

Making the Most of a Career Fair

Internship & Job Search Series

You made it to the AMU Ballrooms. Someone has just handed you a guidebook, a nametag, and a plastic bag. Now what? Try these concrete tips to get what you need out of the Career Fair:

Prepare for the Fair

- Write a resume highlighting skills and experiences related to your goal
- Locate the guidebook online and scan for employers seeking students like you; do your research
- Pull together a professional outfit, preferably a business suit (note: this can be borrowed from a friend)

Your 60 Second Commercial:

This will arm you with all you need to begin an intelligent and effective conversation with employers.

- Where you are now (degree, program, year in college)
- Where you have been (career-related experience, leadership experience, part-time work experience)
- Where you are going (future goals)

"Hello. I'm Dot and I will graduate in 2007 with my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication. As a student here at Marquette, I have had the chance to gain leadership and organizational skills through my involvement in the ABC Club. In addition, I have worked for two years as a server at the Annex allowing me to gain valuable customer service experience. I am seeking an internship in the field of public relations for next summer. Can you share with me any opportunities within your organization that might fit with my skills and experience?"

Things to Bring:

- Copies of your resume (25-50 depending on size of event and number of employers you'd like to approach).
- A smile, strong handshake and positive attitude.
- Your 60-second commercial to introduce yourself and highlight your qualifications.
- Information about the organizations that you will be approaching.
- A hardcover notepad portfolio and/or professional briefcase for resumes, company information, business cards and notes.
- Energy! Be your best, as refreshed as possible.

At the Fair

- Locate your chosen employers on the map
- Offer your hand for a professional handshake (one shake)
- Begin the conversation with your commercial
- Ask the employer a question relating to your career goal
- Ask the employer for next steps

Managing Your Expectations:

You are responsible for making the most of a job fair. This means that you should begin with clearly defined and realistic expectations. You will not receive a job offer at the fair, but it is realistic to assume you will make a significant number of employer contacts. For most candidates, success will depend on effective follow-up after the fair.

Employer Expectations:

Some employers are only collecting resumes; some may not be able to accept any resumes and may ask you to submit application materials online. Some are building/assessing an applicant pool; some are ready to fill specific vacancies.

Some will expect you to express your interest by already knowing about their organization; some will view this day as a career fair/information gathering process. Most employers will expect you will follow up if you are interested. All employers expect you to be professional, willing to initiate conversation and able to highlight your strengths.

Questions To Ask:

First and foremost, questions should be natural. Be yourself. Don't rifle your questions; maintain a flow.

Sample Questions to Ask Organization Representatives:

- What kind of entry-level positions exist within your company?
- Do you offer internships?
- If so, what percentage of interns are offered positions after graduation?
- What does your company consider the 5 most important qualities in an employee?
- What courses do you suggest in order to be a successful candidate?
- What personality traits are important for success in your company?
- What made you chose this company?
- How long have you been with the company?
- What goals does your company have for the next five years and beyond?
- What are the next steps in the hiring process?

After the Fair

- Follow up with those employers who piqued your interest
- Send an e-mail or hand-written letter thanking them for their time and including a copy of your resume

Tips:

- Do not read directly from the above list of questions at the career fair. Be relaxed and natural.
- Attend the Career Services Career Fair Prep Workshop which is offered every semester. Contact our office or check out our website for more information.
- Attend the career fair as early as possible. Some employers may have to leave a bit early; you don't want to miss them.
- Follow up with the organization representative(s) you meet with. We hear from employers that many students do not do this, so it's a great way to stand out.
- If you attend the fair with a friend, separate and work the fair alone. Employers want to talk to you, not you and your friend. Plan a time and place to meet up after the fair.
- Do not bring a member of your family to the career fair. You laugh, but we have seen this!
- Career Services is here to help! Please stop in our office if you have any questions.

Use internet social networks to make connections with people:

We're tweeting!

- Follow the Career Services Center on **Twitter** (twitter.com/MU_CSC) to stay up to date on the latest job search articles, highlights and Career Services Center happenings.

We're blogging!

- Be sure to visit the Career Services Center's new blog, **Career Chatter** (marquettecsc.blogspot.com), regularly to get all the latest information and advice from our office. It's the Career Services Center... UNPLUGGED

We're on Facebook!

- Become a fan of the MU Career Services Center on **Facebook** (www.facebook.com/mucsc). It can't hurt...right?

We're LinkedIn!

- Network with professionals in our MUCSC Group on **LinkedIn**. If you don't already have an account - here is one good excuse to get one! To find us just search in groups for MUCSC and join.