

Career Fairs & what it can do for you.

The importance of attending the Career Fair cannot be overstated. It provides students with the chance to:

- network with potential employers and contacts for the future
- learn more about companies and organizations
- find out about careers and potential employment opportunities
- explore careers associated with your studies, different fields and career paths
- receive advice on what employers are looking for
- learn about current internships
- gain valuable interview experience and job search advice and even obtain an interview
- much of the job search process is **not** done in person – the career fair gives you the advantage to meet employers face-to-face (Nothing replaces in-person contact for making an impression).

What to do before the Fair - to make it work for you!

To be effective at a career fair, you need to be ready to make a good impression and at the same time you will be evaluating companies and organizations by the way their representatives behave towards you.

Define your goals. Do you want to find a job or internship? Are you looking for information about organizations? Do you want to build your network?

Review & research the companies attending – Visit their web sites and know who they are and what they do. Gather basic information about the company (size, organization, location, products). Do they advertise any opportunities on their web site? Make a list of the ones you would like to approach. Be prepared – if you can ask focused and specific questions, it will impress the employer representatives because it shows a genuine interest.

Customize your CV for each targeted position of interest to you. Note: Some employers will be accepting CV's at the fair while others will not.

How will you introduce yourself? - Develop a 30-second introduction to market yourself. Tell the person who you are, what makes you unique, and the benefits you can provide. Be enthusiastic and show your strengths, skills, experience, and interest. Be prepared to answer questions regarding your career goals. Also prepare a few questions to ask the recruiters.

Remember, first impressions count! Keep in mind to **dress for success** – remove all visible piercing (let them know the real you after you showed them what an excellent employee you are). Keep the visible piercing if you want to apply for an opportunity as a tattoo artist or a body piercer ;-)

Remember to pack **pen and paper** for jotting down notes and contact information. Take a portfolio to hold CV's and company literature that you will collect.

During the Career Fair

Employers are impressed by those who demonstrate a familiarity with the organization and have relevant questions to ask. Arrive early and plan to stay late.

- Network, network, network. Attempt to establish rapport with each employer representative. Expect to take the lead in your conversations. Be enthusiastic, smile, make eye contact and offer a firm handshake. Use your 30-second introduction – show your strengths, skills, experience and interest.
- Answer questions, but also remember to ask questions so you will have a better understanding of which company are the best fit for you. Also ask about the recruiting timetable to know what the next step in the process is.
- Gather information, company literature and business cards from each company. If you can't get a business card, be sure to get all the contact information. Feel free to take some freebies but don't be greedy.
- Thank each person for taking the time to meet you and talk to you about the opportunities within their company.

Follow-Up after the Career Fair

Email or mail a thank-you note to the company representatives you are interested in, thanking them for their time, interest and help. Make your note short and powerful, reminding them who you are and in what position(s) you are interested.

Reflect on the career fair – what might you have done more effectively? Make some plans for improvement before the next career fair.

Don't make these mistakes:

- Not knowing what type of position you are looking for – lacking focus.
- No knowledge of the company.
- Lacking communication skills – inappropriate questions.
- Asking about salary.
- Not asking any questions.
- Having a poor or unprofessional attitude.
- Grabbing free stuff.
- Not being willing to relocate.
- Not bringing anything to write on.
- Giving a weak handshake
- Not taking time to fill out an application, or other forms.

Useful web sites for more information on preparation for the Career Fair.

<http://careers.utah.edu/careerFair/preparing.htm>

<http://careers.utah.edu/downloads/WhatdotheRecruitersThink.pdf>

<http://www.loyola.edu/thecareercenter/careerfair/career%20fair%20prep.html>

<http://www.csufresno.edu/careers/students/careerfairs/prepare.shtml>

<http://oregonstate.edu/career/students/fair.php>