Job Fair Tips

Compiled by Career and Counseling Services, University of Houston - Clear Lake

UHCL’s Office of Career and Counseling Services sponsors and posts notices for area job fairs throughout the year. Although attending a job fair is only one tactic job seekers may employ, it can be an efficient use of your job search time. With many companies represented in one location job seekers have the chance to meet multiple employers while expending minimal effort. The following tips are offered to assist job fair participants in making the most of their attendance, if additional assistance is needed contact a Career Counselor.

JOB FAIRS PROVIDE

- Information about career options to students prior to selecting a major.
- Information on employment and hiring trends.
- Insight into the skills employers seek for a variety of careers/jobs.
- Prospect of meeting hiring managers.
- Opportunity to apply for current openings.
- Potential to schedule interviews.
- Leads on future openings.
- Chance to research specific companies including salary, benefits, and training opportunities.
- Contact information for follow-up discussions.
- Opportunity to develop or expand a network of contacts in your field.
- Chance to enhance communication skills.

JOB FAIR PREPARATION FOR JOB SEEKERS

1. **Know yourself.** Make sure you have developed well-defined career goals and you know the contribution you could make to a company. You should be able to speak confidently about your skills, qualifications, accomplishments, interests, and values.

2. **Do the necessary homework.** If possible, obtain a list of employers attending the job fair and identify those employers with whom you want to talk. Keep your focus broad considering any employer that might be hiring candidates with your qualifications. For example, you may not think to target a hospital but hospitals recruit candidates from a variety of backgrounds including management, information systems, and health care. To the extent possible, research the companies you are targeting. Check employer web sites, ask network contacts for information, or if time allows contact the company directly for information.

PREPARATION (Continued)

3. **Prepare questions.** Develop questions you want to ask of employers during the job fair. These questions serve the dual purpose of demonstrating your interest and research of the company while allowing you to acquire needed information. The following questions are offered as a sampling of the type of questions you may have prepared.

**Questions you may want to ask:**

- What are the best ways to find out about current and anticipated career opportunities with your company?
- Can you describe what a new employee might be expected to accomplish in the first six months or year of employment?
- What are the promotional opportunities for outstanding employees with your company?
- What qualifications and skills do you look for in prospective employees? In your recent memory what has been the most outstanding qualifications of successful applicants?
- What do you think it will take to be successful in this career field in the future?
- How did you get started in this field and how long have you been with the company?
- What do you like about your job?
- What is the turnover for staff in these positions and with your company?
- What do the employees like best and least about your company?
- Now that you have an idea of what I have to offer, what areas of your company would be a good fit for me?
- How might I most effectively follow-up with your company regarding job openings?

OVER
PREPARATION (Continued)

3. **Prepare an introduction.** Learn to quickly sell yourself. With the proper preparation you should be able to briefly relate your background (education, experience, and accomplishments) to the industry and/or employer’s needs.

4. **Develop or update your resume.** Create a resume that will serve as an effective marketing tool. Your attendance at a job fair will provide an opportunity for you to distribute resumes to many potential employers. Be sure you are leaving an error free resume that will positively represent you. Pay attention to the appearance of the resume, the format, and the information included. Have several people, preferably individuals in your field and/or resume experts critique your resume. Take the advice offered and make improvements in the resume prior to the job fair.

For additional suggestions regarding the development of a resume see Career and Counseling Services Resume Writing Tips handout.

JOB FAIR DAY

- **Take care of yourself.** Job-hunting can be a stressful endeavor. Get a good night sleep before the job fair. Eat a light, but healthy meal prior to arriving. Allow for plenty of time in your schedule to effectively work the job fair.

- **Pay attention to your appearance.** As you approach a potential employer their first impression of you will be based on your appearance. Arrive early so you have time to check your appearance. Come dressed professionally as you would for more formal interviews. Select weather appropriate, conservative, and well pressed business attire. Avoid wearing anything that could be distracting including excessive cologne or jewelry. Be sure your hair and nails are neat and clean. Shoes should be in good repair and recently polished.

For additional suggestions regarding appearance see Career and Counseling Services Interviewing Tips handout.

- **Bring a portfolio.** Bring a portfolio to hold your materials including a pen, paper (for note taking), your list of prepared questions, and numerous copies of your professional looking resume. If the list of companies is available in advance, bring the list with targeted companies identified for quick reference.

- **Use professional business etiquette.** Don’t interrupt an ongoing conversation; however, recruiters busy with paperwork want and expect to be interrupted. Be confident, enthusiastic, and polite. Offer a firm handshake and maintain eye contact. Avoid monopolizing an employer’s time. Ask specific questions and offer to follow-up after the fair, as appropriate.

- **Be direct.** If you are job seeking tell the employer what type of position you are seeking. If you are gathering information tell the employer what type of information you are seeking.

- **Collect and keep company literature.** Time spent in line waiting to talk with an employer provides an excellent opportunity to gather and read company literature. This information will prove helpful in the event of future contacts with the company.

- **Request business cards.** Collect business cards from employers you meet and request contact information for the appropriate contact for follow-up.

- **Make notes.** Take notes after each conversation to provide a later reminder of what you talked about with each company representative.

- **Follow-up on all leads.** Send thank-you letters to employers you met during the fair. Remember recruiters meet numerous candidates during job fairs these letters will help keep you on the mind of the recruiter. Include something in the letter that will trigger a memory of your conversation. Send follow-up letters to additional leads you developed during the job fair. Include a resume with all letters.

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