

PREPARING FOR A CAREER FAIR

Brad: A career fair is pretty cool when you think about it. A bunch of companies are getting together just to hire folks like you. To make sure you land that sweet job, there're some definite dos and don'ts when it comes time to working a career fair. Let's get into the four steps to make sure you land that sweet job. **One: do some homework.** I know that's the last thing you want to hear, but preparation is key. Go to your career center, find out what companies are going to be there, and check them out online. If you can walk into the career fair knowing a bit about the companies you're interested in talking to, it sends a strong signal that you're a serious candidate. **Two: make a plan of attack.** A good opening line is not...

Student: Hey, I've never heard of you guys. What do you do around here?

Brad: Sometimes students race into the career fair and go to their number one company right away. That's not a great approach. You want to make sure you practice a bit and you have your mojo going before you take it to the big leagues. So try it out on a few other companies, before you go for your number one employer. **Three: create your pitch.** Working a career fair is a lot like speed dating. And just like dating, you have a limited amount of time to make a connection. It's not the best approach to go up to a company, drop off your resume, spend ten seconds, and move on to the next one. In fact, you don't want to say...

Student: I have a 3.8 GPA, I'm a member of the finance association, I'd like to give you a copy of my resume. Please contact me when you have a moment. Thank you, bye.

Brad: Believe it or not, that's not going to be your best approach. Instead you want to be relaxed, be confident, and strike up a conversation. Talk a bit about their company, talk a bit about yourself, ask them a few questions. The goal is to make a connection. Here's a sample interchange.

Student: Hi, it's really nice to meet you.

Recruiter: Hi, my name is Courtney; I'm the Director of Recruiting at JB Consulting.

Student: My name is Brad Karsh. This is really exciting for me, Courtney. JB Consulting is a company I admire quite a bit. Seems like a great place to work.

Recruiter: It is. I've been here four years and love it.

Student: Wow, I've done a lot of research on the company and it seems like you have a wonderful relationship with all of your clients, and a long standing relationship, as well. I also noticed that leadership is really important for some of your newer employees.



Recruiter: It is; it's critical to success here.

Student: Well, I've been fortunate; I've had some great leadership experience, I was one of the student senators at my school, and I was also resident advisor for my dorms.

Recruiter: Oh wow, I'd love to see a copy of your resume.

Student: Absolutely. How does the hiring process work for you newer employees?

Brad: So there's a little snapshot of how it might go. Now some interactions might be a bit longer, some might be a bit shorter. Just be prepared to go with the flow. **Four, follow up.** Follow up and write a thank you note. So you did your homework, you made a plan of attack, you even made a great connection with your recruiter. The sad truth is, it doesn't end there. Remember, companies are going to be meeting dozens, sometimes hundreds of students at a career fair. You need to stand out both during and after the event. Send a thank you note, make it personal, and try to reference something you discussed during your brief encounter. So there you have it, a sure-fire way to be a big hit on the career fair tour and land the job of your dreams. Good luck.