Job Fairs can be critical tools for job search success...whether you use them to get an internship or job, or, whether you use them as a networking tool.

Companies attend job fairs as part of their recruiting strategy in order to connect with a large number of job seekers in one location. The purposes of the job fair are threefold: 1) Increasing a company’s visibility to a targeted audience, 2) Collecting resumes, and 3) Screening candidates on a one-on-one basis to determine if follow-up interviews are warranted. Students interested in connecting with a large number of companies in one location should attend a job fair. If you are entering into your Junior or Senior year, it is strongly encouraged that you attend to network with potential employers. Your goal is to secure an interview and/or a solid contact. Be sure to ask for a business card.

Remember, 85% of job opportunities are secured through networking. During a job fair recruiters and representatives interact with participants one-on-one and in small groups.
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“You will have 2–3 minutes to communicate why a company should consider hiring you...”

Research
You should plan to arrive 30 minutes early to secure an up-to-date list of participating companies and to plan your strategy to approach each company of interest. Identify and prioritize your companies. You’re not going to be able to connect with every organization. The initial interaction is considered an interview, so prepare for your first exchange. It could lead to a new opportunity. You will have 2-3 minutes to communicate why a company should consider hiring you or possibly granting you an interview at a later date. Follow-up with each of the companies of interest that you made contact with.

Preparation is the key to standing out! Research companies that you’re interested in meeting. Have at least 20-25 resumes. Be professional and polite and don’t be afraid to smile. Have a prepared opening statement that highlights your strengths and what you have to offer a company. Practice! Have prepared questions that you can ask and don’t be afraid to interact during your exchange.

Dress Professionally
Dress appropriately. If you’re serious about securing a full-time job or internship, dress professionally in interview attire. Women: dress conservatively, nice solid color suit (pant suits are acceptable), neat hairstyle, limited jewelry, easy on the perfume and make-up, clean and trimmed nails. Men: A Nice suit or sport coat and slacks, tie, white long sleeve shirt, dark socks and shoes, limited jewelry, neat hair cut, easy on the aftershave, clean and trimmed nails.

Be Prepared
You will be talking with a lot of representatives during the day. Bring a small portfolio that includes a pad and pen. It will also enable you to carry copies of your resume. As you collect business cards be sure to write notes so that you have enough information to follow-up with the representatives that you talk to. Your resume should provide the representatives with a summary of your skills and qualifications. To ensure that you have a quality resume, schedule a resume critique appointment with your Career Coordinator before the job fair.

Arrive Early
Job fairs generally run for 3-4 hours. Company representatives talk to a lot of people during the course of the fair. Oftentimes they are tired by the end of the day and many even leave the fair before the official ending time. By arriving early, you can research the employers, plan your strategy, and talk to representatives when they are fresh and more alert.

Check Out The Set-up
When you get to the job fair don’t get intimidated by the noise and activity. Stay focused on your goal: to meet with those companies on your target list. Take a quick walk through of the job fair to understand how everything is set up and note the locations of your targeted companies. Companies do offer “give-aways” such as frisbees, stress balls, cups, mugs, candy, etc. It is ok to take these, but don’t get too carried away. You don’t want them to think that your only interest is in the give-aways.
Be Ready To Converse With the Reps

The company representatives will be talking with a lot of people throughout the fair and they soon become annoyed when they have to keep repeating very basic information about their organization. You should do your research and be knowledgeable about your target companies so that you can be more direct and make a connection between you and the company. You should have a well-practiced, short 30 second introduction. Tell the recruiter your name, your class year and whether you are interested in a full-time, part-time or internship position. You may then reveal your career interests, major and why you are interested in their company. If you are gathering information, let employers know that you are only interested in materials and information. Remember to use good eye contact and a firm handshake.

Try To Get A Business Card

Before you disengage with representatives, ask for their business card and ask if you can give them a copy of your resume. Ask them what steps you should take to follow-up with them. Take a few minutes immediately after you leave each booth to write detailed notes about the contact(s) you made.

Keep It Brief

Company representatives are hoping to meet with a lot of candidates during the job fair. Keep your conversation brief, make your key points, get the information you need, exchange your resume for a business card, and then move on to the next employer.

After the Job Fair

Follow-up is the key to making a job fair work for you. Recruiters will collect hundreds of resumes during the job fair and will have talked to a lot of candidates. Review your notes for following up, and send a cover letter and resume to the representative. Be sure to remind them that you spoke with them at the job fair and that they recommended that you follow-up. Ask for an interview. Tell them you will call them to try and set up a follow-up interview and then call them.

Final Thoughts

Remember, the company representatives are here to recruit UNF students and they want to talk to you. Make the most of these great opportunities!
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