

Tips for Making the Most of Career Fairs

Career fairs can seem intimidating, but if you know the purpose of the event and present yourself in a positive manner, the benefits are often invaluable.

Career fairs are designed to help you learn about specific career fields, what education and training is needed, and general information about companies and internship opportunities.

It is important for you to know the purpose of each event in order to be prepared. **Preparation** is the key to success. Read on for tips on how you can make the most of this experience.

Clarify Goals

- Make sure you know the goals of the fair and understand that your goals need to be consistent with the purpose of the event. What do you hope to accomplish by the end of the fair? Career fairs are for gaining career and internship information.

Research Employers

- Find out some information about the companies that are attending. Visit the Career Center web site to discover which companies are attending. Bring intelligent questions and approach the company representative with confidence.

Prepare Properly

- Gain confidence by knowing about yourself-- your interests, skills/
- capabilities and goals.
- Plan what attire you will wear (no jeans or shorts.)
- Prepare a 45-second "commercial" of your interests, skills, and why you are interested in the company. Ask for information about the organization.

Present Yourself in a Positive Manner

- Demonstrate that you are able to connect what the company does and how your skills and interests would contribute. Ask appropriate questions and provide clear, concise, answers. (Avoid questions about salary and benefits.)
- Prepare yourself for a positive presentation by demonstrating confidence, interest and enthusiasm.
- Avoid distracting mannerisms.
- Be well organized.
- Arrive EARLY and orient yourself. Sit in a quiet area and organize your thoughts.
- If the line around an employer table seems too long, it may be more efficient to select another company and go back later when the crowd thins out.

Demonstrate Proper Etiquette

- Respect other people's privacy as they speak with a company – don't barge in and interrupt a conversation.
- Conduct yourself professionally at all times. Remember that you are being observed even when you are not speaking directly with an employer.

- Try to talk with as many companies as possible within a reasonable time frame. Pick up brochures. You may want to correspond with some companies after the event. Get business cards; too, as these will help you follow up.
- As you approach the table, establish eye contact, present a **firm** handshake, introduce yourself in a clear voice and explain why you are interested in the company. State your interests, state what you know the company does (if you do), and ask about the opportunities for internships and how you can prepare for employment in the future.
- Never say **anything negative** at any time during the event. You never know who is listening; it can cost you dearly.
- During a conversation, listen for information that relates to something you have done. Use transition statements, "That's similar to an experience I had when I worked for..."
- At the end of the conversation, offer a **firm** handshake and express your appreciation.

Follow Up

- Make notes of your conversations and send typewritten, professional thank you letters reiterating your interest in the companies.

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