Job and Internship Fair Success Tactics

Attending a Job and Internship fair? It’s not as simple as just putting on a business suit and walking in the door!

Hi, I’m Rebecca and I am a sophomore at the University of St. Thomas.

Career fairs are a great way to make contacts as well as get leads on jobs or internships. Make a good first impression with the helpful tips presented in this audio guide. Learn about researching before the big day, what to take with you, how to introduce yourself, and other techniques to make your career fair visit a success.

Here are a few tips that will help you prepare and have a successful day at the fair.

Prepare before the Fair

Know yourself
Students have different reasons for going to the Fair. We encourage you to give some thought as to why you are attending and what you have to offer employers.

- Are you seeking a job or internship in a specific career field or within a certain industry?
- Are you interested in making contacts that can refer you to other positions or departments within their organization?
- Are you interested in learning more about an industry or company?

As you can see, there are many reasons why students attend the Fair. We encourage you to identify your objectives and assess your interests, skills, personality and values which will help you research employers of interest and direct your conversations with employers while at the Fair.

Prepare and practice your 30 second introduction commercial.
This is also known as the “elevator pitch”. Employers want you to take the lead in the conversation by introducing yourself. This is a personal commercial in which you highlight your education, experience, skills and interests in a brief period of time.

The Career Development Center staff is available to help you craft your commercial. You can also find handouts and an audio guide that reviews the “30 Second Introduction Commercial” on our website. In addition, we would encourage you to rehearse your commercial prior to the fair, until it is polished and feels natural.
Know the market
Make it a point to view the list of participating organizations before attending the Fair. You should review the organizations’ web sites and select those that are of particular interest to you.

Take notes on index cards to bring with you to the Fair. A list of things to research can be found in the Career Development Center’s Blackboard Community under the Job/Internship Fair Success Tactics presentation.

Next, you will want to prioritize the order in which you will visit the organizations. Create your game plan for approaching the employers on your target list.

Create a resume
Update your resume and bring multiple copies. The Career Development Center has several resources to help you write and edit your resume. After you have prepared a draft, we encourage you to meet with one of the Career Counselors for a resume critique. On a related note, we would advise you to carry your resume in a notepad or folder and to carry a pen with which you can take notes.

Send letters and resumes prior to the Fair
Many employers arrange interview schedules in advance for interested students. It is therefore advantageous to express your interest ahead of time by sending a cover letter and resume. Use the fair’s Web site to get the contact information and addresses.

Imagine having interview times waiting for you before you even arrive at the fair!

Make time to attend
While there are “rush hours” and “lulls” in the schedule, it is difficult to predict when this will occur. For this reason, we encourage you to adjust your class or work schedule in order to spend as much time at the fair as possible and to come up with a game plan for targeting specific companies that interest you.

Get dressed
We would advise you to dress in professional business attire. Employers may attend the Fair wearing business casual, but you should see this as an opportunity to shine and make a great first impression. Wear classic, modest attire and no strong perfume or cologne.

Once at the fair, orient yourself
Depending on the fair, there may be a registration table. If there is, they are usually divided among the colleges participating. At the registration table you will receive your name badge and any handouts such as a list of participating employers, booth numbers, or even a map. Nametags should be worn on your right side.

You are strongly encouraged to bring only what you need as there may or may not be a coat or bag check at the fair. At the Minnesota Private College Job and Internship Fair,
for example, you may leave your coat and bags behind the UST table on the storage racks but there is not a check-in or check-out system in place.

**Strategize your time on the floor**
While many organizations will send more than one representative, you will likely encounter lines. If there is a line, approach from the side and take literature about the organization to read while you wait. You could also use this time to review the notes you brought based on your research of that organization. By doing this you will be prepared to begin a conversation.

Employers who have long lines will only spend a few minutes at the booth talking with you. Don’t be offended. This is their opportunity to screen as many applicants as possible. You should also use this time to see as many employers as possible. Scan the hall for shorter lines to use your time more effectively.

**Ask for an interview**
Some employers will select a pool of candidates with whom they will extend longer interviews on the same day or the following day. Ask the employer for an interview time or inquire about their procedures for notifying students if you are selected for an interview.

**Ask for a business card and follow-up**
This is really important, otherwise it may become a challenge to send follow-up “thank you” emails to recruiters. And if you really want to make a good impression, it’s a good idea to send the “thank you” email or note card within 24 hours.

**We encourage you to contact the Career Development Center with any questions concerning job and internship fairs or any other career related concerns.**

See you at the Fair!