

Wentworth

Co-ops & Careers

Career Fair Prep

Career Fairs are one of the most powerful ways to advance your job search! Though most of your contact with a potential employer might be through e-mail, recruiters still prefer face to face conversations. It is an opportunity to tell employers about yourself, learn about current or future openings, get questions answered, make professional connections, or even follow up concerning an application you have already submitted.

Before the Fair

Preparation

- Edit and update your resume. Print multiple copies (15-20) to hand to employers.
- Research the employers attending the fair.
- What available positions do they have? Will they have openings in the future?
- What is their size? Location? Product? Service? History? Mission?
- Are alumni currently working there?
- What programming language do they work in?
- Prepare questions for the employers to better understand their organization and spark conversation.
- Take notes on each employer to refer to before your conversation with them.
- Make a list of employers you want to speak to at the fair. Make note of your 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices.
- Apply to positions online before the fair, when possible. Employers are eager to spend time with people who have already applied. Let the recruiter know you have applied and for which position. You can gain excellent “insider” information to help with the process.

Elevator Pitch

Develop and practice your “pitch”. This is a brief introduction (30 seconds) that captures the interest of the person with whom you are engaging. One key to successful networking is to make a strong first impression. This pitch should serve as a way to spark a conversation by first offering an overview of your education, interests, experience, skills, and accomplishments. Your pitch should touch on the following topics:

- Who are you? What are you studying? Why did you choose to study this?
- What are your interests, skills, abilities, and relevant experiences? What makes you unique?
- Briefly summarize labs, projects, or co-ops that were relevant to this organization.
- Why are you interested in this organization?
- What past accomplishment proves you have the fundamental skillset to work in this field?
- End with a good question that transitions the dialogue into a more relaxed and natural conversation.

Example:

“Hello, my name is Arioch Huntington and I am in my 3rd year at Wentworth studying Civil Engineering with a minor in Construction Management. I have volunteered with Engineers Without Borders throughout my first two years at college. Last summer I completed an internship with the CTA, and I’m hoping to find an internship in Transportation this summer in the Boston area. I have always had an interest in transportation, and I’m also finding that I have a knack for project management. In the future, I’m hoping to combine these two in a career that includes them both. I am really interested in the co-op positions I found posted on your website. Can you tell me more about the types of projects your interns work on?”

See handout titled “Delivering Your Introduction” for more on the elevator pitch prep.

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At the Fair

Work the Room

- Approach employers confidently and introduce yourself with eye contact.
- Approach your 1st choice employers first before moving on to your 2nd and 3rd choice. However, be open as you never know what an employer can offer you unless you speak with them. Some students may want to begin with a 3rd choice employer to practice their pitch and calm their nerves.
- Always thank the representative and ask for their business card before you leave.
- Expect to wait in line. Use this time to listen to the conversations ahead of you so you know what to expect.

Present Your Best Self

How you present yourself tells the employer a lot about how you approach your work. Here are some tips on how to present your best self:

- Deliver a firm handshake, make eye contact, smile, and try your best to remember names.
- Keep good posture and limit hand gestures and body movements if possible. Try your best to stay present in the conversation and block out distractions around you.
- Bring a portfolio that contains extra copies of your resume and has room to place materials collected from employers.
- Prepare a list of talking points/questions to discuss with the employer about the position, organization, and industry.
- Bring a pad of paper & pen to take any necessary notes. What did you discuss? Are there upcoming deadlines? Did they request an electronic copy of your resume? Do they want you to follow up?
- Collect business cards of employers you meet in order to follow up with a thank you note. The back of the card can be a good place to make a note of your conversation.
- Be polished. Dress appropriately. Avoid colognes/perfumes and distracting accessories. Pull your hair away from your face and limit visible tattoos and piercings. No gum! Jeans and leggings are best avoided as they are often perceived as unprofessional; if your only option, choose dark colors with no holes/tears and pair them with a dress shirt or blouse.

After the Fair

Follow Up and “Thank You” Notes

- Send “thank you” e-mails to the representative 12-24 hours after the fair.
- If he/she requested additional information, be sure to attach it to your thank you note. o Resume and/or cover letter in PDF format o Your availability
- Contact employers you missed and to whom you want to speak.
- Store all your contact information in a safe place... you never know when you might want to reach out to them again for future opportunities or informational interviews. (See *Informational Interview* handout for how to create a spreadsheet to keep track of potential employers)

Common Mistakes

- Skipping the research. Employers are interested in qualified candidates who can demonstrate knowledge about their company and industry.
- Lacking organization.
- Behaving too casually with an employer. You can mirror their demeanor, but always remember to remain appropriate for the interaction.
- Forgetting to request contact information.
- Failing to follow up with a “thank you” note.
- Visiting a representative with a friend tagging along.
- Running out of resumes.
- Approaching an employer with inappropriate attire, food, drink, or a cell phone in hand.