

Career Fair/Career Expo Preparation

OVERVIEW

You attend a career event to gather information about a variety of careers or employers. These events give you opportunities to talk with recruiters in career fields or companies/agencies that interest you. One valuable outcome of career events is networking – establishing contacts and learning best ways to get started in a career field. Fully participating in career events can give you an advantage over others in the applicant pool after graduation as well.

MARKETING YOURSELF WELL

Your résumé is a critical element in being successful as you participate in career events. Prepare a professional résumé and update it for each career event.

- Invest time assessing what you offer employers:
 - Verbal and written communication skills
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Teamwork skills
 - Organizational skills
 - Analytical skills
 - Leadership skills
- Get started by looking at the Résumé Guide from MGA Career Services at http://www.mga.edu/career-services/docs/resume_guide.pdf
- A short, targeted résumé is best for anyone with limited career-related experience.
- Have several copies of your professional-looking résumé ready to hand to recruiters.
- Don't be disappointed if recruiters tell you to apply online and don't take your résumé. Online applications give applicants a better chance to have their résumé reviewed because every online application must be documented and tracked.

PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS

Another important part of your preparation for a career event is a review of employers registered to attend. Many times, pre-event information gives employers' web site as well as the academic majors they recruit. Take time to review the list of participants, do some research on the companies that interest you, and be ready to talk with the recruiter at the career event.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

FOR EVERYONE: ATTIRE

Your attire is a key element of the first impression you make on anyone you meet.

Conservative is the key word for professional dress.

- Avoid extreme colors, styles, and fashions. Trendy looks have no place in business attire.
- Conservative colors include grey, black, and navy in a fabric without sheen.
- Ensure recruiters remember you for all the correct reasons – not for an inappropriate outfit.
- Clothing must be clean and pressed.
- Your suit must be tailored to fit YOU, not your brother or sister or your roommate.
- Check to be sure there are no missing buttons, snags, lint, or pet hair on your clothing.

FOR EVERYONE: GROOMING

- Bathe and shampoo and style your hair the day of the event.
- Use deodorant, but no cologne or perfume.
- Remove all traces of tobacco from your clothes and your breath. Leave cigarette pack and lighter in your car.
- Cover tattoos and remove body piercings recruiters may find objectionable.

FOR WOMEN

- Trousers or knee length skirt with matching jacket
 - With skirt, wear flesh colored hose; with pants, wear hose or trouser socks
- Conservative colors such as grey, navy, black
- Coordinated blouse, preferably white
- No cleavage, no sheer fabric, no show-through lingerie
- Closed toe, closed heel pumps with 2" to 2 ½" heel
 - In good repair – not scuffed, heel tips replaced if necessary
 - No stilettos, chunky platforms, sandals, flats with bows or buckles
 - You will be on your feet quite a while during the event
- Keep jewelry to a minimum
 - One ring per hand
 - One nickel-sized earring per ear
- Use cosmetics, but understated and natural looking
- Keep nails clean, trimmed to just over top of finger, neutral color – no dragon claws, jewels, flowers, airbrushed designs, etc.

FOR MEN

- Suit with matching jacket and pants tailored to fit YOU.
- White collared shirt; ½" of shirt sleeve showing below jacket sleeve
- Conservative tie you tie yourself
- Clean shoes and dark socks
- Color of belt should match color of shoes
- Conservative watch and other jewelry
- Groom facial hair carefully or shave, depending on the career field you want to enter.

DAY OF THE EVENT

Obviously, you need to know the location of the event, parking arrangements, and the start and end times. Give yourself plenty of time to get there so you are calm when you arrive. You will be asked to register and give the name of your school and, perhaps, your school ID. You will be given a program with participants' names and locations in the event. The organization(s) presenting each career event want students and employers alike to have a positive experience. There will be someone there to answer your questions and give you directions.

Work to overcome your reticence at approaching a stranger and introducing yourself. If you can't get past that hurdle, you won't benefit from the event as much as you could. Prepare your handshake. Prepare your "elevator speech" and then practice saying it aloud until you're relaxed and comfortable with it. (Get information about elevator speeches here: http://www.quintcareers.com/job-search_elevator_speech.html)

Collect business cards or make notes of the names of individuals you meet. Write each of them a thank you note within 24 hours of the event. If you talk about a specific topic when you met, mention that in your note to job the recruiter's memory. This may seem a bit old fashioned or outdated, but it helps you make a positive impression on individuals who may help you launch your career.

Feel free to contact MGA Career Services to get information about career events you may attend as well as assistance preparing your résumé.

Career Services

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<http://www.mga.edu/career-services>