



# How to Work a Career Fair

## Career Development Services

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### REASONS TO ATTEND A CAREER FAIR

Regardless of your major, year in college or future goals, here are numerous benefits to attending a career fair:

- Increase your chances of receiving an interview with an employer.
- Expand your network of contacts.
- Investigate positions, occupations and career fields you could pursue with your major and background.
- Learn more about employers and available positions.
- Receive sound job search advice from seasoned company recruiters.

### WHAT TO EXPECT AT A CAREER FAIR

Having realistic expectations of a career fair is important in succeeding in your career search. The following list can be helpful to identify any misconceptions of a career fair:

- Employers expect students to be prepared (i.e. be professionally dressed, ask thoughtful questions, have a polished resume).
- Employers expect to interact with students seeking employment as well as those simply researching careers and employers.
- Most recruiters are not authorized to hire candidates on the day of the fair. With this in mind, your goal should be to land an interview—not a job offer.
- Employers' goals are to be exposed to as many job candidates as possible; therefore, you will have a relatively short amount of time to sell yourself and make a positive impact on the employer.

Attending a career fair for the first time can be a little overwhelming. However, if you have taken time to prepare for the fair, you will get as much out of the career fair event as you put into it.

### MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR CAREER FAIR EXPERIENCE

Simply attending a career fair is not enough; you need to make your participation at the fair count! The following information represents what you need to do in order to prepare for a career fair. Hopefully, you have already taken some, if not all, of the following measures to make the most out of your career fair experience. Hang on to this handout and use the ideas presented in it to prepare for the next career fair or interview that you attend.

### BEFORE CAREER FAIR

#### Target Your Top Five Companies

A list of companies/organizations who will be attending and a map detailing their location is available at [www.auburn.edu/career](http://www.auburn.edu/career). Take this list and plan your strategy for which companies you would like to visit. Research the five organizations in which you are most interested. Then, print the floor plans so you know where you are going upon arrival.

#### Prepare a Resume

A well-written, error free resume is a must! Make sure you have multiple copies of both your resume and list of references on hand.

#### Create a List of Questions

Create a list of questions you want to ask employers.

#### Prepare to Answer Questions

Remember, employers will also be asking you questions! You will be expected to think on your feet, so be prepared to answer their questions.

#### Learn to Sell Yourself

Create a 60 second commercial and practice it! Your commercial should include the following:

1. **Introduction:** Introduce yourself, offer a firm hand shake and a resume.
2. **Objective:** tell the employer why you are there and what sort of employment you seek.
3. **Summary:** Briefly summarize education, experience, strengths, etc.
4. **Closing:** Reiterate your interest and thank the employer.

#### Personal Appearance

At least a week before Career Expo, get a haircut and make sure your suit is appropriate, fits, is cleaned. Dress for Success tips are located in the Handbook located in 303 Martin Hall and at [www.auburn.edu/career](http://www.auburn.edu/career).

#### Arrive Early

In many cases arriving early means avoiding long lines. Also, you may find that some of the employers will leave before the career fair has ended and you do not want to miss an opportunity of speaking with a company/organization that you would like to meet.

As you arrive, remember to be polite to people in the parking lot, elevator, hallway or restroom as it may be a recruiter.

## In Summary

- Prioritize employers with whom you would like to speak.
- Identify the information you hope to obtain.
- Identify personal strengths you would like to convey.
- Specify those goals you hope to achieve by attending the career fair.

## DURING CAREER FAIR

### Be Confident

It is important that you understand that employers view candidates as possible future employees of their organization. Therefore, you need to display enthusiasm, confidence, sincerity and the ability to communicate clearly. Smile; walk confidently with good posture, and make consistent and direct eye contact.

### Chart Your Course

Survey the room to determine where employers are located and in what order you plan to visit them. If possible, avoid standing in long lines. If there is a long line to speak with a representative, keep moving and return later.

### Introduce Yourself

When it's your turn to meet the employer, take a deep breath, smile, shake hands firmly and begin your "60 second" commercial. Be sure to make direct eye contact with the employer throughout your conversation. Also, watch your tempo and tone when speaking to the employer. A common nervous habit is to speak too quickly and/or too loudly or softly.

### Ask Meaningful Questions

- It is a good idea to ask one or two meaningful questions without monopolizing the employer's time.
- Do not ask about salary at this time.
- If you are currently an undergraduate, be sure to ask about internship, co-op, summer employment and scholarship opportunities.

### Prepare to Follow-Up

At the end of your conversation, be sure to do the following:

- Thank the employer for his/her time.
- Leave a copy of your resume.
- Ask the employer for a business card, company literature and protocol for follow-up.
- If the employer says they do not have a position in your field, ask for the address of the Personnel Office so you can write. Nearly all employers hire all majors. The person you are talking with may not be aware of all the opportunities offered by their company.

As soon as you walk away from the employer, jot down a few notes about your conversation. You may want to bring up a few memorable points that were discussed during your visit to include in your follow-up letter.

## AFTER CAREER FAIR

### Give Yourself the Competitive Edge

Don't make the mistake of thinking that as soon as you have spoken to the last employer and left the facility that you are finished. Follow-up is essential to making the most of your career fair experience!

### Send Thank You Letters

Be sure to send thank you letters to employers that you meet within one week. Most candidates do not make the effort to send thank you letters. Why not give yourself the competitive edge? You can start with a thank you email that evening and follow it with a hard copy letter.

### Be Persistent

Observe the follow-up procedures suggested by the employer. Once you have complied with these procedures, if a reasonable amount of time has passed and you have not heard from the employer, it is okay to send a letter to the employer inquiring about the status of your application.

### Use the Career Development Services Handbook

Remember, the CDS Handbook is an excellent resource. It is located in the office, 303 Martin Hall, and on-line at [www.auburn.edu/career](http://www.auburn.edu/career)

### Summary

You have made the most of your career fair experience when it results in subsequent interviews. If you have followed the "before," "during," and "after" steps, you are probably on your way to landing one or more interviews—and better yet—a career!

Statistics from career fairs indicate that 49 percent of candidates receive interviews from job fairs, 65 percent of those eventually receive offers. This process may take three to four months (or longer). Again, the larger the company, the longer this may take.

### Career Fair Checklist

- ☐ Portfolio/Briefcase (Women should either carry a briefcase or handbag, never both.)
- ☐ Pen and Notebook
- ☐ At least a dozen resumes
- ☐ Copies of your unofficial transcript
- ☐ Copies of list of references
- ☐ Appropriate clothing including comfortable, professional shoes
- ☐ Small breath mints—no gum!
- ☐ A positive attitude

### Resources:

- "Keys to a Successful Career Fair." Clemson University Career Expo Handbook. 2000.
- Reuter-Alm, G. "Three Ps for Succeeding at the Job Fair." Career Development Associate, Eastern Michigan University