



HOW TO PREPARE FOR A CAREER FAIR

1. BE PREPARED TO APPROACH EMPLOYERS

In our everyday lives, we do not usually walk up to strangers and introduce ourselves. However, Career Fairs and Forums are networking events where this behavior is the norm! Recruiters expect you to take the initiative to introduce yourself. Walking up and introducing yourself may feel uncomfortable at first, but with practice it will soon become comfortable. REMEMBER EMPLOYERS EXPECT YOU TO WALK UP AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF.

2. BE CONFIDENT WHEN YOU APPROACH EMPLOYERS

Be confident when you approach! Be prepared to say hello, introduce yourself, and shake the employer's hand. Remember to establish eye contact. A firm handshake and eye contact are signs of confidence.

3. PREPARE YOUR INTRODUCTION

A polished introduction creates a positive first impression! Begin the conversation with a general statement about yourself. This general statement could include the degree you are pursuing, your major, when you are graduating, and what type of information you are hoping to obtain from them. For example, "I am in the MBA program with a concentration in Marketing and will graduate in 2006. I would like to know more about marketing opportunities with your company."

The key is to have a short opening line or introduction to get the conversation started! The more recruiters you speak to, the more skilled you will become at these initial introductions.

Part of your BOLD introduction can include a business card. Your business card should include your name, major(s), college/location, graduation date, phone number and email.

4. DRESS PROFESSIONALLY

To create the impression that you are serious about your future, you should dress in professional business attire. For men and women, the 2-piece matching business suit is strongly recommended.

Even if these events take place on campus, it does not mean that business casual or dress casual dress will be appropriate. Professional business attire is the look that will create a positive first impression.

5. BRING AT LEAST 25 RESUMES

Your resume is a part of the initial impression you are making. Your resume should be well-written and professional in appearance. Your resume should be printed on good quality paper – do not bring photocopies. Also, make sure there are no typographical or grammatical errors.

6. RESEARCH EMPLOYERS

If you want to show that you are a candidate with strong initiative and motivation, do your research on companies that interest you before attending career fairs. Then when you meet the representatives you will have more to discuss and will be able to ask more than the typical generic questions most candidates ask.

7. TARGET EMPLOYERS

Make a list of the companies you want to approach – up to ten – and then do the research on each. Try out your introduction on companies in which you are interested but who may not be your top choices. Once you feel comfortable and confident, then approach your top choices. It is important to overcome any nervousness before meeting those representatives from companies that are your top choices.

8. ARRIVE EARLY

Career Fairs become very crowded a few hours into the event. This makes it difficult for recruiters to spend a great deal of time talking with any one candidate. So, if you want a more relaxed atmosphere and hope to spend some quality time talking with recruiters, be one of the first to arrive at the event! Without the crowds, they have the chance to focus on you and give you more of their undivided attention!

9. SEND FOLLOW-UP LETTERS

Before you leave an employer, make sure to ask for a business card. That way, you will be sure to have the right spelling, title and accurate contact information for that representative. On the back of their card, write any specific information you discussed.

Within 1-2 days of the event, send a thank you letter. Most candidates do not take the time to do this. By sending a thank you letter, you have an opportunity to distinguish yourself, showcase strong follow-through skills and create a positive lasting impression.

In your letter make sure to indicate that you met the representative at the Career Fair (indicate WHICH Career Fair) and that you appreciated having the opportunity to meet them. To tailor the letter effectively, include any specific information you may have noted on the back of their business card.

Your thank you letter should be a formal, typed business letter printed on high quality stationary.

10. VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

Preparation is exactly the same: Target your top employers and do the 'research'. For this event, you will be 'selling' yourself in writing (your cover letter and resume) therefore it's critical that you do the homework. If possible, follow-up with the employer a few days after you submit your application materials to make sure that their received your cover letter/resume; communicate your continued interest in the position.

Adapted *Campus Recruiter*, Florida International University, 2001