

Making the Most of a Career Fair

Are you puzzled about your career? Find out information about companies who are looking to hire at the career fair. Success is fitting the missing piece of the puzzle.

To improve your chances for success at a career fair, spend some time studying the following "pieces" and consider them as you plan your strategy. If you place the "pieces" in your preparation you will appear more focused, prepared and professional in the eyes of potential employers and should enhance your chances for success. GOOD LUCK!

Before Attending the Fair:

Clarify your interests and goals. Use Career Services! The office is open 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. during the school year and 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the summer. Make an appointment or take advantage of workshops prior to each career fair. For more information call 406-496-4140.

Review the list of employers attending the fair and research the companies with whom you are most interested in visiting. Search DIGGERecruiting by what companies are recruiting in your major.

Most companies have their information on their website. Look for information on company's history and careers available. It is imperative that you have some knowledge about their policies, philosophies, products, services, location, and similar information.

Prepare a "focused" resume that will be relevant to the particular employers you have researched and plan to talk to at the fair.

Prepare a "generic" resume, without a focused objective, that can be used for other employers you talk to at the career fair. (Bring extra copies!)

Develop a three minute "commercial" about yourself that will briefly, but enthusiastically, show employers your strengths, skills, experience and interests.

Prepare questions to ask the employers you will be talking to:

- What are your company's strengths? Weaknesses?
- What are the challenging aspects of the position?
- What qualities are you looking for in new hires?
- Describe the work environment.
- What do you enjoy most about working for your company?
- What characteristics does a successful person have at your company?
- What opportunities exist for personal growth?

Prepare answers to the questions employers will be asking you:

- Tell me about yourself. (This is your "three-minute commercial")
- What is your greatest strength? Weakness?
- Would you be a successful "team member"?
- How do you deal with conflict?
- How do you deal with authority or supervision?
- Where do you want to be in five years? Ten years?
- What job-related skills have you developed?

At the Fair:

Dress professionally! Suits are preferable or business casual attire:

For men: khakis/dress pants & collar shirt/sweater.

For women: dress/skirt/slacks & blouse/sweater.

First impressions are important and employers are more likely to remember the students who present themselves in a professional manner. Prepare ahead of time what you are going to wear. Make sure that what you want to wear fits and it is comfortable. If you have new shoes, break them in before-hand.

Wrinkles, scuffed shoes, torn pants and missing buttons will give the impression to a recruiter that you are sloppy or lack attention to detail.

Broaden your focus; be open to new ideas and companies. Talk to many different types of employers.

Your chances of success go up with each contact you make. Career Fairs are a valuable opportunity to obtain information about unfamiliar employers.

Request company literature, business cards, and information about any positions they have available now or in the near future. Bring a pen/pencil and paper to take notes.

Bring extra copies of your resume to leave with employers. Estimate the amount you will need based upon the company list of who is attending this year's fair.

Greet employers with a smile and a firm handshake. While talking with the recruiters maintain good eye contact with them. **Remember:** First Impressions Count!

Indicate any knowledge you have of the organization that you've gained through your company research.

Do not monopolize the employer's time. Ask specific questions based upon your knowledge or what you have been discussing. Offer to follow up after the fair, as appropriate.

Communicate your related interests, skills, strengths and experience with enthusiasm.

Ask questions to gain information, but do not ask about salary and benefits until you are being seriously considered as an applicant.

After the Fair:

Write a letter to employers you are interested in, thanking them for their time and information. Include another resume and any other information you may have promised to send (a completed application, writing sample, recommendations, transcripts, etc.).

Check with Career Services to see if the employer will be interviewing on campus. If they are, register with our office to interview with the employer.

Find a company that fits!