MAKING THE MOST OF A CAREER FAIR

WORKFORCE READINESS:
EXPLORE | EXPERIENCE | ENGAGE | EMERGE

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Before the Fair

- Polish your **resume** and have it critiqued.
- Purchase a conservative, professional outfit/suit and shoes to wear. Make sure it is clean and wrinkle free!
- Purchase a nice portfolio or leather folder to hold your resumes and any information you gather.
- **Research** employers attending the fair. Know a little bit about the companies you want to meet. Use company websites, LinkedIn, and [www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com) to research organizations.
- Practice your handshake and **30 Second Commercial**. You should have a firm handshake, and maintain eye contact while speaking to the recruiter. Use this formula to create your unique commercial: Name, year in school, major, relevant experience or skills, and desired position. **Here’s an example:**
  
  *Hello, my name is Jane Doe. I am currently a senior at Benedictine University majoring in accounting. I completed an internship with Kraft Foods last summer and have also volunteered with a tax assistance program for underprivileged families. I am looking for an entry-level position with an accounting firm.*

- **Practice! Practice! Practice!** Shake hands and introduce yourself to your friends, to family, to yourself in the mirror. Employers at career fairs look for prospective employees who know what they want in a career and show initiative. Do not act confused about your future! They have too many candidates to see and can’t afford to waste any time to help you determine your career goals. This is the time to be confident – not shy!!!
- Prepare to answer and ask questions. (see attached sample questions)

At the Fair

**Arrive early. Reasons?**

- Parking problem is alleviated.
- If you’ve pre-registered, this gives you time to check the paperwork to see if you have been selected for an interview (if interviews are taking place on site).
- Whether or not you’ve pre-registered, the extra time allows you to review the information you’ve been given at the door regarding companies and available positions.

**What should I bring?**

- Multiple resumes.
- Portfolio, pad folio or leather folder. Besides holding your resumes, the portfolio is handy for carrying all the company information, business cards, etc. that you will pick up during the Job Fair.
- **A positive attitude and an eagerness to meet new people.** They will serve you well! You should also have a pen and paper; you’ll want to take notes on the companies you meet with.
What should I wear?

- A SUIT. First impressions are important. You want to look professional and polished. That includes hair, jewelry, cologne, socks, shoes, EVERYTHING! (see attached sheet on what to and what not to wear)
- Ladies – if you carry a purse, make sure it matches your suit.

What should I expect?

- You can expect hustle and bustle! Career Fairs will host large numbers of employers (in booths or at tables) and attract hundreds of students. The atmosphere is “energized” by activities and conversations. You will register upon your arrival (receive a “map” of the room and employers’ information) Then are on your own to make contact with companies of interest to you.

What do I do?

- Target several companies/organizations and present yourself to them. Be flexible when targeting your employers of interest and manage your time effectively. There may be long lines for popular companies, especially at the beginning of the session.
- Manage your time by visiting other employers until lines are shorter. Make a priority list of the employers you want most to meet. Also create a log of “maybes” in case you have some time left over at the end. Don’t pre-qualify too much—you will miss out on many opportunities if you pass up a booth just because you “think” you know whom they are hiring.
- Listen attentively and gather information. Learn as much as you can about the various openings available. Be open-minded. Employers consider your experience and skills, not just your major.
- Give yourself some breathing space and take notes. Interactions/interviews with recruiters at job fairs can last from 5 to 15 minutes. After each interview, take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned and how you performed. Accurate information will be needed for the follow-up done after the job fair. Make notes on the companies as well as ask for a business card and any available information from the recruiter with whom you are speaking. Collect business cards for future reference. This will also help you with follow-up after the fair.
- Your “mini-interview” should be a dialogue, not a monologue. Because you have limited time to make an impression and gain valuable information about the company, you should have several questions ready. These questions help you figure out if the company and job is a good match for you. THEN use that information to sell yourself! Answer questions directly, politely, and concisely.

How shall I best conduct myself as I speak with recruiters?

- Approach each employer with confidence! Initiate contact with the employers present by making eye contact, smiling, offering a firm handshake and introducing yourself. Employers look for firm handshakes (but don’t break anyone’s hand either) and good communication skills from a prospective employee. A friendly manner and ease in conversation will take you a long way. This is your first impression (besides your appearance), even before the resume or interview.
• You can present your resume and inquire about the employment possibilities if this is a company you are interested in or think you might be interested in. Remember, just because they do not have an opening in the exact department you desire, one may open up or you may find something else within the company to start you out. Don’t close the door too quickly. Think creatively!
• Network with other job seekers. Talk to other job seekers at the fair. Which employers have they seen? What questions did they ask?

Review of the DO’s and DON’Ts

**Do:**
- Present yourself with professionalism, enthusiasm, and confidence at all times
- Be polite at all times. The person you meet in the parking lot, hallway, or restroom may be a recruiter you see later that day
- Utilize effective non-verbal communication skills including direct eye contact.
- Answer questions clearly and concisely
- Ask questions that demonstrate knowledge of the organization
- Be well organized and have resumes available
- Explore every company that sparks your interest
- Be patient and respect other candidates privacy when approaching the recruiter’s table
- Take breaks when you need them
- Make notes about each visit and regroup before approaching the next recruiter
- Focus on what you can do for the employer not what the organization can do for you
- Spend as much time as you can at the career fair to make the most of this networking event

**Don’t:**
- Give your resume immediately to the employer as a means of introduction
- Chew gum, fidget, play with your hair, sway, etc.
- Walk up to an employer and expect them to take control of the conversation
- Congregate with your friends where the employer can watch you
- Ask about salary and benefits initially

**After the Fair**

• **Organize** all of the brochures and business cards you collected and make notes on the companies you visited.
• **Follow up with those employers you desire an interview with.** It is appropriate to send a follow-up thank you letter to any employers you met at the
event within 24-48 hours. Resumes left behind act as a reminder and reinforce the impression you made with the recruiter. However, an additional follow-up note is your chance to thank them for their time, explain why you are a good fit with the company, and express your continued interest in the position.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: The program book says they have openings for full-time positions, but I want an internship. Should I talk to them anyway?
A: YES!! If you are interested in a company, talk to them! The recruiter attending the fair may be able to forward your resume to the appropriate individual or provide you with the contact information to send your resume to that person. Take advantage of the opportunity!

Q: If an employer is not hiring, why do they attend a job fair?
A: Job opportunities can come and go quickly with employers. Employers need to go to job fairs in order to collect resumes for when the jobs open up. If you are interested in a company, and they tell you “We’re not hiring,” make sure you follow up with them in a month or two to see if any opportunities have come up.

Q: Why do employers come to a Career Fair but then tell me “go to our website to apply online?”
A: There are several reasons why employers do this. One reason is that it is much easier for the recruiter to email an electronic resume that it is to copy a paper resume and mail it around the company. Think about it: don’t you prefer to use email than snail mail? Another reason is that in order to be considered an applicant for an employer, candidates must apply online. In many cases, employers cannot follow up with candidates unless they have applied online. Furthermore, it’s easier for an employer to keyword search for certain skills they are looking for when your resume is electronic. Just because an employer tells you to apply online doesn’t mean your resume is being zapped into a black hole!

Q: How come there weren’t any jobs or internships in my major?
A: Are you SURE?? Sometimes students will pass by an employer because they assume there won’t be any opportunities for them. Don’t forget, a hospital needs more than just doctors and nurses; they need human resources managers, IT specialists, etc. Social Service agencies need more than just counselors; they need accountants and public relations managers too. The best way to find opportunities in your field of study is to talk to as many employers as you can. You’ll be pleasantly surprised to see how many great opportunities await you!!
COMMON QUESTIONS TO EXPECT FROM EMPLOYERS

- Tell me about yourself. Tell me about your interests.
- Tell me about your work experience.
- Why did you decide to attend Benedictine University?
- Why did you select your major?
- What interests you about our organization?
- Why do you want this position? Why our organization?
- Why do you think you would be successful in this field?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- What three things are most important to you in a job?
- What major problems have you encountered and how did you deal with them?
- Why do you think that you will be successful in this field?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- What do you think determines an individual's success in a work situation?
- Tell me about your work experience.
- What will be the most difficult aspect of making the transition from college to career? Why?
- Are you willing to travel?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- What are your strengths/weaknesses?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK THE EMPLOYERS

- Please describe the position(s) you have available at________.
- What is your timeline for filling this position?
- Does your organization offer a training program? What does it include?
- What career paths are available after starting in this position?
- Is relocation/travel required for this position?
- How can I reach you in order to follow up with this position?

COMMON REASONS FOR REJECTION

- Poor personal appearance
- Lack of planning for career - no goals or purpose.
- Lack of enthusiasm and interest.
- Failure to ask questions.
- Inability to express themselves clearly, poor voice, diction, grammar.
- Timid, lacks sufficient degree of assertiveness.
- Unwilling to relocate.
- Poor eye contact.
- Weak handshake.
JOB FAIRS
SOME ADDITIONAL TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR EFFECTIVENESS

**START WITH A STRONG HANDSHAKE AND A PRACTICED INTRODUCTION**
when meeting your first employer. Direct eye contact is also essential when making a first impression. As you introduce yourself include such information as name, college, major, point of interest, and date available for employment. He or she may also ask about your qualifications as they relate to the position so be ready to discuss several of your best strengths.

**BE FLEXIBLE WHEN TARGETING YOUR EMPLOYERS OF INTEREST AND MANAGE YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY.** There may be long lines for the popular employers, especially at the beginning of the day. Manage your time by visiting other employers until the lines are shorter. Your time at a job fair has been well spent if you have visited at least 12-15 employers during the course of the day.

**BE OPEN-MINDED.** Employers consider your experience and skills, not just your major. Introduce yourself to employers even if your major is not one for which they are recruiting. If they do not hire for your area of expertise, ask them to forward your resume to the appropriate individual. It is also helpful to ask for the other individual's name in order to follow up in the future.

**LISTEN EFFECTIVELY** when standing in line for a recruiter. You can learn about the position and the employer by listening to what is being said to the person ahead of you in line. Network with other candidates by exchanging information about employers with whom you have made contact.

**TAKE NOTES.** Accurate information will be needed for the follow-up done after the job fair. Make notes on the company listing as well as ask for a business card and company information form the recruiter with whom you are speaking;

**FOLLOW-UP WITH EMPLOYERS AFTER THE JOB FAIR.** Resumes left behind act as a reminder and reinforce the impression you have made with the recruiter. However, do not rely on the recruiter to contact you after the fair. Identify at least 5-10 positions you would like to learn more about and contact the employer by phone or by sending a thank you letter within two weeks of the job fair. Initiative is the key to obtaining an offer from the employer you met at the job fair.

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK A RECRUITER:**
What qualifications do you look for when hiring a __________?  
What is the career path for this position?  
What training is provided for this position?  
I am interested in this position. What should I do to follow-up?
SAMPLE FOLLOW-UP LETTER (ENTRY LEVEL JOB)

Remember, this is just a sample. Be creative and personable.

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Your address

February 14, 2011

Name of contact person
Title (if known)
Organization name
Organization address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Mr., Ms, or Mrs. Last Name):

I enjoyed speaking with you at the Career Fair at Benedictine University last week about (organization name) and the (position title) position. I am very interested in this position and believe my good (experience, scholastic record, or whatever your strength) and my interest in working with (people, or other interest area) can be an asset to your organization.

Feel free to call me at 012-345-6789 if I can provide you with any additional information. I look forward to meeting with you again.

Sincerely,
(Leave four spaces for your signature.)

Your name

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Excerpt from When Job-Hunting: Dress for Success
by Randall S. Hansen, Ph.D.

It's probably one of the most overused phrases in job-hunting, but also one of the most underutilized by job-seekers: dress for success. In job-hunting, first impressions are critical. Remember, you are marketing a product -- yourself -- to a potential employer, and the first thing the employer sees when greeting you is your attire; thus, you must make every effort to have the proper dress for the type of job you are seeking. Will dressing properly get you the job? Of course not, but it will give you a competitive edge and a positive first impression.

Hints for Dress for Success for Men and Women

Attention to details is crucial, so here are some tips for both men and women. Make sure you have:

- clean and polished conservative dress shoes
- well-groomed hairstyle
- cleaned and trimmed fingernails
- minimal cologne or perfume
- no visible body piercing beyond conservative ear piercings for women
• well-brushed teeth and fresh breath
• no gum, candy, or other objects in your mouth
• minimal jewelry
• no body odor
Finally, check your attire in the rest room just before your interview for a final check of your appearance -- to make sure your tie is straight, your hair is combed, etc.

For specific tips for women: http://www.quintcareers.com/dress_for_women.html
For specific tips for men: http://www.quintcareers.com/dress_for_men.html

Bottom line: You need to look your best at a job fair or interview. That doesn't mean spending a fortune, either. I knew a 2006 grad who spent $25 on a suit and borrowed the shoes. She looked fantastic.

Women
• Solid color, conservative suit (pantsuit is fine)
• Coordinated blouse
• Moderate shoes – no open toes or spikes
• Limited jewelry – nothing flashy
• Neat, professional hairstyle
• Tan or light hosiery
• Sparse make-up & perfume
• Manicured nails
• Portfolio or briefcase

Men
• Solid color, conservative suit
• White or light colored long sleeve shirt
• Conservative tie
• Dark socks, professional shoes
• Very limited jewelry
• Neat, professional hairstyle
• Go easy on the aftershave
• Neatly trimmed nails
• Portfolio or briefcase

QUESTIONS?
Please contact Academic and Career Enrichment Center at ace@ben.edu or 630-829-6041 or stop by Goodwin, second floor, RM 214.