

INTERNSHIP/JOB FAIR STRATEGIES

There are several ways you ensure a successful job fair experience. Employers attend career events for several reasons, whether it is increasing the awareness of their organization, providing career information, or increasing their applicant pool for current and future position openings. Networking has never been more important, so be sure to follow these tips to prepare and present yourself effectively.

Research the companies attending: This will allow you to focus your approach to specific employers. You will be able to better communicate why you are interested in their company, and how your background fits their needs. It will also prevent you getting too overwhelmed.

Prepare your resume: Ask for help if needed—get someone to edit it for grammar and punctuation. Make sure it reads clear, concise, and professional.

Prepare your 30-second “elevator pitch”: Prepare and memorize a brief statement summarizing your background to the employer’s needs. This should be well-rehearsed and conversational.

Have questions prepared: This is especially important when approaching an employer you know little about. Ask several probing questions that will obtain the information needed while connecting your background, interests, and goals. Below are some examples:

- What types of employment or internship opportunities does your organization represent?
- What characteristics do you look for in applicants?
- How does your organization provide supervision and training?
- What is your application process for new college graduates?
- May I leave you a copy of my resume?

Note: Be sure to ask appropriate questions. Avoid initial questions about salary, benefits, vacation, sick leave policy, etc.

Dress and act professionally: Treat the fair like a real interview. Be confident, show interest and enthusiasm! Maintain good eye contact, smile, and have a firm handshake.

Business cards: While at the fair, you will want to network with as many employers as possible. Collect business cards for follow up purposes. (If something sticks out to you about a certain individual, jot it down on the back of their business card to jog your memory later.) You can also create your own business cards to hand out as well—try to include a picture on your card so they will remember you better.

Follow up: Immediately after the fair, follow-up with a handwritten thank you note, or email, to everyone you spoke with. This exhibits professionalism, and will make a positive impression.

Even though these fairs should be treated like an interview, don't forget to relax and be yourself. As cliché as it sounds, it makes a big difference in a first impression.