

How to Achieve Results and Get the Most Out of a Career Fair

Attend as many job fairs as you can. Not only will practice make perfect, but it will expand your network of career contacts. Make sure to ask precise questions and be prepared to answer specific questions the employers have regarding your background and capabilities.

Before the Job Fair- be prepared

- Create a résumé and have it reviewed by a career counselor.
- Create a list of 3-5 references in case they are requested. (Be sure to ask your references for their help before including them on the list.)
- Create your 30-second oral résumé and practice, practice, practice!
- Review the employer list. Determine where employers are located and in what order to visit them.
- Broaden your focus and include different types of employers. For instance, although you may not have thought of working for a hospital, hospitals recruit and hire professionals in many different fields.
- Do your research! Look up information about the employers of interest:
 - Check their websites for information about their products/services and mission statement.
 - What types of jobs do they have open?
 - What kind of people are they looking for?
 - What kind of skills do these people need to have? How do you meet their skill requirements?
 - Develop some questions you would like to ask the employer representatives at the fair
- Network! Network! Network with people you know and via social network sites like Linked-In and Facebook for more information about the companies. Also seek contact with employees you might know or seek information from alumni who work there.

During the Job Fair

- Dress for success! Assume you will be interviewed and dress the part. Even if you don't get an interview at the job fair, you have already made a great impression!
- Always have a pen/pencil and paper to take notes- a portfolio works best
- Bring plenty of résumés with you. While some companies will be seeking employees for specific positions, some employers will collect résumés for future positions. Be sure to get all of the contact information you need to complete an application.
- Make sure to have copies of your reference list in case an employer asks.
- First impressions are everything! Be direct, have a firm handshake and make eye contact as you greet employers! This will speak volumes about your confidence. If you are only gathering information, let employers know that you are only interested in materials and information.
- Be aware of time demands of employers. Do not monopolize the employers' time. You should have already done your homework about their company so you can better spend your time asking about the positions available (or available in the near future) and how your skills match their needs. Give them your 30-second oral résumé and impress them with what you feel you can do for their company. Since practice makes perfect, don't give up if the first attempt doesn't go well. Keep trying with other employers.
- Ask specific questions and collect information from each booth you visit including business cards from the employer representatives. Offer to follow up after the fair and ask what the best way to contact them is.

After the Job Fair

You now have a prime opportunity to make a distinctive impression!

- Use those business cards you collected to follow up with each employer you are interested in.
- Be sure to do everything you promised at the job fair. Complete the application and upload your résumé.
- Send a thank-you note or email to all whom you talked with, within 48 hours of the career fair! This shows that you are serious about their organization and will set you apart from many who neglect to do so.
- If you follow up on your application for a position, be sure to follow the preferred contact method and don't overdo it.
- Stay in contact and use this experience to expand your network.
- Submit an additional or amended résumé during your follow-up contacts, if need be.
- Follow-up and follow-through contacts are up to the student; be persistent and polite.

Additional information “what employers are expecting”

- **What Will Impress Employers**
 - Demonstrate that you have done your homework and researched their company.
 - Be prepared! Have your résumé critiqued by Career Services and bring plenty of copies with you. Develop questions to ask; smile and courteously and enthusiastically engage the representatives.
 - Have a firm hand shake and good eye contact- dress for success.
 - Never ask about salary; let them bring up the subject.
 - An expectation that you will be responsible for following up with them; including a thank you note or letter.
 - Take the initiative! Walk up to them and engage the employers; they want to speak to you!
- **What Employers May Want to Learn About You**
 - Specific career/job objectives. What are your expectations?
 - Individual strengths and weaknesses. Have specific examples that demonstrate your skills; develop short stories that showcase your skills. (Remember a job fair is time sensitive and you don't want to take up too much time of one employer.)
 - Contributions you will make to the operation. Remember, be specific, now is not the time to blandly or generically discuss what you can do.

What You Should Learn About Each Company

- Employment trends. Career Fairs are excellent resources for information about career decision-making.
- Skills necessary for different careers/jobs. Have meaningful conversations with representatives.
- Current/future positions.
- Salary, benefits, training, and other information about the company. (again, let the employer bring up salary)
- Who to contact for follow-up discussions and what their hiring processes are, get specifics.
- Collect their business card or write down their contact information.

30 Second Oral Résumé

Purpose

It is important to practice your 30 second oral résumé prior to attending a career fair. The famous “Tell me about yourself” is a question that is always asked. Whether the question is asked in a social setting, an interview, or a networking event, a well-planned answer can set you apart from the crowd as well as spark additional conversation. Begin preparing your oral résumé by following the tips below.

How to Prepare Your Oral Résumé

- Begin by brainstorming what you would want someone to know about you. Write down all of your ideas.
- Consider including the following information in your oral résumé:
 - Job Objective
 - Education and Training
 - Skills
 - Accomplishments and Achievements
 - Prior Employment
 - Other Experience
- Narrow down your options—pick the top 5 things you want the person to know about you.
- Develop a paragraph that encompasses all of the things you wish to say.
- Practice makes perfect! Read aloud your résumé several times.

Additional Tips

- Prepare more than one oral résumé for various situations
- Practice your résumé by calling your voicemail and later playing back the message—think about how it sounds and what you would like to change
- Make sure that your oral résumé will keep the listener's attention

Example Oral Résumé

Hi, my name is _____ and I am a senior at IU Kokomo, majoring in New Media. I am looking for an internship experience in graphic design/web development. Through my coursework, I have developed strong computer and analytical skills. Last summer I worked as an intern at the Kokomo Perspective to gain experience with print media. At the Perspective, I worked with the copy editor as well as the writing staff to gain experience in both fields. I also volunteer at United Way; developing and updating their website.

Send a Follow-up thank you note

Send a thank you note or email to all whom you talked with, within 48 hours of the career fair! This shows that you are serious about their organization and will set you apart from many who neglect to do so.

- Be sure to remind the employer where you met them
 - *Thank you for taking the time to talk with me on Thursday at the career fair. After talking with you, I am even more eager to work at ____.*
- Summarize specific qualities and assets you obtain
 - *I am certain my education at IU Kokomo has enhanced my skill set and has provided a solid background of knowledge in the _____ field..... Some experiences I have had the pleasure of doing are... This opportunity improved my work ethic and made me aware of my self-reliance.....*
- Always attach your résumé again, for their convenience
 - *I have attached my résumé for your convenience. I look forward to an opportunity to further discuss my qualifications. You may contact me at..... (phone # and/or email address)*
 - *Thank you again for your time and consideration*

Sample Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me on Thursday, November 9, at the career fair on IU Kokomo's campus. I appreciate your time and attention and after talking with you, I am even more interested in learning more about your organization.

You were extremely helpful in explaining {company's name} customer service and marketing trainee program. Now that I have a better idea of what the position entails, I am even more certain that I would be an asset to your team and to {company's name}.

My solid education from the IU Kokomo Communication Department, and the fact that I have worked my way through college, show the work ethic and determination you said were important to be successful at {company's name}.

I look forward to an opportunity to visit {company's name} office and speak to you further about the trainee program. I will contact you next week to arrange an appointment. Enclosed is an updated résumé for your review.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,