

Career Fair Tips

Tips for Success

Career fairs provide a way to explore opportunities from many companies in one location. It's a great way to learn about job openings, research companies and practice your interviewing and networking skills.

BEFORE THE FAIR

Prepare. Visit the CMC web site, www.odu.edu/cmc, to identify career assistance and events that will help you prepare. Search in advance for registered organizations recruiting in your major. Also investigate companies that state that they are seeking "ANY" major because many employers seek candidates with a variety of skills and educational experiences. When you review the CMC list of registered organizations, expand your research to the web site provided by each recruiting company. Do not limit your research to only your major. Think "outside of the box" and explore opportunities to ask, "Who in your company might I speak to about..." This preparation will help you to refine your targeted list of organizations and plan your strategy. Remember to review a copy of the floor plan to identify the location of each targeted company.

Do your homework. Spend time researching the companies at the fair. Employers love talking to candidates who are familiar with their company and business. You'll come across as intelligent and interested. **Get your resume in order.** Create and/or refine your resume and **bring many, many clean, crisp copies** to hand out. **Prepare your 30 second commercial.** Create a 30-second "sound bite" that summarizes your skills, goals, experience, and the kind of company with which you want to associate. Practice this until you are comfortable using this as your opening. Anticipate interview questions and practice your responses.

Prepare Questions. In addition to your 30 second commercial, plan some appropriate questions. Do not ask questions that are answered on the company's web site. Instead, prepare questions that incorporate your knowledge of the company. For examples, visit this link <http://www.odu.edu/ao/cmc/pdffiles/questionstoaskemployers.pdf>

AT THE FAIR

Dress Appropriately. Even if the recruiter is wearing "Business Casual," remember this is a JOB FAIR. You are expected to dress professionally. Visit this site for Job Fair Do's and Don'ts, <http://www.odu.edu/ao/cmc/jobfair/dress.shtml>

Plan the day. Relax and plan on spending time at the fair. Career fairs are not that frequent so plan your time well. For the most popular companies, lines form during peak attendance (i.e., lunch hour, between classes, etc.). If you want to meet with a recruiter, plan to arrive right at the beginning of the fair, or queue up in the line and wait.

Ease into it. Visit your lower priority companies first. This way you can practice and fine tune your approach. When you are ready, precede to the top priority employers on your list.

Keep it lively. The lines may be daunting, but don't fail to maximize this opportunity. Talk to every company that fits your experience and ambitions. If you meet with 20 recruiters, at the end of the day you will know 20 people by name. That sure beats sending a blind resume to "Personnel Director." When you get to actually talk to a company representative, remember to **shake hands firmly and introduce yourself.** This is your chance to make the best first impression.

Network! Talk to both employers and other job candidates. If you are standing in line, don't be shy, talk to the people in line. More jobs are filled by networking than any other means.

Avoid the shopping spree. Many companies give out freebies at their booths. It's OK to pick up an item or two, but don't leave the impression that you are shopping for your dorm or apartment.

Getting the Run-Around? Probably not. Don't be surprised if you are asked to submit your resume through the employer's web site. In some cases, the law requires this. These electronic systems often screen based on key words, so make sure your resume reflects accurate key words in your field. If you have been asked to submit your resume this way, you be confident that the recruiter has your name and will look to find your application as soon as you submit it.

Get a business card – and follow up! If it goes well, you will want to follow up with a letter within a couple of days that reinforces the points you made and the facts you learned. Always refer to the date and location of the career fair. Highlight parts of the conversation that stood out to make it easy for them to remember you. Always include a copy of your resume.