



HOW TO MAKE A WINNING IMPRESSION At A CAREER FAIR

www.careerservices.neu.edu

Before the Fair: Modified for Grad Seminars in Computer/Information Co-op Preparation

See special question section on page 2.

- **Develop your marketing tools.**
You must be prepared to market yourself in a highly competitive entry-level job market. Develop a resume and an oral presentation to advertise your talent and skills to the employer market.
- **Resume perfection.**
A great resume may not get you the job. But a poor resume may be the reason you don't get an interview. Stop by the Office of Career Services to have your resume reviewed before handing it out at a fair.
- **Impress employers with your communication skills.**
Prepare a 2-minute presentation that includes information about your previous experiences, outstanding accomplishments and unique qualities. Also include a personal career mission statement that shows the employer your focus and determination. Employers respect applicants with a clear vision of what they want from their career. End with a question that the recruiter will then answer to make it a conversation. Be sure to ask the employer what the next step is.
- **Practice your pitch.**
Get a hold of the list of employers that have been scheduled to attend the fair. Choose the "top 10" companies you want to speak to, then choose 5 second choice companies. Talk to one or two employers from your list of second choice employers first before talking with one of your "top ten" employers that really count.
- **Impress employers with your investigative skills.**
Research the companies online, or in periodicals and books in the library. Use the information to ask relevant questions about the company and the position. If you've done your homework properly, what you are looking for should match with what the employer is looking for.
- **Be realistic.**
The lines may be long, and in the end you may not get a job offer, but it is your chance to network and to practice how to coherently talk to employers about your experience, skills and competencies.

At the Fair:

- **Impress them by presenting a professional image.**
Decisions are made more quickly at a career fair than at a regular interview, so image is even more important. Business attire is a must, as is good grooming and excellent preparation.
- **Impress them with your organizational skills.**
A briefcase and/or portfolio are more impressive than a plastic bag. Put your resumes in a color folder (red), and bring a different color folder (blue) to hold things that you collect from the table. (business cards, brochures, etc.)
- Turn your cell phone off at a career fair.
- Smile, recruiters want enthusiastic, likeable candidates.
- The introduction is key to making a lasting first impression. As one employer said, "the worst thing a student can do is walk up to me and not say anything." Practice a firm handshake and an opening line.
- Be independent. You look more serious and focused walking alone.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the company's mission statement and its products and services. This will give you and the employer something in common.

HOW TO MAKE A WINNING IMPRESSION At A CAREER FAIR

At the Fair: (continued)

- While waiting in line to speak with an employer listen to what the employer is saying to those people ahead of you. They will appreciate the fact that you're paying attention and you may learn something useful.
- Never talk about salary unless the employer brings it up first.
- A job search is a public relations campaign. Say "thank you" to build positive relationships.
- Return to the employers that interest you most to thank them again and to let them know you will be in touch soon.

After the Job Fair:

- Take a deep breath, and then take some notes on your conversations with employers. You may choose to take notes between time spent visiting employers if it's likely you'll forget the conversations after the fair.
- Send a thank-you note via email or snail mail and reconfirm your interest in the position and company.
- Telephone employers if you have not heard back from them within a week.

Special Concerns For International Students:

- Know your VISA status before hand - what you are and are not eligible for.
- Do not bring this up in your 2 minute presentation; focus on your skills, experiences and interest in the company; however, be realistic and if a company does not accept non-citizens, do not push it.
- Do know which companies have branches in your home country.

Questions to Try and Ask Employers at the Fair:

Grad Seminar Assignment: Write-up the answers to the questions below for five (5) employers. Make sure include the company name and address in your report. Report at least one page typed (single spaced is okay).

1. What are the growth projections for next year?
2. What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
3. What do you like best about your company/job?
4. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
5. Does your company encourage further education?
6. Do you fill positions from the outside or promote from within first?
7. Have you cut your staff in the last three years?
8. If the money question comes up (it really shouldn't) then respond to the employer with a question like "How much does a person with my degree and/or experience typically get paid?"
9. Does your company sponsor a cooperative education or internship program?