

## **JOB FAIR- Tip Sheet**

### **WHAT IS A JOB FAIR?**

A job fair is the gathering of a large number of employers in one location such as a campus gymnasium, hotel, convention center, or possibly an Internet site (known as a virtual job fair). It provides job seekers with the opportunity to meet with a variety of potential employers in a short period of time. Many job fairs include a mix of business, technical, research, non-profit and government organizations. Booths of employers are generally lined up in rows within an arena-like setting. Each employer has a table to display organization literature, collect resumes, and meet with job candidates. While you will most likely have only a few minutes with each representative, some job fairs provide an opportunity for you to have more in-depth interviews with the employers during or after the fair.

Your purpose at a job fair is to:

- Meet face-to-face with potential employers! Your chances of being selected for an interview are far better (if you are prepared) than just sending a resume or completing a website application.
- Establish contacts.
- Explore career fields and learn about part-time, internship, and/or full-time opportunities.
- Gather employer information.
- Make a favorable impression with employer representatives and possibly set up a follow-up interview for positions that interest you.
- Practice your interviewing techniques. Take advantage of the large number of employers available at a fair to hone your interviewing skills.

Employers go to job fairs to:

- Increase awareness about their organization.
- Provide career and organization information.
- Screen candidates for existing and future internships and job vacancies.
- Maximize their use of recruiting time & money by meeting with a high number of potential candidates within a short period of time.

### **PREPARATION**

Just as for an interview, preparation for a job fair is key. The following is a list of things to do before the event:

1. If required, pre-register and pay any fees before the deadline date.
2. Review information about the job fair process. Also, useful tips from employers are available at [www.westpacs.org](http://www.westpacs.org) under 'For Candidates- Job Fair Preparation.' WestPACS also offers various informational videos at [www.youtube.com/channel/](http://www.youtube.com/channel/).
3. Research the employers.
  - Obtain a list of employers and their available positions. Many job fairs will have a website detailing this information and may provide a link to employer websites. Employers attending RMU's Career Expo and Spring Career Fair are, for example, posted under the Events tab on ColonialTRAK.
  - Identify a primary and secondary list of employers you would like to meet with and research information about them. Take notes and review comments the day of the fair.
  - Develop a list of questions to ask your targeted employers.
  - Complete organization website applications, if available, before the job fair.

#### 4. Prepare yourself.

- Clarify your goals and determine your purpose for attending the fair (informational interviewing, internship, part-time job, full-time job).
- Develop a concise, professional, error-free resume. If you are exploring different career or internship possibilities, you may want to have more than one resume, each targeting a different area. Take multiple copies of each resume, printed out on a laser-quality printer using white or off-white, good quality bond paper. Refer to the Resume Writing Tip Sheet for additional pointers on resume preparation.
- Polish your interview skills by practicing a 30-60 second commercial about yourself (also referred to as an elevator speech.). Each meeting with an employer will be like a mini-interview. Although the setting is less formal than at a structured interview, treat this process as you would an actual interview. Your first impression is critical! Know your career goals, strengths and weaknesses, and why you would like to work for the organization. Be able to convey your qualifications and enthusiasm clearly and concisely. Relate what makes you a unique fit for the position and/or organization.

Also, practice your non-verbal communication skills; your handshake, eye contact, and body language all help to create your first impression with the potential employer.

The Career Center offers a variety of tools to help you develop your interview skills. In addition to reviewing the Interviewing Tip Sheet, attend a relevant workshop, set up a practice interview with a career counselor and/or employer, and/or utilize the interview books available in the Career Library.

## THE DAY OF THE FAIR

Package yourself! The outside "package" you present will form the recruiter's first impression of you. Since you will only have a few minutes with each employer, first impressions are even more critical than in a normal interview situation. Your approach to a job fair should be similar to that of an interview. Following are some key points to remember in terms of your presentation:

**Use proper cell phone etiquette.** To make a professional impression and avoid an awkward or embarrassing moment, turn off your cell phone before entering the job fair.

**Dress to impress** in professional business attire. Conservative dress rather than a fashion statement is generally best, but research appropriate dress for your field and/or organizations of interest. Wear a charcoal, navy or gray suit. Ensure that clothes are pressed and well-fitting, not too tight or baggy. Be neat, clean and well-groomed from head to toe.

**Quick tip:** The Career Center has a limited supply of interview appropriate clothing available. If you need to borrow professional wear for a scheduled interview, stop by and visit our 'Career Closet' in advance.

### Women

- ✓ Classic suit
- ✓ Hosiery (close to skin tone or dark; no patterns)
- ✓ White/ light-colored updated blouse, not low cut
- ✓ Knee-level hemline
- ✓ Closed-toe pump with a low to moderate heel
- ✓ No purse; carry a briefcase or portfolio instead
- ✓ Neutral makeup and nail polish
- ✓ Neatly styled or pulled back hair
- ✓ Minimal jewelry (one set of earrings only)

### Men

- ✓ Classic business suit is best; navy or gray preferred
- ✓ Blazer, tie and well-pressed trousers
- ✓ Conservative tie
- ✓ White/light-blue, long-sleeved dress shirt
- ✓ Black lace-up dress shoes and dark socks
- ✓ Neatly trimmed hair, sideburns, mustache (no facial hair for some professions; i.e. CPA firms)
- ✓ Minimal jewelry (no earrings/piercings)

### **Elements of a polished look**

- ✓ Neat, well-groomed hair
- ✓ Cleanliness (no body odor)
- ✓ Fresh breath
- ✓ Genuine smile
- ✓ Good body posture
- ✓ Clean, trimmed fingernails
- ✓ Little or no cologne/perfume
- ✓ Pressed clothes and polished shoes
- ✓ No candy or gum; no cigarettes
- ✓ No visible body art/tattoos

### **Finishing touches**

- ✓ 9"x12" leather or vinyl-bound portfolio to store your resume, letters of recommendation, and other relevant materials that demonstrate your abilities; can also be used to take notes at the job fair
- ✓ Briefcase to keep the extra copies of your resume and to collect information gathered at the fair (in lieu of the plastic bags offered)
- ✓ A good quality pen that doesn't bleed (does not need to be expensive)

## **AT THE FAIR**

1. Plan to arrive at the job fair with enough time to meet with employers of interest. Do not wait until the last hour to come, even if you plan to speak to only three or four employers. Organization representatives may begin to tire, or possibly pack up and leave, within the last one-half to one hour prior to the close of the job fair.
2. If applicable, take your admission ticket and any other materials needed for admittance.
3. When you arrive at the job fair:
  - Turn off your cell phone.
  - Wear a name tag, if available. This helps the employer connect a name with a face.
  - Obtain an updated list of employers and job fair literature that may contain specific information about the employers, their available positions, and their location at the fair.
  - Explore the layout of the job fair and make note of where your targeted employers are located. Some lines may be longer, so plan your strategy to make the best use of your time. Be prepared to wait in line for some of the more popular organizations.
  - Make sure that your resumes are easily accessible, so you are not fumbling through your materials to retrieve them when you are with the recruiter.
4. When you meet with the employer:
  - Be confident! Smile, offer a firm handshake and introduce yourself to the recruiter(s). For example, as an introduction, students may state their name, major, academic year and university name.
  - Offer your resume. **Note:** Some employers who have website applications no longer accept resumes, so don't be discouraged if they will not take one from you. You still have an opportunity to make a favorable in-person impression that can lead to an interview.
  - Present a 30 second commercial about yourself. Demonstrate a link between your goals, courses, college activities, experience and the available position.
  - Show that you have some knowledge of the organization. Ask questions and request information to learn more about the position, the organization and its hiring practices. Show a genuine interest in and enthusiasm for the organization and the position available.
  - Respond with concise answers to the interviewer's questions. Be prepared to cite examples of where and how you developed your skills and qualifications.
  - In most cases, your opportunity to talk with an employer will be brief. You will have 3-5 minutes to present your qualifications and interest in working with the organization and to answer their questions. Do not stray to unimportant topics.
  - Before leaving, inquire about the employer's timetable for the interviewing and hiring process. Also, find out when and how you may follow up with them, request a business card for future correspondence, and thank the employer for his/her time.

5. Some additional pointers to maximize your success at a job fair include the following:
- Don't be shy! There will be many employers and many candidates in attendance. You may need to be assertive (but not aggressive or rude) if you want to talk with the recruiters.
  - Be aware of your verbal and nonverbal communication. The employer's goal is to get to know you and assess your personal and professional qualifications in a short amount of time.
  - Try to determine if the employer representative at the job fair is actually the "hiring" person. If not, try to obtain that person's name and contact information, so you may follow-up with them as well.
  - Don't limit yourself to talking to just one or two employers or organizations. After you have visited your targeted organization recruiters, make contact with as many employers as possible. You may learn about opportunities of which you were not previously aware.
  - Be flexible. You may encounter crowded conditions or waiting lines. Don't waste time standing in long lines. Seek employers who are less busy and then return.
  - Put your waiting time to good use. Before you talk with a recruiter, try to obtain the information at the organization booth to review while you stand in line. Also, network with other candidates by exchanging information about available positions with the employers each other has already contacted.
  - Don't be frustrated if the employer directs you to the organization website to complete their online application. Website applications are now required for many organizations. As mentioned earlier, complete these applications before you attend the job fair. Then, when directed to the website, you can inform the employer that, because of your interest in the organization and/or position, you have already completed that step and would like to know the next best step to take to be considered for the position.
  - Don't be discouraged if an employer representative rebuffs you, saying they are recruiting for something unrelated to your area. Stay positive; try to get contact information for the area appropriate to your job interests, if possible. If unsuccessful, move on to other potential employers.
  - After you leave the employer's booth, write key points about your conversation and the position on the employer's business card. This information will help you in later assessing the position(s) and in your follow-up with the organization.
  - If you feel that an employer's conduct has been inappropriate (rude, excessively pushy, etc.), report it to the job fair organizers. While this rarely happens, organizers want to be aware of these circumstances for further investigation and follow up.

## **FOLLOW-UP**

Your work is not done when the job fair ends. It is also important to do the following:

- Write follow-up thank you letters, affirming your interest in and qualifications for the position you are seeking. Be specific about when and where you met with the employer.
- Provide any follow-up information the employer requested during the job fair visit. This information may include a transcript, cover letter, letters of recommendation, or application on the organization's website.
- Assess your interactions with each employer, deciding which positions may be of interest to you.

Whether or not you get the "perfect job" through a job fair, you will be able to gain knowledge about specific employers and career fields. A job fair also gives you the opportunity to practice your interviewing skills.

Formal job offers are rarely extended on the day of the job fair. Employers will typically invite you for at least one follow-up interview before extending you an offer. If you receive a job offer on the day of the fair, it is recommended that you neither sign any document, nor agree to pay any fee, until you have consulted with the Career Center and/or your attorney.

**Success lies in good preparation, effective communication, and appropriate follow-up.**