

PREPARING FOR A CAREER/JOB FAIR

Career/Job Fairs are typically one-day events designed to connect a large number of employers with a large number of students/candidates. Employer representatives attend these events to meet/interview individuals for immediate and future hiring needs, collect resumes, and market their company/organization. For students/candidates, benefits of attending a career/job fair include: the luxury of one-stop shopping (i.e. the opportunity to meet several employer representatives at one time and place), an opportunity to learn about specific companies/organizations and their respective jobs and internships, the chance to actually talk (in person) to a company representative instead of just submitting a resume or employment application by mail or online, and an excellent way to network and make company contacts, perhaps even asking those in your targeted industry for general feedback about your resume, education or experiences. Students/candidates who are most successful at career/job fairs are the ones who prepare.

Smart preparation includes three stages:

1. Before
2. During
3. After



BEFORE THE CAREER/JOB FAIR

- Prepare your resume; have it reviewed/proofread/critiqued so that it's perfect (no errors!); print multiple copies on resume paper
- Research the companies/organizations who will be attending the event so that you can communicate intelligently with the recruiters
- Prepare your 30 second commercial
- Prepare pertinent questions to ask the recruiters
- Practice responses to sample interview questions
- Arriving at the event and before entering the career/job fair room, study the program/floor plan so you'll know where each organization is located





DURING THE CAREER/JOB FAIR

- Wear professional business attire (i.e. suit or business/meeting attire); when in doubt, it's always best to err on the side of being conservative and over-dressed rather than under-dressed
- Pay attention to personal grooming and accessories (i.e. very little or no cologne/scents; minimal jewelry; clean/simple styled hair/make-up; be sure breath is fresh)
- No chewing gum; no food/drinks in hand
- Cell phones should be turned off and kept out of site
- Carry the copies of your resume in a professional looking folder or portfolio
- Bring a pen and small notebook/portfolio for notes and recruitment materials
- Introduce yourself and be enthusiastic; use a firm handshake and maintain eye contact. Clearly state your name, major/degree, and graduation date; be ready to launch into your 30 second commercial (i.e. your strengths/experiences and the type of opportunity you're looking for) ; don't exhibit a lack of direction and focus
- Volunteer your resume (don't wait for the recruiter to ask for it)
- Collect business cards from recruiters (ask for one if they don't volunteer this); perhaps make quick notes on the back side, if appropriate
- Before leaving each table, thank the recruiter for talking with you and for any brochures/company literature and promotional materials (e.g. coffee mug, pen,) they shared; ask about follow-up activity and timeline
- Be sensitive to others who are waiting behind you in line; realize that employers sometimes like to talk to groups (don't be upset)
- Don't ask about salary/benefits
- Don't monopolize someone's time



AFTER THE CAREER/JOB FAIR

- Keep track of those you spoke with and any special notes you need to make
- Send thank you correspondence to those you are seriously interested in and wish to pursue

Special notes

- The most sought after skills and attributes that employers seek are: communication and interpersonal skills; intelligence; enthusiasm; flexibility; leadership/team work; energy level; maturity; and a willingness to learn and grow. Even though time is short at career/job fairs, try to show or share evidence of these if possible.
- When researching companies/organizations before the career/job fair, try to learn at least the basics which include: company mission; products/services; location(s); place in the industry (e.g. competitors, niche, specialties); job/internship opportunities; work/corporate culture; etc.
- Prepare questions to ask the recruiters that demonstrate you've taken time to research their organization but now need more information (e.g. training programs; typical career paths; opportunities for advancement; qualities and experiences they're looking for in applicants for specific positions; etc.
- Smile! 😊