

Making the Most of a Job Fair

Attending a job or internship fair helps get your foot in the door. Here are a few tips you need to know:

Before the Job Fair

- ◆ Arrive early and plan to stay late.
- ◆ Thoroughly research those companies that interest you to gain background information upon which you can base your conversations with the company representatives. Research their history, locations, and current career opportunities ahead of time using the company website, your school's library, or the career center.
- ◆ Contact employers of special interest ahead of the fair.
- ◆ Create a professional resume that targets your position(s) of interest. If you need assistance in preparing a résumé, attend a résumé workshop, use the examples found in the Career Resource Library, or visit the links found on the Career Services website. Once you've created a draft, meet with a career counselor to "fine tune" your résumé
- ◆ Set realistic expectations. Few people will get hired on the spot. Be prepared to identify and follow up on promising leads.
- ◆ Express your interest and motivation by arriving early to meet with employers before the fair gets crowded. Remember to bring a list of employers you are interested in meeting.
- ◆ Think about the interview questions you may be asked, and develop a commercial that concisely states your qualifications, interests, skills and strengths. Practice out loud so you become comfortable.
- ◆ Prepare a few relevant questions you would like to ask the employers such as the types of skills the employer is seeking.
- ◆ Prepare your own job fair kit complete with enough resumes for employers you want to talk with, plus a few extras. Make sure your resume is printed on resume-quality paper.

During the Job Fair

- ◆ Bring 30 copies of your resume.
- ◆ Bring pens and paper.
- ◆ Keep yourself and your materials neat. You may want to bring a folder or small bag to carry everything.
- ◆ Be patient and ready to wait in lines. Practice by visiting less crowded booths first.
- ◆ Show your knowledge of the employer.

◆Energy! Career fairs require you to be on your feet moving from table to table for an hour or so. Each time you meet someone, be at your best, as refreshed as possible! If you start to get fatigued, take a break. Take time to regroup and be ready for the next organization.

◆Dress the same as you would for a job interview. Consider this a preliminary interview. You want to present the best image possible -- jeans, sweatshirts, flip flops, sneakers, and backpacks won't cut it. Avoid excessive jewelry, perfume, loud colors, low cut blouses, short skirts, tight clothing, and ties with animal characters or sayings. You will only have a few minutes to make an impression as a job candidate. Positive first impressions are critical!

◆Turn off all cellular telephones and electronic devices – better yet, don't bring them with you into the event. The noise from these items (even “vibrate” makes noise) is distracting and can be viewed by the recruiter(s) as unprofessional.

◆Keep an open mind and don't reduce your opportunities due to lack of information or effort. You may want to tour the event and make contact with all the participating organizations to learn more about them and what they have to offer, but visit your "priority" companies first.

◆Approach employers with confidence. Make eye contact and shake hands with the employer when you introduce yourself. Prepare a brief introduction. For example: “Hello, my name is Mary Brown and I'm a junior at McDaniel College majoring in Biology. I am interested in learning more about the research positions with your organization.”

◆Present your resume and tell the employer why you would be an excellent candidate for the position and why you are interested in the organization.

◆Ask for company materials and business cards. This enables you to have something to refer to when you follow up with an organization. Take notes immediately after leaving the employer so you remember relevant information. When you send Thank You notes, remember to thank the recruiter for taking the time to speak with you.

After the Job Fair

◆After the event, you should make it a point to follow up with a letter expressing your interest in the company and in what they have to offer. This will help you stand out in the employer's mind. You may want to include an updated résumé or provide better answers to specific questions asked during the event. Thank you/follow up letters should be received by the employer within 2-5 days after an event.

◆Call to make sure the company received your application materials if you do not hear from them in two weeks after the job fair. At this time, you can check on the status of the position and offer to come in for an interview.

◆Continue to research the companies that interest you. Treat the job fair interview as an initial contact, not the last.

◆Review your notes from the job fair and evaluate what you think went well and what you can improve for the next job fair or interview.

◆Keep accurate records of your contacts, including dates of your letters or telephone calls and copies of all application materials that you send.

◆Contact the Office of Career Services with updates on interviews and job offers. Call 410-871-3305 or email us at career@mcdaniel.edu.

Questions to Ask Recruiters

- ◆What are common career paths with your organization?
- ◆When you give the recruiter your resume, ask what the next step in the process is.
- ◆Do you offer an internship program? If so, how do I find out more information?
- ◆What is the training program for new hires?
- ◆What do you look for in a candidate?
- ◆What are some of the duties I would perform in the _____ position?
- ◆Are you going to be hiring any new staff?
- ◆Are job prospects good, stable or competitive?
- ◆What are the typical job titles available in your organization? What are the specific job responsibilities?
- ◆What are the benefits and negative aspects of working/volunteering in this industry?
- ◆How did you get involved with this organization?
- ◆What advice would you give to someone starting in this field?
- ◆What major/programs are offered in your graduate school?
- ◆What opportunities are available for me to participate in community service?
(Community service/non-profit organizations)
- ◆What is the level of involvement/commitment for working/volunteering with your organization?
(Community service/non-profit organizations)

Questions to Never Ask Recruiters

- ◆What does your company do?
- ◆What are your psychiatric benefits?
- ◆Do not ask the recruiter personal questions.
- ◆Are you (the interviewer) married?
- ◆Can you guarantee me that I will still have a job a year from now?
- ◆How well do the employees get along? Do they go to happy hours after work?
- ◆How am I as a candidate?
- ◆How can you determine my qualifications in a short interview?
- ◆Do I get to keep the frequent flyer miles from my trips?

- ◆Would anyone notice if I came in late and leave early?
- ◆What is the zodiac sign of your company's president?
- ◆Do you offer free parking?
- ◆What do you mean by "relocate"?
- ◆How much does this position pay?
- ◆Do you reimburse the cost of getting an MBA?
- ◆Can you tell me about your retirement plan/benefits?
- ◆How many (put in the name of any ethnic group) do you have working here?
- ◆The job description mentions weekend work. Would I really have to do that?
- ◆What does this company consider a good absenteeism record?

Things Not to Do at a Career Fair

- ◆Don't cruise the booths with a group of friends. Interact with the recruiters on your own. Make your own positive impression!
- ◆Don't carry your backpack, large purse, or other paraphernalia with you. Carry your resume in a professional-looking portfolio or small briefcase works well. It will keep your resume neat and handy, and gives you a place to file business cards of recruiters that you meet. Usually you can stow your coats, backpack, or other gear in a coatroom.
- ◆Don't "wing it" with employers. Do your homework! Research the companies just as you would for an interview. You'll be able to focus on why you want to work for the organization and what you can do for them.
- ◆Don't come during the last half hour of the event. Many employers come a long distance to attend the fair and may need to leave early. If you come late, you may miss the organizations you wanted to contact.
- ◆Don't interrupt the employer reps or your fellow job-seekers.
- ◆Don't just drop your resume on the employer's table.