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guide:

Career Fair Success

Attending a job fair gives you something a job board or website can't – personal interaction with a recruiter. The reality, however, is that recruiters may see hundreds of applicants over the course of the event. Therefore, your goal is to make a good impression on the recruiter. Here are some tips on how to get the most out of job fairs.

BEFORE THE FAIR

- Research company information (mission, vision, stakeholders, available positions, history, etc) and see what jobs are posted on their site. As you prepare for the fair, make a list of the employers you want to talk with first.
- Wear professional business attire
- Bring a portfolio, multiple copies of your resume, your own business card
- Make sure hands are free to shake hands get business cards and write down information
- Plan questions to ask the employer
- Prepare elevator speech, write out and practice before the fair
- Prepare objective before coming to the fair. Is it networking? To get an internship? A job?
- Arrive to allow adequate time in the fair and get the employers when they are fresh
 - a. Strategize which employers you want to talk to and when

DURING THE FAIR

- Do not necessarily pre-qualify companies just because they are not in your field: For example, even though you are a Marketing major, you should consider speaking to the recruiters from the hotels, since they may have a marketing department. Likewise, accounting majors may consider inquiring about the opportunities with a hospital.
- Make a lasting impression, give the employer an engaging elevator pitch. For example:

“Good afternoon. My name is John Smythe and I am a Finance major graduating this Spring. I visited your website when I saw that your company was attending the fair, and I’m very interested in learning more about the types of opportunities you are recruiting for.”

- Determine the employers next steps: just collecting resumes, looking to hiring right away
- Make sure to maximize your opportunity at the Career Fair, meet as many as employers as possible, this is a great opportunity to build connections
- Despite the name “Career Fair,” you are not trying to get a job at the event. You are trying to get an interview. Try to build rapport with the recruiter by expressing genuine interest in the company. Describe your qualifications and see if they match the requirements of the positions they are hiring.
- After speaking with the recruiter, get his/her business card and ask if you can send your resume directly to them, since hopefully you have made a good impression. If they direct you to an online application process, ask them if there is anything you can do to stand out or for other advice for getting a “foot in the door.”

AFTER THE FAIR

- Follow-Up: The reality is that fewer recruiters are accepting paper resumes at job fairs. They are increasingly directing job seekers to online application processes. So, the real work may actually begin *after* the job fair. If you're writing a cover letter, mention in it that you met “Sally Jones, the recruiter from your company, at the FGCU career fair, and she indicated I may be a good fit for the Account Executive position.”
- Send a thank you email to follow up with the employer and reinforce the points you made and what you learned from them at the Career Fair
- If you do not hear back within a week, try to reach out again to see if there is an opportunity for you

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: *The employer list with job titles says they have openings for full-time positions, but I want an internship. Should I talk to them anyway?*

A: YES!! If you are interested in a company, talk to them! The recruiter attending the fair may be able to forward your resume to the appropriate individual or provide you with the contact information to send your resume to that person. Take advantage of the opportunity!

Q: *If an employer is not hiring, why do they go to the Career Fair?*

A: Job opportunities can come and go quickly with employers. Employers need to go to job fairs in order to collect resumes for when the jobs open up. If you are interested in a company, and they tell you "We're not hiring," make sure you follow up with them in a month or two to see if any opportunities have come up.

Q: *Why do employers come to the Career Fair, but then tell me "go to our website to apply"?*

A: There are several reasons why employers do this. One reason, it is much easier for the recruiter to email an electronic resume to others in their company. Another reason, it is easier for an employer to keyword search for certain skills they are looking for when your resume is electronic. Just because an employer tells you to apply online doesn't mean your resume is being zapped into a black hole!

Q: *How come there weren't any jobs or internships in my major?*

A: Are you SURE?? Sometimes students will pass by an employer because they assume there won't be any opportunities for them. Don't forget, a hospital needs more than just doctors and nurses; they need human resource managers, IT specialists, etc. The best way to find opportunities in your field of study is to talk to as many employers as you can. You'll be pleasantly surprised to see how many great opportunities await you!!

COMMON QUESTIONS TO EXPECT FROM EMPLOYERS

Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your interests.

Tell me about your work experience.

Why did you decide to attend this school? Why did you select your major?

What interests you about our organization?

Why do you want this position? Why our organization?

Why do you think you would be successful in this field?

What are your short-term and long-term goals?

What three things are most important to you in a job?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYERS

Please describe the position(s) you have available at your company.

What is your timeline for filling this position?

Does your organization offer a training program? What does it include?

What career paths are available after starting in this position?

Is relocation/travel required for this position?

How can I reach you in order to follow up with this position?

QUESTIONS NOT TO ASK EMPLOYERS

What does your company do? You could look that up beforehand online, and you show no forethought or invested interest in the company.

What kinds of positions are at your company? Again, too broad and lack of understanding who they are.

SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER (ENTRY LEVEL JOB) Remember, this is just a sample. Be creative and personable.

Your address

February 14, 20XX

Name of contact person

Title (if known)

Organization name

Organization address City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Mr., Ms, or Mrs. Last Name):

I enjoyed speaking with you at the FGCU Career Fair yesterday about (organization name) and the (position title) position. I am very interested in this position and believe my strong (experience, scholastic record, or whatever your strength) and my interest in working with (people, or other interest area) can be an asset to your organization.

Feel free to call me at 012-345-6789 if I can provide you with any additional information. I look forward to meeting with you again.

Sincerely,

(Leave four spaces for your signature.)

Your name