in touch with you in the future.

Again, thank you very much for your kind consideration and your support.

Sincerely,

Luke Duke

NOTE *how Luke expresses his appreciation for the time and consideration extended and how he provides a professional and understandable explanation of his withdrawal from consideration.*

Sample Rejection Letter

Andy Sipowicz
100 McAllister Street • San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 555-1212 • asipowicz@uchastings.edu

December 22, 2015

Harry Callahan, Esq.
Barnburner, Cropduster and Bannerflyers
800 Airport Road
Oakland, CA 94816

Dear Mr. Callahan:

I am flattered to receive your offer of a 2015 Summer Associate position at Barnburner, Cropduster and Bannerflyers, especially since you indicated that you would not be hiring any Summer Associates. As we discussed on the phone today, however, regrettably I must decline.

You had kindly referred me to John Rambo at Cessna, Piper and Bonanza, and, before receiving your offer, I explored with him the idea of a Summer Associate position in Palo Alto. I believe that Cessna's extensive work in the area of aviation product liability defense would give me some additional background to round out my experience. I am still very interested, however, in Barnburner, Cropduster and Bannerflyers' work, and I hope that I may keep in touch with you in the future.

Again, thank you very much for your kind consideration and your support.

Sincerely,

Andy Sipowicz

NOTE *how Andy expresses his appreciation for the offer and then briefly and professionally describes why he is rejecting the offer.*