

How to Get the Most out of a Career Fair

The Career Fair is designed with the idea that it can be helpful to students looking for full-time jobs, summer/part-time jobs, and internships. However, you won't walk away with a job. Rather, it's purpose is so you can learn more about opportunities and network with potential employers.

Before the Career Fair

- Research the organizations that might be of interest to you
- Read literature about the organization (use the company website, LinkedIn, and other resources)
- Be prepared to ask questions of the representatives...practice out loud; it helps (but don't ask the what's-in-it-for-me questions such as salary, benefits, or other perks)
- Know yourself and identify specific experiences where you have demonstrated your strengths
- Backing up all of your skills with specific examples will make you a stronger candidate
- Know why you want to work for their organization...if you don't know, they won't either
- Use the above to prepare a verbal summary/elevator pitch
- Develop a strong résumé and bring several copies on résumé paper for distribution (bring more than you think you'll need)

During the Career Fair

- Make a good first impression; be genuinely interested
- Make eye contact immediately when introducing yourself and give a firm handshake to start
- Remember the representative's name; if not, casually refer to their name tag
- Smile and be polite - enthusiasm is an important quality
- Dress professionally, wear a conservative, well-fitting and wrinkle-free suit
- Take the right things with you: résumés, a professional pen, leather folder/portfolio, note pad, etc.
- Get your bearings upon entering the room and make a navigational plan
- If you need a 'warm-up,' start with a company that is number four or five on your list

Body Language often can speak louder than the spoken word

- Do not fidget, play with your hair, rock, or look around when talking or being spoken to
- Do not chew gum or use your cell phone

Communication is critical!

- Listen carefully to what the representative has to say!
- Enunciate clearly, use proper grammar, and talk loudly enough to be heard; show confidence in your voice
- Ask for a business card or write down the representative's name and email, learn what's going to happen next, and what, if anything, you can do to advance your candidacy

Explore all of your options!

- Speak with organizations that you had not considered before
- Take the initiative and engage in meaningful conversations with representatives
- Representatives are here to provide information about their organizations and career fields
- Not all representatives know everything about all positions, so use the interaction to find out more about the employer and get contact information for a more appropriate person
- Representatives are excellent resources in your career search and decision-making process
- If one table has a long line, make the most of your time by talking with representatives that don't have long lines, even if they're not your top choice, and check back at those tables that had long lines later in the day!

After the Career Fair

- Mailing a thank you letter is not only appropriate, it can also bring attention to your name and may move you from the 'maybe' pile to the 'yes' pile
 - You can also call to make sure that your application is complete; when calling, be prepared and know/practice what you are going to say beforehand
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Questions for Representatives at the Career Fair

First and foremost, questions should be natural. Be yourself. Don't fire off questions; maintain a natural flow. Before beginning with your questions, be sure to introduce yourself and establish rapport with the representatives. Listen carefully to their answers. Be courteous. Before leaving, be sure to close the conversation and thank them.

Questions You May Want to Ask Organization Representatives

What does your organization consider the 5 most important qualities in an employee?

Are graduate degrees important? If so, in what areas?

What courses do you suggest in order to be a successful candidate?

What personality traits are important for success in your company?

As an entry-level employee, what can I expect to be doing 2, 5, 10 years from now?

What made you choose this company?

How long have you been with the company?

What things has your organization accomplished of which you are especially proud?

For how many years does the entry-level employee typically stay with the company?

What goals does your company have for 2015 and beyond?

How many employees are in my area of interest (which is..)?

Does your company hire on a continual basis or just at certain times of the year?

How long does the hiring process take?

What percent of applicants are eventually hired?

What is the retention rate in the company?

Do you expect your employees to relocate during their tenure with the company?

Questions an Employer Representative May Ask You

Why do you want to work for this company?

How did you decide on your major? Why do you want to work in this field?

How are you going to achieve your career goals?

What sets you apart from other people who want this job?

What is your greatest strength? What is your greatest weakness?

What are your goals for the next five years?

What qualities do you think this position requires?

What was your most significant accomplishment in college/graduate school?

What do you know about our organization?

What do you see as the perfect or ideal job for you?

What would you like to learn within the next five months?

What questions do you have for me?