



Fountainhead Forum

Issue: Volume I # 3

July 2009

**Dear Nina,**

I hope you're not too busy because we have another excellent edition of the Fountainhead Forum for your reading pleasure. This month features an important aspect of the interview process that everyone seems to forget - the "thank you" follow-up letter. Also included is an introduction of Simonson Consulting, LLC and details about a creative blog based on the current economic situation. Additionally, we added some funny "thank you" letter mistakes that just could not be missed. Have a great July!

Interview Thank You Letter - It's Important

Lately we've noticed that candidates seem to be experiencing problems with interview follow-up letters, which are often an overlooked part of the interview process. What is important to know is that if you write a poorly written letter (even after having done extremely well on an interview) it can seriously impact your chances of being considered as a viable candidate for the position. Conversely, when an interview goes poorly, an excellent follow-up letter may slightly increase your chances of being considered for the position, but generally won't make much difference at that point. So it is critical to not only have a successful interview, but to send an excellent follow-up letter, in order to help "seal the deal".

Here is a good example of how a poorly written follow-up letter can ultimately result in being turned down for an offer. Recently Fountainhead was conducting a difficult and lengthy search for a Director level position that paid close to \$100K. Our client company phone interviewed a candidate we had identified - someone they felt was worth pursuing. The client decided to fly him out from the east coast for a second interview, and they paid for all the costs (plane fare, hotel, rental car, etc.). They were

In This Issue

[Thank You Letter](#)[Letter Mistakes](#)[Simonson Consulting LLC](#)[News Highlights](#)[MyEconomyVacation.com](#)

Contact Fountainhead Staffing

Poke around in [here](#) a bit when the boss isn't looking. You might even learn something.



Would you like to contribute to our newsletter?

[Click here to send your ideas](#)

obviously very interested in the candidate. From our follow-up with the company's hiring managers after the in-person interview, we concluded everything seemed positive. Then they received his follow-up letter via email. Out of respect for the candidate, we won't go into specific details here. But suffice to say that the follow-up letter was atrocious, and so the company ultimately decided not to make an offer.



So let's take a moment to review some common mistakes and also to share some good practices.

The one mistake on follow-up letters that occurs with the highest frequency seems to be spelling and/or grammatical errors. The higher the level the position, the more likely these mistakes will be fatal in terms of getting an offer. Over the many years we've been in this industry, spelling and grammar errors seem to get worse every year, and this is true even with executive level candidates. We don't understand this, especially with the advent of spelling and grammar checking software - these types of mistakes are simply inexcusable.

So please, after typing your follow-up letter, take a moment to run a spell check program. After that, proofread the letter slowly, several more times, and then ask someone to proof it once more if possible. It can also help to print off the letter - believe it or not, some mistakes can get missed on the computer screen over and over again until you see the letter "in print". Be mindful that sometimes a word will be misspelled, even when it is a "real" word, so a spell check program won't flag it. This leads to sentences such as "I really appreciated the time you spend with me today". For this reason, it is very important to take a second (and third) look at your letter, before you email or mail it.

Other common mistakes can include misspelling the hiring manager's name, getting their title wrong, or getting the title wrong on the position for which you are interviewing.

Finally, there is one more issue that is worth sharing if you will be emailing your follow-up letter. Please ensure that you have a professional-sounding email address. An email address that is cute or funny to your personal friends and family may not strike the same chord when it is being emailed to a hiring manager. While we would love to share a few of our best examples with you, we are trying to keep this a clean and professional newsletter. But I'm sure you get the idea.

"I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies. If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around the banks will deprive the people of all property until their children wake-up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered..."

-Thomas Jefferson 1802



Independence Day

July 4, 1776



So now that you know what not to do, let's talk briefly about the key points of what you should be doing in your follow-up letter. Your letter should be short, to the point and professional. Here's a quick outline of what to cover:

- 1) Thank the hiring manager for their time.
- 2) Tell them specifically what interests you about the position (the company, the duties and responsibilities, the industry, the opportunity for advancement, etc.).
- 3) Summarize in a few key points why you feel your technical and soft skills are a good fit for the company.
- 4) Close the letter on a strong, positive, and forward-thinking note.

Overall, the letter should be relatively short and concise. It should not be a long, drawn-out recap of all your qualifications or be more than a paragraph or two in length.

In closing, please give us a call if you need some help in this area. We've assisted hundreds of candidates on follow-up letters over the years, and we'd be happy to help you as well.

For a Good Laugh

Notable "Thank You" Letter Mistakes

"Instrumental in ruining entire operation for a Midwest retail chain."

"Please don't misconstrue my 14 jobs as 'job-hopping'. I have never quit a job."

"I am very interesting in the position."

"I am extremely loyal to my present firm, so please don't let them know of my immediate availability."

The letter stated that the applicant wished to pursue a challenging account executive position with a rival firm other than the company he was writing the letter to.

"While I am open to the initial nature of an assignment, I am decidedly disposed that it be so oriented as to at least partially incorporate the experience enjoyed heretofore and that it be configured so as to ultimately lead to the application of more rarefied facets of financial management as the major sphere of responsibility."



Qualifications: "Twin sister has accounting degree."

Salary Requirement: "I am a man filled with passion and integrity, and I can act on short notice. I'm a class act and do not come cheap."

Education: "College, August 1880-May 1984."

"...If I can handle a wife and five kids, I'm pretty sure that I can be successful in..."

A candidate sent her letter without deleting someone else's editing, including such comments as "I don't think you want to say this about yourself here."

"My boss cut off his right arm when he had to let me go."

"I am loyal to my employer at all costs. Please feel free to contact me via my office voice mail."

"Please call me after 5:30 because I am self-employed and my employer does not know I am looking for another job."

Simonson Consulting, LLC

A Fountainhead Staffing Partner



Simonson Consulting, LLC is a financial management and IT services firm. We address the important gap of accounting and information technology to organizations in order to provide better financial reporting and business intelligence, in addition to streamlining and automating critical accounting processes. In addition to the skills and services offered by Simonson Consulting, we also have partnerships with payroll outsourcing firms such as ADP, CPA firms for tax and audit requirements, Fountainhead Staffing for Accounting and Finance recruiting needs, multiple programmers and software resellers, and investment advisors. This wide array of resources allows us to offer our clients all of the services of a larger, more expensive national consulting firm for a fraction of the cost, with much more personalized service.

A summary of our most recent engagements:

- CFO outsourcing to a consumer products company to assist in what has turned out to be 800% growth in 24 months. This growth was made possible by implementing the appropriate systems, creating banking relationships, building business intelligence and reporting systems, and reassigning staff according to needs and expertise.
- Payroll automation via data integration for multiple Taco Bell, Panera, and Long John Silver's franchises.
- Business Intelligence systems and financial analysis for multiple organizations in manufacturing, construction, and consumer products industries.
- Accounting Process Automation.
- Data Migration in support of ERP implementations.
- Relational database architecture.
- Accountant training.
- Operational reporting and analysis systems.
- Data Mining.
- Full IT Support: hardware sales, network administration, database and software administration, desktop support, system troubleshooting, and virus and spam solutions.

Please contact Dan Simonson directly at 480-776-5776 or Dan@SimonsonConsulting.com.

News Highlights

National

Supreme Court Says No To Quotas

In a landmark case regarding racial discrimination and hiring quotas, the Supreme Court decided in the Ricci v. DeStefano case (commonly known as the New Haven, Connecticut firefighter case) that employment law only rarely permits quotas to remedy racial imbalance.



Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited intentional discrimination on the basis of "race, color, religion, sex, or national origin". Speaking for the majority of the Supreme Court, Justice Anthony Kennedy said "The purpose of Title VII is to promote hiring on the basis of job qualifications, rather than on the basis of race or color." The goal was to create a workplace environment free of discrimination, "where race is not a barrier to opportunity". And yet "the City made its employment decision because of race. The city rejected the test results solely because the higher scoring candidates were white."

As author Abigail Thernstrom stated in conclusion of the article, "Residents in a burning building want competent firefighters. They don't care about the race of those whose job it is to save them."

([Wall Street Journal](#), Abigail Thernstrom, July 1, 2009)

Stocks Post Gains for Second Quarter

Wall Street closed its first positive quarter in more than a year and a half yesterday (June 30, 2009), capping a massive rally built on hopes for an economic stabilization that has yet to materialize.

The Dow Jones industrial average rose 11 percent during the second quarter, its biggest quarterly jump on a percentage basis since 2003. The Standard & Poor's 500-stock index climbed 15.2 percent, its largest quarterly increase since 1998. Financial stocks rose the most during the quarter, jumping 35 percent, though they are still down more than 60 percent from their peak in 2007.

Investors have largely left behind the fears of a severe global recession that sent stocks to their lowest level in 12 years in March. Stocks are up more than 30 percent since then, and both the S&P 500 and the Dow have recouped most of their losses for

the year.

To begin chipping away at the massive losses from 2008, when Dow stocks lost more than 30 percent of their value, the economy needs to show real improvement, analysts said. ([Washington Post](#), Renae Merle, July 1, 2009)

U.S. Home Sales Rise Again in May

Sales of existing homes rose for the second straight month in May, signaling that low prices and incentives are attracting buyers.

The National Association of Realtors says existing home sales, including single-family homes, condos, and co-ops, rose 2.4 percent in May. It was the first back-to-back monthly gain in existing home sales since September 2005. ([Phoenix Business Journal online](#), June 23, 2009)

Rasmussen Poll: Obama's Popularity Plunging

The latest Rasmussen daily tracking poll shows that President Barack Obama for the first time has a negative approval index - more Americans disapprove of his job performance than approve.

Rasmussen is founder and CEO of Rasmussen Reports and co-founder of the sports network ESPN. He has been an independent public opinion pollster for over a decade, and most major news organizations cite his reports.

"The raw numbers are pretty straightforward - 31 percent of Americans strongly approve of the way Barack Obama is handling his job, 33 percent strongly disapprove," Rasmussen said. "Before last week we never had a circumstance where the number who disapprove outweigh the number who approve. So we're in new territory. Right now the approval index, at minus two, is as low as it's been. What we've seen in the last month is a growing number of people who strongly disapprove, and we're seeing it at a time when the President's honeymoon is coming to an end and people are beginning to look at the policies that he's promoting." ([Newsmax.TV](#), Ashley Martella, June 30, 2009)

Local

Arizona Could Lead the Nation in Growth

The solar industry could spur tens of thousands of jobs in Arizona, providing several factors - ranging from consumer demand to business incentives - line up in its favor.

As many as 10,000 Arizona jobs could stem from a federal investment tax credit that was approved last year, according to the Solar Energy Research and Education Foundation in Washington.

When factoring in several bills pending in the state legislature, that number could balloon to make the solar industry one of Arizona's biggest job creators. ([Phoenix Business Journal online](#), June 19, 2009)

Unemployment Continues to Rise, Arizona Lags National Average

Unemployment rates in every major metro area of the country were higher in May than a year earlier, but rates around Arizona generally are lower than national averages.

The U.S. unemployment rate in May was 9.1 percent. The Phoenix and Tucson area unemployment rates in May were 7.3 percent and 7.1 percent respectively. ([Phoenix Business Journal online](#), June 30, 2009)

www.MyEconomyVacation.com

Featured Author: Angela Miller

Have you been handed a pink slip? Job or no job, are you having to tighten your belt more so than you have in the past?



You are not alone.

In fact a lot of us are on "economy vacations". MyEconomyVacation.com is a resource for both employed and unemployed individuals looking to share their economy survival stories. The site provides humorous stories on handling the current environment, tips on saving money and tools and insights into finding a job. You can also use it as a creative outlet and share your own personal experiences with fellow "vacationers". Check out www.MyEconomyVacation.com or follow us on Twitter: MyEconVacation.

Keep in touch,

Fountainhead Staffing