

# How to Work a Career Fair

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Career fairs are an efficient way to connect with potential employers. Preparation, communication, and follow-up are the keys to making a career fair an interesting, fun, and valuable experience. In addition to seeking employment, other reasons to attend a career fair include:

## Information

If you are unsure about choosing a career field, use the career fair as a way to explore different careers and employers. Approach employers, introduce yourself, and tell the representative that you are currently making some career and academic choices and would like to know more about their organization and opportunities. They will probably tell you some general information about their mission and provide you with some literature.

## Networking

If your career field or desired position is not represented, use the fair to network for additional contacts. Select employers who might potentially use your career field and approach them. Introduce yourself and, as an example, tell the representative that you know the organization is recruiting for engineers, but that you are interested in a marketing position and ask about these opportunities. Next, ask if the representative could provide the name of a contact for these positions. The recruiter may offer to forward your resume for you and if so, you should still try to get a contact name and follow-up with the contact after the career fair.

## Preparation

- Find out which employers will attend and target those you most want to contact.
- Research those employers through the Career Center and internet resources.
- Prepare questions you want to ask each potential employer.
- Update your resume. Consult a Career Counselor.
- Bring more copies of your resume than you think you will need. A notebook or portfolio with room for collecting employer brochures and business cards is a good idea.
- Prepare a short professional introduction including focused information about your experience, strengths, accomplishments, career interests, and goals. Brainstorm with a career counselor, if necessary, to prepare your introduction.
- Dress professionally – you are making that all-important first impression.
- Arrive early and plan on extra time for parking and locating targeted employers.

## Communication

- When meeting employer representatives, shake hands, make eye-contact, and smile. Demonstrate enthusiasm, confidence and interest.
- Present your professional introduction and ask any questions you might have.
- Answer questions they may have for you directly, politely, and concisely.
- Listen attentively and gather information about career opportunities. Keep notes, business cards, or brochures from employers you contact. Be sure to thank them for their time.
- Network with others while standing in line – you may hear about other opportunities. To explore your options, visit a few employers you did not target, as they may also have opportunities.
- If feeling overwhelmed, give yourself time to take a break and return to the fair with renewed energy and a positive attitude.

**Follow-up**

- Send a thank-you note to any representative who spent a significant amount of time with you, gave you valuable information, or alerted you to an opportunity. Remind them how you met, your qualifications, and reiterate your interest in their organization.
- Follow-up on any employment opportunities that interest you. This may include a phone call, completing an online application, sending your resume and cover letter to the human resources department or potential supervisor, requesting a job description, or obtaining an application packet.

Remember to relax and enjoy yourself. Do not be intimidated. Collect information, literature, free giveaways, and most of all, have fun!