



Making the Most of Career Fairs

A career fair is designed to be helpful to students seeking full-time jobs, internships and summer/part-time jobs. However, there is more to going to a career fair than merely putting on your suit and having a few résumés in hand. Attending a career fair means that you will be surrounded by company representatives from organizations where you may be interviewing and perhaps working someday. You can be certain of one thing at a career fair – you are being observed. That includes your body language, your verbals and the way you interact with others. This resource has been created to give you helpful suggestions and tips toward making your experience at career fairs successful.

Before the Career Fair

- You will want to have a résumé completed before the career fair. It is helpful to have your résumé critiqued by several individuals to make sure that it is perfect. Make sure that you have your résumé printed on résumé stock paper and that you have enough copies to hand out.
- Research the organizations that might be of interest to you. You can receive a list of companies for each career fair by accessing the OSU Career Services Web site: www.hireosugrads.com or the Career Services part of the CASNR Web site at www.casnr.com.
- Be prepared to ask questions of the representatives. Have a list of questions you want to ask and practice these questions before the career fair.
- Try to identify specific experiences where you have demonstrated your strengths.
- Backing up all your skills with specific examples will make you a stronger candidate.
- Know why you want to work for their organization. If you don't know, they won't either.

Questions for Company Representatives

1. How many employees does your company have?
2. What goals does your company have for the next 10 years?
3. What kind of entry-level positions exist within your organization?
4. How many employees are in my area of interest (which is..)?
5. Does your company hire on a continual basis or just at certain times of the year?
6. How long does the hiring process take?
7. What does your organization consider the five most important qualities in an employee?
8. Are graduate degrees important? If so, in what areas?
9. What courses do you suggest in order to be a successful candidate?
10. What personality traits are important for success in your company?
11. As an entry-level employee, what can I expect to be doing 2, 5, 10 years from now?
12. What made you choose this company?
13. How long have you been with the company?
14. What has your organization accomplished of which you are especially proud?
15. How long does an entry-level employee typically stay with the company?
16. What percent of applicants are eventually hired?
17. What is the retention rate in the company?
18. Do you expect your employees to relocate?

During the Career Fair

- Make a good first impression. You may not get the opportunity again.

- Dress nicely. A suit is not required, but ratty jeans will not make the right impression.
- Make eye contact immediately when introducing yourself.
- Give a firm handshake to get you off to a good start.
- Remember the representative's name; if not, casually refer to their name tag.
- Smile and be polite – enthusiasm is an important quality.

Body Language

- Do not fidget or play with your hair.
- Do not rock from side to side.
- Do not look around when talking or being spoken to.
- Do not chew gum.

Communication

- Introduce yourself and establish rapport with the representatives.
- Ask questions in a genuine manner. Don't bombard the employer with questions; maintain a natural flow. Be yourself.
- Listen carefully to what the representative has to say. Be courteous.
- Avoid using filler words such as “um,” “like,” “you know.”
- Show confidence in your voice. The exhibit hall may be noisy and if they can't hear you, they won't remember you.
- Offer your résumé. One way to make your résumé stand out is to include a cover letter that is specific to the organization you are speaking with. You might also consider including a business card that includes your name, university, address, home address, telephone, e-mail address and graduation date.
- Before leaving, be sure to close the conversation and thank them for their time. Ask for a business card or write down the representative's name. It is

also okay to ask what the hiring procedure is. You want to make sure you're doing it right.

Explore ALL Your Options

- Speak with organizations that you had not considered before.
- Take the initiative and engage in meaningful conversations with representatives.
- Representatives are here to provide information about their organizations and career fields.
- Representatives are excellent resources in your career search and decision-making process.

Five Faux Pas to Avoid During a Career Fair

1. Approaching a campus recruiter when the person is talking with another student.
2. Jumping into conversation without first introducing yourself with a smile, handshake, and giving your full name.
3. Rambling rather than asking specific questions during your few minutes with the person.
4. Not leaving the brief meeting knowing more than you knew when you approached the person.
5. Not ending the conversation before the recruiter does (i.e. Thank you for taking time to speak with me. I will contact you this spring to schedule an interview as you requested.”).

After the Career Fair

- Mailing a thank you letter is not only appropriate; it can also bring attention to your name.
- You can send an additional résumé in your thank you letter; again, point out your strengths.
- You can also call to make sure that your application is complete.
- When calling, be prepared to know/practice what you are going to say beforehand.

Career Fair Follow-Up

You can be sure that any letter you send following a career fair will be the exception rather than the norm. For that reason alone, be sure to send a letter 48 hours from the day of the career fair. As a way of reminding the recruiter who you were, mention something that you may have talked about (i.e. "I was the person who also is from Cleveland"). A sample letter is included below:

456 University Street
Stillwater, OK 74074
September 15, 2005

Ms. Jane Doe
Human Resources Manager
XYZ Corporation
111 Yourhired Avenue
New Employee, OK 10101

Dear Ms. Doe:

It was a pleasure meeting you at the Oklahoma State University Career Fair last week. As you may remember, I am the person who also is from Dallas.

As you requested, I have registered with CASNR Career Services and will be selecting to interview with your company. I will be graduating in May 2006 and hope to become a part of your organization's team. As we discussed, I believe my _____ skills would be a good match for your organization's needs.

After you review my résumé, please let me know how you would like to proceed. If I do not hear from you during the week of _____, I will contact you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

DO's

- Introduce yourself to the representative. Ask one or two thoughtful questions.
- Sell yourself! At a career fair you only have 1-2 minutes to make an impression— make it positive!
- Bring several copies of your résumé and leave a copy with each company you speak with.
- Treat all representatives equally—you never know who has decision-making ability in the process.
- Offer a firm handshake.
- Homework! Read a brochure, check the library files, go to the alumni office and find a recent grad who works at the organization to get information.

DON'T's

- Expect recruiters to approach you and carry the conversation
- Drop off your résumé with the excuse, “I don’t have time to talk.”
- Assume the firm’s representatives will just remember you. They talk to hundreds of students each day.
- Skip over the recruiter and only talk to the “line people” to get your information.
- Crush the representatives’ hands or offer a limp handshake.
- Expect the firm’s representative to tell you everything there is to know about the company.