

THE CATHERINE CAREER GUIDE TO

Career Fair Preparation

A career fair, also known as a job fair or recruitment fair, is a resource for candidates to find out about potential employers. They are typically organized in a large hall where employers will set up booths with members from their human resources (HR) team along with new employees, to tell those attending about their company and application process.

Why attend a Career Fair?

The main reason –**research**. Asking representatives for details of a profession or a certain company will allow you to get a bigger picture of what it is like to work in that area, allowing you to make an informed choice about your career path.

A career fair is also useful for **networking** with employer representatives. When you do apply to a particular employer, it can be a great advantage to know someone there who can help guide you through the application process.

Prior to the Fair

- **Prepare a professional resume** that reflects your education, skills, and experience.
 - Check for spelling or grammatical errors
 - Design it to be reviewed easily by an employer
 - Try to keep it to one page and highlight skills
- **Review and research** employers and identify the ones of interest to you.
 - Use websites to learn what the company does, its mission, and other important information
 - Take notes about the organizations and take them to the fair to review before you approach a representative
- **Know what you want to communicate** to an employer in just a couple minutes.
 - Prepare an elevator speech that includes your name, major, program, career interests, experience, skills related to the work you wish to do, etc.
 - **PRACTICE** your introduction or elevator speech –By practicing you will gain more confidence and be better prepared
- **Plan your attire carefully**. Always dress professionally and conservatively.
 - Plan to look your best—not too casual, not too trendy!
 - Not advised – a skirt that’s too short, a lot of make-up, earrings that are too large, or clothing in general that is too revealing, etc.
- **Secure a portfolio case with a pad of paper and pen** to use at the fair to take notes.

At the Fair

- **Arrive a bit early to collect items you will need**—these may include a name badge, map with the layout of organizations, and schedule for the event.
- **Locate the employers you want to talk to** and plan the order in which you hope to see them or organize your time.
 - Prioritize organizations by your level of interest and develop a strategy
 - Visit with organizations of lesser interest first to get used to talking with recruiters, then move on to your top choices
- **Bring twice as many resumes as you think you will need.** Running out is very stressful and copying machines may not be available.
- **Approach employers with:**
 - A smile
 - A positive attitude
 - A firm handshake
 - An elevator speech
 - Readiness to answer questions, regarding you and your experiences
- **While talking to the employer:**
 - Tell the recruiter you are very interested in her/his organization then share information you learned from your employer research
 - REQUEST A BUSINESS CARD for follow-up purposes
 - If the employer is not collecting resumes and tells you to “apply online” ask for:
 - Tips on how you can format your resume to scan well electronically
 - Any other steps you can take to get an interview
 - What skills they are looking for in good candidates
 - *Always* thank the employer before you leave their table or booth. Reiterate your interest and excitement about opportunities with the organization
 - If applicable, ask for an interview during the fair
- **If you are networking** for positions not posted at the fair, follow the above suggestions and:
 - After introducing yourself, tell the employer of your career areas of interest (i.e. communications, human resources, business analysis, project management) and ask the recruiter if they have:
 - Suggestions of people to contact in the organization who may be hiring in your area of interest
 - Tips for finding positions in those areas
 - Other ideas that would help you gain visibility within their organization
- **Ask polite questions and always leave with a business card** so you can follow up with a thank-you note and to use in the future.

After the Fair

- **Review your day**, note what you learned and make a follow-up plan to:
 - Send thank you notes to employers. Proofread cards or email messages carefully!
 - Follow up by going to organizations' websites and apply on-line using the information you gathered at the fair
 - Reassess what you need to do to continue your job search.
 - **COME TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT** for more assistance! *Attending career fairs is one strategy to finding a career or internship opportunity. We can help you learn more strategies*



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