

JOB FAIR- Tip Sheet

WHAT IS A JOB FAIR?

A job fair is the gathering of a large number of employers in one location such as a campus gymnasium, hotel, convention center, or possibly an internet site (known as a virtual job fair). It provides job seekers with the opportunity to meet with a variety of potential employers in a short period of time. Many job fairs include a mix of business, technical, research, non-profit and government organizations. Booths of employers are generally lined up in rows within an arena-like setting. Each employer has a table to display organization literature, collect resumes, and meet with job candidates. While you will most likely have only a few minutes with each representative, some job fairs provide an opportunity for you to have more in-depth interviews with the employers during or after the fair.

Your purpose at a job fair is to:

- Meet face-to-face with potential employers! Your chances of being selected for an interview are far better (if you are prepared) than just sending a resume or completing a website application.
- Establish contacts.
- Explore career fields and learn about part-time, internship, and/or full-time opportunities.
- Gather employer information.
- Make a favorable impression with employer representatives and possibly set up a follow-up interview for positions that interest you.
- Practice your interviewing techniques. Take advantage of the large number of employers available at a fair to hone your interviewing skills.

Employers go to job fairs to:

- Increase awareness about their organization.
- Provide career and organization information.
- Screen candidates for existing and future internships and job vacancies.
- Maximize their use of recruiting time & money by meeting with a high number of potential candidates within a short period of time.

PREPARATION

Just as for an interview, preparation for a job fair is key. The following is a list of things to do before the event:

1. If required, pre-register and pay any fees before the deadline date.
2. Review information about the job fair process. Also, useful tips from employers are available at www.westpacs.org under 'For Candidates- Job Fair Preparation.'
3. Research the employers.
 - Obtain a list of employers and their available positions. Many job fairs will have a website detailing this information and may provide a link to employer websites. Employers attending RMU's career fairs are, for example, posted under the "Events" link on Handshake.
 - Identify a primary and secondary list of employers you would like to meet with and research information about them. Take notes and review comments the day of the fair.
 - Develop a list of questions to ask your targeted employers.
 - Complete organization website applications, if available, before the job fair.

4. Prepare yourself.

- Clarify your goals and determine your purpose for attending the fair (informational interviewing, internship, part-time job, full-time job).
- Develop a concise, professional, error-free resume. If you are exploring different career or internship possibilities, you may want to have more than one resume, each targeting a different area. Take multiple copies of each resume, printed out on a laser-quality printer using white or off-white, good quality bond paper. Refer to the Resume Writing Tip Sheet for additional pointers on resume preparation.
- Polish your interview skills by practicing a 30-60 second commercial about yourself (also referred to as an elevator speech.). Each meeting with an employer will be like a mini-interview. Although the setting is less formal than at a structured interview, treat this process as you would an actual interview. Your first impression is critical! Know your career goals, strengths and weaknesses, and why you would like to work for the organization. Be able to convey your qualifications and enthusiasm clearly and concisely. Relate what makes you a unique fit for the position and/or organization.

Also, practice your non-verbal communication skills; your handshake, eye contact, and body language all help to create your first impression with the potential employer.

The Career and Professional Development Center (CPDC) offers a variety of tools to help you develop your interview skills. In addition to reviewing the Interviewing Tip Sheet, attend a relevant workshop, set up a practice interview with a career coach and/or employer, and review interviewing resources on Vault, a comprehensive career resource linked to the CPDC website (www.rmu.edu/cpdc).

THE DAY OF THE FAIR

Preparation: Interview Attire

Research shows that hiring decisions are often impacted by the first few moments. For interviews, conservative attire rather than a fashion statement is best. However, the style of dress should be reflective of the type of work or industry. Those entering a creative field or industry may have the opportunity to express more personality and style. If unsure, ask a professional about dress for their field and/or your career coach. Overall, keep it simple, polished and professional. Be memorable for your unique abilities and successes, not by being inappropriate or outlandish.

Clothing

Formal, two-piece matching suit
Shirt should be light, solid color (white or light blue)
Conservative tie (solid color or small-patterned)

Belts should match shoes
Skirt should come to the knee
All clothing should be pressed and clean

Footwear

Choose dress shoes that are polished and well maintained
Solid color navy or black socks (gray or black if wearing a gray suit). No white socks!

Closed toe pumps with low to moderate heel
Hosiery or panty hose should be skin tone (no patterns)

Hair and Accessories

Hair should be brushed and neat
Long hair can be worn up or down
Facial hair should be minimal and well groomed
Neatly trimmed hair, mustache, and sideburns

Remove facial and body piercings and cover tattoos
Choose natural tones of eyeshadow and lipstick
Wear a minimum of jewelry
Use minimal or no fragrance

Quick Tip: The CPDC has a limited supply of interview-appropriate clothing available. If you need to borrow professional attire for a scheduled interview, stop by and visit our 'Career Closet' in advance.

AT THE FAIR

1. Plan to arrive at the job fair with enough time to meet with employers of interest. Do not wait until the last hour to come, even if you plan to speak to only three or four employers. Organization representatives may begin to tire, or possibly pack up and leave, within the last one-half to one hour prior to the close of the job fair.
2. If applicable, take your admission ticket, ID, and any other materials needed for admittance.
3. When you arrive at the job fair:
 - Turn off or mute your cell phone.
 - Wear a name tag, if available. This helps the employer connect a name with a face.
 - Obtain an updated list of employers and job fair literature that may contain specific information about the employers, their available positions, and their location at the fair.
 - Explore the layout of the job fair and make note of where your targeted employers are located. Some lines may be longer, so plan your strategy to make the best use of your time. Be prepared to wait in line for some of the more popular organizations.
 - Make sure that your resumes are easily accessible, so you are not fumbling through your materials to retrieve them when you talk with the recruiter.
4. When you meet with the employer:
 - Be confident! Smile, offer a firm handshake and introduce yourself to the recruiter(s). For example, as an introduction, students may state their name, major, academic year and university name.
 - Offer your resume. Note: Some employers who have website applications no longer accept resumes, so don't be discouraged if they will not take one from you. You still have an opportunity to make a favorable in-person impression that can lead to an interview.
 - Present a 30 second commercial about yourself. Demonstrate a link between your goals, courses, college activities, experience and the available position.
 - Show that you have some knowledge of the organization. Ask questions and request information to learn more about the position, the organization and its hiring practices. Show a genuine interest in and enthusiasm for the organization and the position available.
 - Respond with concise answers to the interviewer's questions. Be prepared to cite examples of where and how you developed your skills and qualifications.
 - In most cases, your opportunity to talk with an employer will be brief. You will generally have a maximum of 3-5 minutes to present your qualifications and interest in working with the organization and to answer their questions. Do not stray to unimportant topics. Also, be considerate of the employer's time; they are there to connect with many potential candidates, so do not monopolize their time if there are other jobseekers waiting.
 - Before leaving, inquire about the employer's timetable for the interviewing and hiring process. Also, find out when and how you may follow up with them, request a business card for future correspondence, and thank the employer for his/her time.
5. Some additional pointers to maximize your success at a job fair include the following:
 - Don't be shy! There will be many employers and many candidates in attendance. You may need to be assertive (but not aggressive or rude) if you want to talk with the recruiters.
 - Approach the employers alone, not with a group of friends. You are there to highlight your interest and qualifications.
 - Be aware of your verbal and nonverbal communication. The employer's goal is to get to know you and assess your personal and professional qualifications in a short amount of time.
 - Try to determine if the employer representative at the job fair is actually the "hiring" person. If not, try to obtain that person's name and contact information, so you may follow up with them as well.

- Don't limit yourself to talking to just one or two employers or organizations. After you have visited your targeted organization recruiters, make contact with as many employers as possible. Do not limit yourself to only large well-known organizations. You may learn about opportunities of which you were not previously aware.
- Be flexible. You may encounter crowded conditions or waiting lines. Don't waste time standing in long lines. Seek employers who are less busy and then return.
- Put your waiting time to good use. Before you talk with a recruiter, research the organization and positions by checking your smartphone or obtaining the information at the organization booth to review while you stand in line. Remember, though, to mute and put away your phone when talking with employers.
- Don't be frustrated if the employer directs you to the organization website to complete their online application. Website applications are now required for many organizations. As mentioned earlier, complete these applications before you attend the job fair. Then, when directed to the website, you can inform the employer that, because of your interest in the organization and/or position, you have already completed that step and would like to know the next best step to take to be considered for the position.
- Don't be discouraged if an employer representative rebuffs you, saying they are recruiting for something unrelated to your area. Stay positive; try to get contact information for the area appropriate to your job interests, if possible. If unsuccessful, move on to other potential employers.
- After you leave the employer's booth, write key points about your conversation and the position on the employer's business card. This information will help you in later assessing the position(s) and in your follow-up with the organization.
- If you feel that an employer's conduct has been inappropriate (rude, excessively pushy, etc.), report it to the job fair organizers. While this rarely happens, organizers want to be aware of these circumstances for further investigation and follow-up.

FOLLOW-UP

Your work is not done when the job fair ends. It is also important to do the following:

- Write follow-up thank you letters or emails, affirming your interest in and qualifications for the position you are seeking. Be specific about when and where you met with the employer and mention points of interest discussed.
- Provide any follow-up information the employer requested during the job fair visit. This information may include a transcript, cover letter, letters of recommendation, or application on the organization's website.
- Assess your interactions with each employer, deciding which positions may be of interest to you.

Whether or not you get the "perfect job" through a job fair, you will be able to gain knowledge about specific employers and career fields. A job fair also gives you the opportunity to practice your interviewing skills.

Formal job offers are rarely extended on the day of the job fair. Employers will typically invite you for at least one follow-up interview before extending you an offer. If you receive a job offer on the day of the fair, it is recommended that you neither sign any document, nor agree to pay any fee, until you have consulted with the CPDC and/or your attorney.

Success lies in good preparation, effective communication, and appropriate follow-up.