

career fair preparation



Attending a Career Fair

Why Attend a Career Fair

Career fairs are an opportunity to meet prospective employers face-to-face. The ability to have contact with a wide range of employers at one time enables you to learn about different types of opportunities, selection processes, and in some instances have or set up interviews. The contacts you make at a career fair are an excellent opportunity to develop your professional network that will further your job or internship search.

How to Prepare for a Career Fair

1. Ensure your résumé is perfect.

It should be clear and concise. If you would like your résumé reviewed you can submit it for approval by a Career Services staff member through Optimal Resume. Visit the Career Services home page and click Optimal Resume to get started.

2. Plan your strategy. There is usually a list of employers available prior to the event that indicates who will be attending. Identify the organizations you want to network with and research information about those organizations.
3. Practice your introduction.

Make a good first impression by having a “one minute commercial”. This will introduce you, allow you to demonstrate your knowledge, let the employer know why you have attended the fair, and express your interest in the company. →

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Never underestimate the value of face time with an employer

"Keep in mind that all is not lost if you don't land a job. Career fairs also offer great practice in perfecting networking and interviewing skills. Talk to as many people as you can; never underestimate the value of face time with recruiters from leading companies. And, just as importantly, listen to them, too. Pay attention to the questions you're being asked and to the kind of information they're offering. It's impossible to leave without something of value."

Women for Hire, Tory Johnson

Career Fair Do's and Don'ts

Do's...

- Ask for a business card or the best way to follow up
- Bring a professional bag to put give-a-ways and other information in
- Have well thought out and intelligent questions
- Show confidence and enthusiasm
- Follow up and send thank you notes after the event

Don'ts...

- Ask the employer "So, what do you do?"
- Walk around with a group of your friends
- Chew gum
- Have your cell phone on
- Wear too much perfume or cologne
- Ask for an interview or a job
- Bring your parent(s)
- Wear inappropriate or unprofessional clothing
- Monopolize a recruiter's time

Night Before Checklist

- Plenty of copies of your résumé on résumé paper. A half dozen more than the number of employers you plan to visit is a good rule of thumb.
- A folder for carrying your résumés
- Paper and pen for taking notes
- A clean, pressed professional suit
- A specific list of employers you have researched whom you want to talk with
- Questions you have prepared

How to Prepare for a Career Fair, con't

4. Know what you are going to ask. Have one or two questions in mind for each employer. The questions should reflect the research you have done on the employer and your interest.
5. Dress professionally. That means a suit or sport coat and slacks, with a tie for men and a suit or dress and jacket for women.



What to Expect the Day of a Career Fair

- You can expect anywhere from 25 to 350 employers depending on the fair, represented at different booths. Long lines can form so patience is important.
- Upon arriving at a career fair take a few minutes to understand the layout of the room and where the employers you most want to meet are located.
- When you are ready to meet with employers it is recommended to begin with a company that is less of a priority for you. This will provide the opportunity to practice engaging and relieve nervousness.
- When you speak with an employer maintain eye contact and introduce yourself with a firm handshake. Have questions and your "One Minute Commercial" prepared.
- It is wise to keep track of the organization and representatives with whom you spoke. It is easiest to do this by taking notes after each interaction with an employer.

What to do After a Career Fair

- It is important to follow up with the connections you made at the career fair.
- Send a brief thank you note to those representatives you wish to pursue. This will set the stage for future correspondence.
- You may also want to extend an invitation to connect on LinkedIn. If you do not have a LinkedIn account it is wise to create one. Go to grads.linkedin.com to get started creating an account.

Remember the Employer's Perspective

- Employers often use career fairs as a way to build a pool of candidates or to raise awareness of their organization; do not be discouraged if they do not have an immediate opening.
- A new trend is for employers not to collect résumés on site but to just refer you back to their web-site for on-line résumé submission. Use the face time at the fair to gather pertinent information to enhance your application as well as make a positive impression.

Visit the Career Services website for a list of upcoming career fairs
hope.edu/student/career