



Make Networking Events Work for You

Networking events such as career fairs are your opportunity to meet professionals from a variety of organizations, learn about their careers and employers, gather information about them, and identify possible next steps in the job search process. To achieve these goals, follow these steps.

BEFORE THE EVENT

Research employers

If possible, learn in advance about the employers who will be attending. For career fairs hosted by Career Services, a list of registered employers will be posted on the its website prior to each event. Develop a prioritized list of employers that you are interested in so your visit to the career fair will be time efficient and focused. Visit the website of each employer on your priority list to research important company information such as:

- Key facts about those employers and what the employer is seeking in candidates from their job postings.
- Compare what the employer is seeking with your qualifications and selling points.
- Review the employer's mission statement and hone in on key words that indicate the personal qualities the organization values. Identify personal qualities you have that closely match.

Identify your targets

Based on your research, rank the organizations on your list and determine who to visit at the fair and in what order. Do not visit your top employer first. Rather, practice your 30-second commercial on your second or third choice first to increase confidence and settle nerves.

Prepare a 30-second commercial

Interaction with employers at networking events is limited, so maximize your time with them by promoting yourself in an appropriate way to ultimately answer the question "why should we hire you?"

Utilize Career Services

Consult Career Services for a résumé review and interview preparation. Résumé critiques are offered during drop-in hours. You can conduct a practice interviews using InterviewStream, the Career Service's online practice interview tool. Also, bring plenty of résumés printed on good résumé paper to a career fair. For other networking events, have professional business cards made to exchange with employers. Career Services also offers free résumé paper and business cards.

DURING THE EVENT

Be professional and polite

Professional business attire (i.e. two-piece matched suit) is expected and sets the tone for your interaction with employers. Approach them with confidence and reasonable assertiveness. Smile as you meet the employer representatives and display good manners.

Use your time well

When it is your time to speak, use your "commercial" to introduce yourself. If you have researched the employer, have relevant questions ready as they reflect your knowledge of the company. This shows interest. Ask for the representative's business card so you can follow-up with them later.

AFTER THE EVENT

Career fair

- Ask the recruiter what the next steps will be, and what you can do follow-up with them.
- If you are asked to complete an online application, do it as soon as possible. This is a sign that they are interested in you. Many employers require online applications be completed to proceed with the interview process.

- Send a thank-you letter or e-mail within 24 hours to those recruiters with whom you discussed positions of interest. Remind them which networking event you met (i.e., career fair, etc.) and reiterate your interest in the position.

Non-career fair network event

Send a thank-you letter or e-mail within 24 hours to the representatives with whom you discussed potential opportunities. Remind them yourself which networking event you met and reiterate your interest in their company or position.

30-SECOND COMMERCIAL FOR CAREER FAIRS AND OTHER NETWORKING EVENTS

Promoting yourself in an appropriate way is crucial to successfully make the transition from college to career. Practice by developing a 30-second commercial about yourself.

The 30-second commercial:

- Provides a starting point for more in-depth conversation
- Helps you focus; gives you more confidence
- Begins to answer the ultimate question: “Why should we hire you?” If possible, research the employers you intend to speak with prior to the career fair or networking event. Incorporate that research into your commercial.

5 seconds – greeting

“Hello, my name is ____.”

5 seconds – educational background

“I’m majoring in (or I’m graduating in May with a bachelor’s degree in) ____ with a minor (or concentration) in ____.”

5-10 seconds – description of interest

“I am especially interested in ____ opportunity (or utilizing my ____ skill set) with your company because of my experience ____ (internship, part time job, volunteer experience, class project, etc.).

5-10 seconds – strengths and accomplishments related to your target job

Whatever you select, use your own words. The objective is to get your message across naturally.

5-10 seconds – summary or goal statement, reasons you would be a good fit for the position or company:

This is a good time to show you have done research on the employer.

EXAMPLE 1

“I am studying ____ with a minor in ____ . These areas have prepared me for ____ entry level position in a company such as yours. I believe my strong GPA shows that I am willing to work hard and that I was successfully able to juggle working up to 20 hours per week while going to school full time. Because of my interest and experience (note special academic project, internship, etc.), I believe I will be a very good fit for ____ . Could we talk a bit about entry level opportunities in _____ (geographical preference)?”

EXAMPLE 2

“I would like to explore entry level opportunities with your company. While my major in _____ is not directly related, I do have two specific experiences (or skill sets) that convince me I am a great fit for your company. My (part-time job, internship, volunteer experience, etc.) at _____ and _____, noted on my résumé, have given me a great foundation in ____ . At (first job/experience), I started as _____ and was then promoted to _____, often serving as the trainer of new staff. At (second job/experience), I had more experience in _____ and found I was consistently able to (meet goals). I have taken electives in ____ and ____, which have provided a good background in (career target). Based upon your website’s description of what is required of entry-level candidates, I am confident I can contribute to the future growth of (company name).”

In conclusion, while it is important to outline and practice your commercial in advance, it may not end up being delivered as a monologue with no interruptions. The employer may want to take the lead in asking questions. Your commercial can help in getting across major points, but go with the direction the employer wishes to establish.

Finally, a successful commercial will focus on what you have to offer. It is not about what they can do for you in terms of paycheck, a great professional opportunity, the prospect of getting your graduate school degree paid for, etc. Those are the rewards for what candidates have in the way of talents, training, motivation and experience; plus being able to articulate a connection between what you have to offer and what they have to gain.