MAKING THE MOST OF A VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

THE PURPOSE OF CAREER FAIRS

For Students
You may attend Career Fairs for various reasons, depending on your particular situation and the career-related issues you are dealing with at the time. One of the most important goals you can set for yourself is to network and make connections. Career Fairs are an opportunity for you to begin relationships with individuals that work for companies you admire and aspire to. These individuals can provide you with excellent information on their particular companies, including the nature of their business, various career paths available, etc. In addition, these representatives are in a good position to provide career information that can help you make career decisions and select academic majors.

BEFORE THE CAREER FAIR
Don’t “walk” into a virtual career fair with zero preparation. These are the things you’ll want to do ahead of time to set yourself up for success.

1. Register ahead of time
   • You’re going to want to register beforehand. Not only will this prevent any last minute hiccups before the career fair, but it will allow you to get a glimpse at the employers participating in the fair. Which leads us to our next tip…

2. Research participating organizations
   • After registering, take some time to review the organizations attending the career fair. You’ll want to get an idea of some of the companies you’d like to meet with. You also don’t want to walk in unprepared—learn about the companies and think of questions you’ll want to ask.

3. Prepare your resume
   • This is a no-brainer, yet so important. Because you’re going to provide your resume to employers you meet with, you’re going to want it up-to-date and spotless for the optimal first impression.
   • The same goes for your LinkedIn account, or a portfolio of your work samples. If the platform allows, upload your resume to your account so it is accessible and ready to hand over to any employers you meet with at the career fair.

4. Practice your pitch
   • How will you introduce yourself? Why are you interested in the company? What types of positions are you seeking? How is your previous work experience relevant? What do you plan on asking the representatives at the virtual career fair?
   • You’ll want to spend some time mulling over questions like these so you’re ready to answer them without hesitation when the time comes. Your well-thought-out responses could impress a recruiter—and even allow you to stand out from the crowd of applicants.

5. Make sure your technology is ready to go
   • Choose your device wisely. To avoid shaky camera syndrome, use a desktop, laptop or propped-up tablet rather than a smartphone that you’ll need to hold throughout the conversation.
   • You may also want headphones if you cannot attend from a quiet, private location.
DURING THE VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

Once you log in, how can you stand out from the crowd at a virtual career fair? Here are a few pieces of key advice.

6. **Wear a professional outfit**
   - You can expect to interact with employers at a virtual career fair through chat functions. However, some employers may wish to speak with you face to face. Make the most out of this opportunity to make a connection by looking professional and presentable.
   - If you’re going to be on camera, be prepared to look professional from at least the waist up. You can wear your yoga pants, but make sure you have a button-up shirt and suit coat on top.

7. **Attend from a distraction-free environment**
   - In addition to your professional attire, you will also want to plan out where you’ll be attending the virtual career fair from. A quiet location is ideal—and camera capabilities mean that you’ll want to ensure it’s distraction-free for employers.

8. **Be ready to put yourself out there**
   - At virtual career fairs, it’s all the more important to exert yourself to make connections.
   - It’s even easier to be a wallflower at a virtual career fair than a traditional one. Once an employer engages you in a chat, the ball is in your court to introduce yourself and ask questions about the organization and open positions. Attendees must present themselves to employers and feel confident doing so.

9. **Use clear, professional business communication**
   - Being a virtual career fair, much of your communication will be done through written interactions in the chat function of the platform. To make a great first impression, you’ll want to demonstrate articulate written communication. Grammar matters, and text lingo, emoticons and any slang won’t be appropriate and your professional written communication needs to be on its A-game.

10. **Demonstrate strong body language in video chats**
    - Just like in a traditional career fair, you’ll want to present yourself as a confident and competent job seeker. One way that employers pick up on this is through your body language. If you’re on a video chat with a recruiter at the virtual career fair, you’ll want to stay conscious of your body language.
    - On camera, it’s even more critical to hold eye contact with the employers you’re interacting with. Speak clearly and avoid slouching. Keep hand gestures to a minimum so you don’t distract the person you’re talking to or block your face from the camera.

11. **Ask for next steps and contact information**
    - When talking to recruiters at the career fair, don’t hesitate to be forward and ask about the next steps in the process—whether that means getting in touch with human resources, filling out a job application or sitting down for a formal interview.
    - Before parting ways with a recruiter, be sure to take down their contact information. Some employers may have it uploaded and accessible within the virtual career fair platform. If not, ask how you can stay in touch. You’ll need this information for following up after the virtual career fair.

AFTER THE VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

Don’t let your efforts go to waste by neglecting to follow up with connection after the virtual career fair.

12. **Reach out the next day with a thank you**
    - Whether it’s an email, phone call or hand-written thank-you note, be sure to reach out to the **connections you made at the career fair**, thanking them for their time and further expressing your interest.
Because recruiters at career fairs come in contact with many candidates and resumes, you can use this chance to refresh their memory and remind them about why you’re a promising candidate, why you’re interested in the company and the skills or experience you bring to the table.

You may also want to send them your resume if you haven’t already, along with your portfolio or work samples if you have any. You can also stay in touch by adding the recruiter on LinkedIn.

**QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT WANT TO ASK EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES**

- What does your company look for in new college grads?
- What is the typical entry-level position for new college grads with a major in ...?
- What coursework do I need to better prepare for a position in your organization?
- Does your organization hire college grads with majors in ...? What type of work or positions would they typically be hired into?
- What skills/qualifications are you seeking for entry level professional positions?
- How important is GPA? Extracurricular or volunteer activities? Internships?
- What do you like to see in a resume? a cover letter?
- Do you offer internships, and if so, in what areas or for what majors?
- How beneficial/necessary is graduate education for entry and/or advancement in your organization?
- What do you foresee as significant trends or changes for your organization over the next four to five years?
- What other advice could you give me that would help me prepare for a career in ...?