

Career Fair Strategies

2010 / 2011



<http://careercentre.sheridaninstitute.ca>

Traf-D103 Davis-B219 · Traf 2533 Davis 5328

Career Counselling · Educational Planning · Tutoring Job Postings · Employment Advising · Career Events

How to Prepare for a Career Fair

1. *Confirm* the date, time and place of the career event!
2. Review the list of employers attending the career event; thoroughly research the employers you are interested in meeting
 - ✓ If their website states they only accept resume on-line then be prepared that the employer may not be accepting resumes at the career event.
 - ✓ Use the career event as a networking opportunity and ask the employer what skills, abilities and experiences you should be highlighting on your resume
1. Prepare your resume; tailor your resume to each employer you're planning to approach
2. Create a business card
3. Prepare and practice your 30-second networking statement
4. Decide what you will wear to the career event prior to the date of the event
(professional business attire only)
- 5. For Sheridan College career fairs: bring your Sheridan Student Card—you will need it to gain admittance into the career fair**

Prior to attending the career fair, create a system that will allow you to document the following information:

1. Date, location and host of the career fair
2. Name of person/contact you spoke to
3. Approx. time you spoke to employer
4. Information discussed/exchanged
5. Action to be taken (send resume, thank you, follow-up with an e-mail, etc.)
6. Next step
7. Follow-up date

Networking

Making a strong first impression will help you create a strong professional network.

Networking is about communicating your unique selling points to a potential employer and identifying potential employment opportunities. You can do this by creating a personal "pitch" or networking statement that highlights your skills and experience.

In order to create an effective networking statement, and thereby make a strong first impression, you have to:

Know your target market

Research each employer attending the event and review current industry trends in your field. Use this information to impress the employers you meet with at the career fair

Know what you have to offer employers

It is important you not only know what skills, knowledge and experiences you have to *offer* a potential employer, you also have to know what skills, knowledge and experiences potential employers *want!*

Having this information will allow you to tailor your networking statement and target potential networking contacts.

Create a third list, stating the companies you want to work for as a means to help you target the networking relationships you want to build.

Networking Statement

Networking, or personal marketing, is about communicating your unique selling points or value to a potential employer. You can do this by creating a personal “pitch” i.e., a marketing spiel that sells your skills, experiences and features.

There are four important things to remember when using your networking statement:

1. Be specific
2. Be relevant
3. Be professional
4. Be brief

[Be Specific]

An employer wants people who want to specifically work for them in the role they have to offer. You need to make them feel that theirs is the only company you are targeting so do your homework. Be prepared to tell them why you want to work for them.

Do not say “ I would like to work for you because it would look great on my resume and will help me to get me into a better job.” This is definitely *not* the way to go!

Do say you would like to work for them because they “represent excellence in their industry and you believe you could make an effective contribution to their organization.” This will make them like you more.

[Be Relevant]

As you are researching a company, seek to understand the types of backgrounds, skills and attitudes the company looks for in their recruitment strategy. When communicating your selling features, make sure you stick to the information that is relevant to them.

[Be Professional]

You will be nervous. In fact, you should be nervous. If you are so cocky that you no longer have any job search jitters, then you need to re-evaluate your attitude and position.

While nervousness may cause you to worry you will stammer, it may actually give you an edge in performance. Preparation is essential because, when you are nervous and come face-to-face with the recruiter for the job you really want, you have a higher chance of messing up your pitch.

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Practice what you are going to say in advance. Practice doing it without notes. It should sound like you did not write it down and memorized it.

[Be Brief]

You only have about 30 seconds to make a first impression. When constructing your personal pitch, you need to keep it to about 70 words.

Your networking pitch should answer 3 questions:

1. Who am I?
2. Why do I want to work for you?
3. Why should you hire me?

When constructing your networking pitch you should keep in mind your answers to the following questions:

- At what do you excel and how can you prove it?
- What accomplishments are you proud of and why?
- Why are you better at your chosen work than others around you?
- What attitudes do you hold that make you successful?
- What approach do you take towards your work? What drives you to be successful?
- What type of company/job/experience/role are you driven to acquire?
- What is your reputation among your peers/supervisors and co-workers?

Hello, my name is _____ and I will be graduating from the _____ (name program) from Sheridan College.

My areas of expertise (or knowledge or experience) in this field include _____,
_____, _____.

My research shows that your company is one of the _____ (state information that demonstrates you have researched this company). I am interested in speaking with you with regards to opportunities within your company in the area of _____.

Suggested questions to ask employers at a career event:

What skills and abilities do you need to be considered a strong candidate to work for your company?

What kind of employment experiences are you looking for?

What additional skills, such as language or software skills, does your organization consider to be particularly valuable?

Final Tips!

When you are conversing with the employer LISTEN more than you speak! Ask questions to help you to understand what are their needs and interests are as an employer.

Don't dominate the conversation by talking all about yourself and what you want. Spend 75% of the conversation listening to what the employer's needs are. Use the last 25% of the conversation tailoring what you say about yourself to be of interest to employer.

Make sure you:

- ✓ Follow the rules of “good hygiene” and dress professionally! Dress exactly as you would for a job interview
- ✓ Place your documents in a professional zip up portfolio or twin pocket portfolio. You want to be able to easily access your tailored resumes when passing them over to an employer and you want to be able to easily collect any company information/business cards the employer hands over to you
- ✓ Approach employers on your own—not as part of a group
- ✓ Bring a pen and paper with you in case you need to make notes during the conversation with the employer (**strategy:** after each meeting with an employer, immediately go to a quiet location such as a hallway to record the information discussed—you won't remember the details of each conversation at the end of the career fair)
- ✓ Ask the employer if it would be appropriate to follow-up with him/her after the career event

Career Centre Resources:

- ✓ Employment Advisors—please check the Career Centre website for drop-in times
- ✓ On-line downloads and print resources available in the Career Centres

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