Finding Job Fair Success
The Purpose of a Job Fair

- Jobseekers attend to establish employer contacts, gather information, and explore career opportunities.
- Employers attend to publicize information about their organization and meet with a large volume of potential candidates within a few hours.
  - You have only a short period of time to make a great impression.
  - Clarify your goals ahead of time to maximize your success!
As a job seeker attending a career fair, your goals could include, but are not limited to …

- **Networking** with employers and gathering information.
- Determining **employers of interest** to you.
- Learning more about the **hiring process** at specific organizations.
- Gaining a better sense of your **career options**.
- Increasing your **self-confidence** in interacting with employers.
Preparation: Employer Research

- **Learn who is attending** ahead of time and **research companies** of interest.
  - Career Services always posts a list of employers attending UM-St. Louis career fairs on our web page.
  - Research allows you to determine appropriate employers to approach at a job fair.
  - You will be better prepared to have a meaningful conversation with the employer and maximize your chances of creating a positive impression!
Focus your company research on the following areas: company background/history, products/services, size, location, and latest news/events.

- Minimally, explore the organization’s web page. Examine magazine and newspaper articles.
- Your research should allow you to ask engaging questions.
After researching companies, create a “game plan” to target your top companies first if time constraints are a concern.

If you have time to speak to a larger amount of employers, avoid starting with your top companies.

- Use other organizations to practice and get comfortable with the process.

In determining companies of interest, be open-minded.

- Do not solely concentrate on “big names” or large organizations.
- There are often great opportunities with companies with which you are not familiar.
After selecting employers to contact at the career fair, prepare a one-minute commercial summarizing your professional background, skills, and interests.

- This will create a smooth start to your conversation.
- Include the following information: name, status (junior, senior, alumni), school, major, opportunities you are seeking, relevant experience, highlights of skills and strengths, and knowledge of the company.
Practice your introduction so you appear polished and poised.

By doing so, you can avoid the dreaded job fair conversation starter: “what does your company do?” or “do you have any jobs?”

When asked what type of position you are seeking, do not say you would be willing to do anything at the company.

Articulate your career goals.
- Keep the conversation on a professional level.
- If you are asked, tell the recruiter your cumulative, major and/or semester grade point average.
  - If your GPA is not stellar it may not matter, depending on the employer. Do not attempt to justify or over explain your GPA.
- Do not forget the value of a firm handshake!
Distributing Your Resume

- After generating that initial connection with the employer, you will most likely be asked to provide them with a copy of your resume.

- A resume that is polished, perfected and mistake-free, along with your conversation with the employer, will help you stand out as a candidate.
Resume Tips

- Print your resume on neutral-colored paper that is **professional** in appearance.
- Use black ink.
- Do not include any graphics or pictures on your resume.
- Use a font that is easy to read at a glance.
- Keep resumes in an easily **accessible** location.
  - Also make sure that your resumes are not wrinkled, rained on, or otherwise blemished.
- Be sure to **bring plenty of copies**.
Closing the Conversation

- In closing your conversation, be sure to **learn the next step** and inquire how to **follow up**.
- Ask if they are the contact person or if it is someone else.
  - If it is another person, obtain their business card or note their name, title, and other contact information.
  - You can use this information to follow up with a short thank you letter and to initiate contact with another representative if applicable.
Do not be surprised if the employer asks you to go online to complete an application and/or submit a resume.

Due to employment laws and/or the sheer volume of resumes that employers receive, applying online is quite common.

For some employers, every candidate—even an internal one—must apply online.
Other Important Items to Consider

- Bring a **pen and paper** with you in case you are asked to write something down.
- Dress in **professional business attire** (i.e., a suit).
  - Wear comfortable business-style shoes—lines can become quite long.
- Consolidate the number of items you are carrying.
- Act in a way that is **polite** to everyone with whom you come into contact as soon as you are on the job fair property.
  - Employer representatives are not just located at their booths!
- Remain **calm** while waiting in line. Becoming impatient does not create a positive first impression!
- **Arrive early** if possible.
  - Employers may step away from their table to take a lunch break, get a drink of water, etc., so re-visiting employers of interest may be required.

- Write your first and last name as well as your major on your **nametag**.

- Interact with recruiters on your **own**. Do not visit the booths with a group of friends.

- Never **bring** family members. **NO CHILDREN!**

- Make sure you are interested in the **organization** you are talking to rather than the "goodies" they give out.
Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions regarding your job search!

Career Services
University of Missouri-St. Louis
278 Millennium Student Center
(314) 516-5111
careers.umsl.edu
careerservices@umsl.edu