

## BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE GUIDE

This business correspondence guide provides templates and guidelines for business and thank you letters, as well as tips for successful outreach.

Topics:

- Networking Emails & Informational Interview Requests
- Maintaining Contact with Thank You Emails
- Interview Correspondence

### What is Networking?

Networking is the cultivation of **mutually beneficial relationships**. These relationships can help you enhance your knowledge of a particular industry or field, exchange ideas with others, improve your business, or serve the community.

Although networking often does result in job opportunities, the point is **not** to simply use others to find jobs. It is a lifelong process of expanding your sphere of influence, helping others, and receiving help in return.

These relationships are most beneficial if they are built on good will, trust, and respect. You need to build and maintain connections **before you need them**.

### How Do You Network?

Whether you realize it or not, you have most likely networked before. You are currently networking with peers, professors, JGSB staff and administration—and if you attend events, you most likely are already networking with employers as well. Giving or getting a recommendation for a doctor or a good restaurant is an example of a simple form of networking. You can strengthen this skill, however, to translate it to a more professional venue.

### Expanding Your Network

The outreach templates below are meant to help you build and establish contacts. Networking emails should **not** be used to directly ask contacts for jobs (even though jobs are often a by-product of thoughtful networking). Instead, you should approach networking as an opportunity to gain more information about your area of interest. Usually this happens through an **informational interview**. This is a meeting in which you drive the conversation, asking your contact about his/her experience. Ultimately you will increase your knowledge of the field and hopefully procure some advice about the best way to proceed.

Your **informational interview request** should:

- Establish a connection
- State your purpose
- Generalize your interest
- Do not explicitly ask for a job (though you may reference an application in progress)
- Keep it short

## Sample Networking Email Messages

### Informational Interview Request

Subject: Rice MBA student seeking your advice

Dear Ms. Saenz,

My name is Caitlin and I am a first-year Rice MBA student. May I ask you a few questions about your experience with FMC Technologies? I am trying to learn more about careers in the oil field services industry, and your insight would be very helpful.

I would welcome the opportunity to talk to you either by phone or in a brief meeting.

Thank you for your time,  
Caitlin

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Subject: Rice MBA student seeking your advice

Dear Cameron,

My name is Caitlin Crotty and I am a first-year Rice MBA student. May I have a few minutes of your time to discuss your experience with Deloitte? Your insights would be appreciated, as I am in the process of applying for a Summer Associate internship there.

Please let me know if there is a time that we could meet in person or talk over the phone. Thank you in advance for your time.

Kind regards,  
Caitlin

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Subject: Rice MBA student seeking your advice

Dear Turner,

My name is Caitlin Crotty and I am a first-year Rice MBA student. I'm currently pursuing opportunities in the Washington, DC area and would like to request a few minutes of your time to discuss your experience at the Carlyle Group. Your insights on relocating from Houston to DC would be appreciated.

I will be in Washington during the week of March 10 and would like to set up a short in-person meeting if possible. Please let me know if there is a time that would work with your schedule. Thank you in advance for your time.

Kind regards,  
Caitlin

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### **Follow-Up Email – When Contact Has Not Responded**

Dear Ms. Saenz,

I emailed you last week regarding an informational interview request and I am following up to determine if you might have a moment to speak with me. Would a later date be more convenient with your schedule? Or, if there is someone more appropriate that you feel I should contact instead, I am happy to do so.

Your guidance is appreciated.

Best regards,

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### **Networking Tips**

- Most people are happy to talk about themselves and what they do – it's easy for them. Don't be afraid to ask.
  - Avoid asking outright if the contact knows of any internship openings. That's kind of like asking someone to marry you on a first date. Instead ask for advice: "what would you recommend to someone who is interested in this field?" "How can I make myself competitive?"
  - It **is** OK to mention a position that you are in the process of applying for. That's still asking for advice.
  - Don't attach your resume to an informational interview request.
  - Have a list of questions ready. You requested the meeting, so you need to drive the conversation.
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- Be respectful of peoples' time. Don't ask for more than 30 minutes, and keep an eye on the clock when you're meeting.
- Make the effort to keep in touch with old and new contacts. A simple e-mail every few months can do the trick.
- There is a fine line between being persistent and being aggressive. Send only one or two follow-up emails to an initial request. After meeting, stay in touch but don't blast your new contact with emails and requests. If you are unsure about how to move forward, contact a CMC Career Advisor.

## Maintaining Contact with Thank You Emails

A well-composed thank you note is an essential skill that reaches beyond the bounds of business. The use of a thoughtfully constructed note (or poorly written one for that matter) can have great impact on an employer or contact. Thank you notes can establish good will, express appreciation, and distinguish you from other candidates.

Use the email to reinforce points made during the interview, or follow-up on advice or next steps. You should always thank someone who has taken the time to help you as soon as possible. We recommend sending email (rather than hand-written letters) within 24 hours of the interview or networking meeting. But a hand-written follow up is a thoughtful touch.

### When to Send a Thank You Note:

- After an informational interview/networking appointment
- After a job interview
- When you want to follow-up with a new contact that you met at an event
- After a networking contact has taken the time to critique your resume, do a mock interview, pass along information about a job opening, or provide other proactive help
- Any time someone has gone out of their way to assist you

## Sample Thank You Notes

### After a Career Fair or Networking Event:

Dear Ms. Johnson,

I enjoyed meeting you at the Chevron information session on October 19<sup>th</sup> at Rice University. Thank you for sharing information on Chevron's internship programs. It was particularly interesting to hear about career paths and global mobility within the organization. I look forward to submitting my application in the spring.

Best regards,

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**After an informational interview:**

Dear Elizabeth,

Thank you for speaking with me yesterday about your experience at Cameron. I sincerely appreciated the insight you provided on transitioning from a non-profit career into your current role. After speaking with you, I am confident that I am on the right track and plan to pursue a summer internship with a corporation in the energy industry, emphasizing the transferable skills that we discussed.

Again, I truly appreciate the time you afforded me. Thank you for being so open.

Kind regards,

**Sample "Check-In" email with a networking contact:**

Dear Toni,

Thanks again for your help last month. Per your advice, I subscribed to emails from RigZone and I'm already feeling more comfortable discussing current events and news in the industry.

Please let me know if you have any further advice, and I'll keep you posted on my progress.

Warm regards,

**After an interview:**

Dear Mr. James:

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview me yesterday for the Senior Analyst position. It was a great pleasure meeting you and your team. After speaking to you all, I am confident that I am the right candidate, with the appropriate experience, skills, and unselfish attitude, to help your group move forward. I felt that the group and I built a strong rapport, even in the short meetings, and feel that we would have the important "team fit" element that you stressed.

I am very excited about the possibility of working for you. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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## Thank You Note Review

- Send thank you notes within 24 hours of an interview or networking meeting.
- Take time to personalize the message in the note. Refer to a common interest you discussed or reaffirm a point you made in the interview. You do not want the note to read like a script.
- After an interview: reiterate your interest and qualifications. You may also offer pertinent, supplemental information that was not discussed.
- Remember to send a note to everyone that helped you, from the person who initially gave you the job lead to the assistant who arranged your interview.
- Proofread your letter or note twice! It must be error-free. Even if you are the perfect candidate, a thank you note with typos can cost you a job offer.

## Interview Correspondence

You may decide to send a follow-up email message a few weeks after an interaction with alumni or an employer (of course, after a Thank You message has been sent). Reasons for this might be to:

- Inquire on the status of a position for which you interviewed
- Communicate scheduling conflicts
- Request feedback from interviewer if you did not receive an offer

Issues you should communicate verbally (over the phone) if at all possible:

- Request more time to make a decision
- Turn down an offer
- Negotiations

## Sample Interview Correspondence

### Thank You Note (review from above):

Dear Mr. James:

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview me yesterday for the Senior Analyst position. It was a great pleasure meeting you and your team. After speaking to you all, I am confident that I am the right candidate, with the appropriate experience, skills, and unselfish attitude, to help your group move forward. I felt that the group and I built a strong rapport, even in the short meetings, and feel that we would have the important "team fit" element that you stressed.

I am very excited about the possibility of working for you. Again, thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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**Inquire on the status of a position for which you interviewed:**

Dear Ms. Stringer:

Thank you again for interviewing me on (date) for the (position title). I am following up on the status, as I have not yet heard back from you on whether a decision has been reached.

I am excited about the possibility of working with your team and feel that I have a great deal to contribute in terms of (name a few specific functions or skills you discussed in the interview). If possible, could you please provide me with time-frame of when a decision might be reached?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

**Communicate scheduling conflicts:**

Dear Mr. Ryan,

I would like to once again express my sincere interest in the (position title) position and thank you for consideration. Currently, I have an interview scheduled at the same time as your proposed interview date and time. Would it be possible to reschedule for another time that day or a different day during the week?

I am eager to meet with you regarding this opportunity and hope we can determine a time agreeable with your schedule. I am available (provide dates/times). Please advise which one of these options might work for you.

Sincerely,

**Request feedback from interviewer when you did not receive an offer:**

Dear Mr. Trent:

Thank you again for interviewing me for the (position title). I was hoping you could provide me with feedback on how I might position myself professionally to become a better candidate for similar positions within the industry, or how I might improve in an interview. I welcome constructive feedback so that I may improve and ultimately succeed in this field.

Your thoughts would be graciously accepted and most appreciated, as I plan to continue recruiting over the next few months.

Sincerely,

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**Request more time to make a decision – This should be communicated verbally, if possible.**

Dear Ms. Sims,

Thank you again for interviewing me for the (position title). (Company Name) is certainly among my top choices for my summer internship. However, I am still interviewing for positions I had previously applied for, and I would like to follow through on my commitments to interview. Thus, I am requesting an extension on making my final decision with you to (time-frame – e.g. two weeks from today – or date), if this is agreeable to you.

Thank you again for your consideration of my candidacy and this request for an extension on my decision.

Best regards,

**Turn down an offer – This should be communicated verbally, if possible.**

Dear Ms. Evans,

Thank you for the opportunity and offer sent last week for the (job/position title) position. I enjoyed meeting with you and your team and although I am interested in product marketing, I have accepted another offer that aligns more closely with my career goals.

I truly admire (ABC Company) and wish you the best of luck in finding the right candidate.

Regards,

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