

# TIPS FOR JOB FAIR SUCCESS

## **BEFORE THE FAIR**

### ***Dress to Impress –***

- Buy a suit, get a haircut 1-2 weeks before and don't forget to shave (men). Be sure that you have comfortable dress shoes and everything is clean, pressed, shined and matched. Check it out while you still have time to fix it. Conservative is best– black, gray, navy, brown/tan and a basic solid shirt and tie for guys and solid or subtle print for women.
- Go easy on the smells – what you think is perfect in aroma may remind someone else of their ex-wife/husband or may cause an allergic reaction! And don't forget the deodorant – it will get hot and crowded.
- Jewelry should be limited to a professional watch and 1 ring per hand, small earrings for women – generally none for men at a job fair or interview. Ladies - watch clunky or noisy bracelets and keep any makeup or hairstyles simple. Use the basic rule – if you look in the mirror and wonder if it looks okay or if an item is too much, you probably need to remove it or change it. YOU, your personality and your abilities should stand out, not your appearance.
- Invest in a professional portfolio to carry your resume copies, your memo pad and at least 2 working pens.

### ***Be Prepared –***

- Know your career objective and what you have accomplished that supports that career objective. Remember, organizations want to know three things: 1.) Can you do the job (skills and experience) 2.) Will you do the job (interest and motivation) and 3.) Will you fit into organization culture. (Values, work ethic, personality, etc.)
- Develop a strong resume that is error-free, concise and easy to read. The formatting should guide the eye to sections that highlight your unique skills, training and accomplishments. Plan on having double the number of copies you think you will need – you will always find more companies that you want to leave a copy with for their review.
- Be sure that the copies are on quality resume paper (not copy paper) – it does not have to be the most expensive brand. Just get a standard weight and choose white, light gray or cream. All your written correspondences will be on this paper (cover letter, references, thank you or acceptance/rejection letters), so buying a box with at least 10 matching envelopes is a good idea.
- Obtain a list of the attending organizations before the job fair – see <http://career.utk.edu> or your Hire-A-Vol Account for the list and their requested majors.
- Build your “Top 10 List” and “Second 10 List” based on the time you have to spend at the job fair. Choose the organizations based on what majors they are recruiting, your interest in working for them based on your research and style (large vs. small, international vs. regional, location, culture of company, specific career opportunities, products, mission, etc.). Your “Top 10” will be the 10 you are most interested in talking to and then you build from there.

- DO YOUR RESEARCH on your “Top 10” and develop your 30-second commercial about yourself, along with 2-3 individualized questions for each organization. This can start out the same for each organization, but should then focus on personalizing for each organization or position.

**Nothing impresses an employer less than a student who asks “So what do you do?”** Be one of the few students who know something about the organization. The organization should feel that you have chosen them specifically and that you have really looked at their organization and thought about why you would be a good fit for their needs. Enthusiasm and real interest is the key, along with your ability to show them your unique skills that can fit their organizational goals. The more informed you are, the more positively you will be remembered.

For example: *“Hi, I’m Mary Jones and I’m a psychology major at the University of Tennessee and I’m interested in the field of human resources. I became interested in the human resources field last summer when I interned at XYZ Company and got to know the Human Resource Director there. I found her job very interesting. She worked in all aspects of employee relations and hiring. When I returned to school this fall, I decided to add a business class and I also joined the Human Resource Management Association. I understand that your organization hires all majors for entry-level trainee positions with opportunities to move into the HR department. I would like to talk more about this trainee position and how my Psychology degree and HR interest might be of benefit.”*

- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! But don’t become robotic – be sincere and confident and show your enthusiasm. And remember, you will be changing your commercial at least a little bit for each organization.
- Prepare notes on a memo pad (in your portfolio – leave at least 5 clean sheets on top for quick notes during fair) for each organization – 1 page per organization – and then take a moment to review those notes and questions before you walk up to each booth.

### **DURING THE FAIR**

- Visit the restroom and do a final check before you enter the fair. Pop a breath mint, check your appearance, get a drink of water and take a moment to review your notes from your research.
- Try to get a map of the organizations at the fair and locate your “Top 10”. Plan how you will proceed to maximize your time.
- If you have a backpack, try to find a place to leave it along with your coat or jacket. Most fairs will have a designated place for this. You should only have your portfolio and a small purse (if needed) as you continue through the job fair.
- Don’t start with an organization that really matters. Choose an organization that is lower on your list or one that you identify as something that might be interesting, but you did not put on your targeted list. You may even choose 2 or 3 to “practice” on before you visit your primary organizations. You may discover a new opportunity!
- Focus on what you can offer the organizations at each visit – not what they can do for you and your career. Remember, it is not about the “give-aways”, but it is okay to take them if you can carry them without looking like a pack rat!
- After speaking with each organization, walk away from the booth and then flip to their page in your portfolio and add additional notes, comments and dates to follow-up or action steps to take. Do it immediately, so you don’t forget the specifics for each organization.

- Get a business card or obtain contact information from each of the organizations you speak with at the job fairs. This will be used for all follow-up after the fair.
- Thank the representative for coming to the job fair – helps you stand out and the organization feels that they made a good choice to choose UT as a recruiting opportunity. If they see you as a strong representative of UT, they will see as a strong representative for their organization.

### **AFTER THE JOB FAIR**

- Spend time after the event to reflect on the organizations and your conversations with the representatives. Write down your thoughts and consider your next steps. Are there things you need to do to improve your next recruiting opportunity or interview?
- Follow-up on your promises – any action steps or items to review that the organization requested or you offered to provide.
- Send thank you e-mails or notes – written letters are usually stronger. You will want to follow-up with all of your “Top 10” and any other organizations you are interested in and thank them for speaking with you at the fair and indicating that you have completed any requested action items. If you receive an immediate interview, then you will follow up with the thank you after the interview. Thank you e-mails or notes should be sent within 24 – 48 hours after any contact occurs.

### **REMEMBER...**

#### **Top Qualities/Skills Employers Want from YOU (*NACE Job Outlook 2009*)**

Communication Skills  
 Strong Work Ethics  
 Teamwork Skills (works well with others)  
 Initiative  
 Interpersonal Skills (relates well to others)  
 Problem-solving skills  
 Analytical skills  
 Flexibility/Adaptability  
 Computer skills  
 Technical Skills

#### **What Employers Want You to Know About THEM (*UT and Clemson Research 2007*)**

What are the primary products or services and the history – what do they make or do?  
 What is the company standing in the marketplace – are they the leader, #2 or just getting started?  
 Who are their typical clients and/or customers?  
 Where are the headquarters located? Any other main locations?  
 What are the specific details of the position/program you are interested in?  
 Who are their competitors?  
 What is the organizational mission?  
 What are the emerging issues that may affect the industry or the organization?  
 What divisions make up the organization?  
 What is the corporate/organizational culture?