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JOB FAIR GUIDE

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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING IN A JOB FAIR?

Benefits for **Job Seekers**:

- Learn about organizations and industries of interest
- Discover opportunities that exist for various skill sets
- Meet employers and speak with them face-to-face
- Compare different company cultures and determine what is the best fit for you
- Fine tune your interpersonal and communicative skills
- Determine the qualifications and skills you should emphasize when speaking with prospective employers

Benefits for **Employers**:

- Promote their organization in order to attract qualified applicants and increase their potential applicant pool
- Provide information about opportunities available within their organization

STEPS TO TAKE PRIOR TO A JOB FAIR:

Some advanced preparation can help to differentiate you from the other candidates and make a positive impression on prospective employers.

1. **Define your goals:** What do you want to get out of the job fair? Do you want to get past your fear of starting a conversation with employers? Do you want to find out about opportunities with a specific organization, and how and when to apply? Define what your objectives are and develop a plan to achieve these goals.
2. **Do your research:** Find out which companies will be attending the fair and prioritize and research the organizations you want to target to determine if they are of interest to you.
 - A good place to start conducting your research is on the company's website.
 - Look to see if the organization has any current openings on their website. You may find openings in the 'employment', 'careers' or 'human resources' section of their website. Determine what the qualifications are for these openings and see if your skills match.
 - Learn about the nature of their work, history, work culture, projects etc.
3. **Prepare questions:** Write out a list of well-informed questions that illustrate your enthusiasm for and knowledge of the organization you are interested in.
 - Do not ask questions that can be easily found with online research.
 - Plan out what you want to say to the employer and then approach their table and introduce yourself.



4. **Prepare to answer questions:** Research common interview questions (please see the St. Lawrence College Employment Service 'Interview Preparation' guide on our website and in our resource centre) and think about how you would answer them.
 - Common questions at the fair may include “why are you interested in working for us?”, “what are your strengths?”, “what is your educational background?”, etc.
 - Write out your answers to common questions as part of your preparation for the fair.
5. **Resumes:** Review and update your resume in order to convey that you are a great fit for the position you are hoping to get. By researching a company ahead of time you can revamp your resume to reflect the needs of that organization.
 - Bring extra copies of your resume (more copies than the number of employers you plan to speak with).
 - Bring different versions of your resume if you have more than one job target.
6. **Supporting documents:** Consider bringing supporting documents, such as a professional portfolio, reference letters and copies of your transcript.
 - Your professional portfolio should include examples of your work and accomplishments.
7. **Self-Introduction:** Practice your handshake and prepare a short (less than one minute) introduction that summarizes key points about you as a potential employee.
 - Ensure that your self-introduction sounds natural and rehearse it until you feel comfortable pitching it to an employer.
 - Some points to talk about may include: Who you are, what you can do or what you have done, what your relevant skills and qualifications are, your educational background and what your goals are for the job fair.
8. **Appearance/presentation:** What you wear and your personal grooming and hygiene say a lot about how seriously you take your job search. Dress for a job fair as you would for a job interview.
 - Ensure your attire is professional, pressed, neat and clean.
 - Business formal: suits for men, pants or skirt suits for women. Dress shoes or low heels.
 - Ensure you shower, groom hair, wear deodorant and refrain from wearing strong cologne or perfume.
 - Pack breath mints or mouth wash.
 - Get a good night's sleep.

ITEMS TO CONSIDER DURING A JOB FAIR:

1. **Strategy:** Determine a strategy for the day. An example of a strategy would be to arrive early to avoid long line ups, survey the layout of the job fair, pick up a floor map and determine the order in which you plan to visit employers.
 - Do not arrive during the last half hour of the job fair, because some employers may leave early.
 - Engage both recruiters and job seekers in conversation. You never know who will have information or contacts that could help you in your job search.
 - If you feel you need to practice your self-introduction you may want to speak with employers you are really interested in after you have practiced with other organizations first.
 - High profile companies may have long line ups, so if you are confident in your self-introduction you may want to visit them first, if they are on your priority list, to avoid the wait times.
2. **Make a good first impression:** When meeting with an employer attempt to build rapport early on and make a good first impression.
 - Approach an employer with confidence. Keep your back straight and shoulders back, smile, make eye contact, say hello, offer a firm handshake, and deliver your self-introduction.
 - Visit company booths by yourself in order to have the ability to market yourself and appear confident.
 - Be organized: take a folder to collect handouts, a calendar in case an employer wants to schedule an interview and a pen and notepad to record notes. Ensure you collect the names of appropriate people to follow up with after the fair.
3. **Be polite:** Paying close attention to your manners will ensure you make a positive impression on the employers.
 - Be mindful of the time you take with the employer. Do not spend more than ten minutes with an employer unless he or she invites you to continue the conversation. Be mindful of social queues. If the employer is looking over their shoulder it may be a sign to move on.
 - Be patient. Don't cut the line or complain about wait times.
 - Do not take an employer's promotional materials without asking or being invited to.
 - Be friendly and respectful with everyone at the fair. You never know who may witness your behaviour or who may pass on what they saw to an employer.
 - Thank each employer representative you talk to for taking the time to speak with you and answer your questions and ask them for their business card.



STEPS TO TAKE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A JOB FAIR:

1. **Tracking system:** Create a system (such as an excel spreadsheet) to track all of your job search efforts. This should include contact names and information, dates and outcomes of conversations.
2. **Reflect and evaluate:** Job fairs not only offer the opportunity to connect with employers and organizations, but also offer valuable opportunities for learning. Reflect on and evaluate how things went for you at the job fair.
 - Reflect on the information you discovered about different industries and organizations.
 - Ask yourself what you would do differently at the next job fair you attend.
 - Reflect on your self-introduction and determine if it needs to be modified.
3. **Send Thank you notes:** The next day following the job fair send a one-page thank you note to each employer representative you spoke with and attach your resume.
 - Follow formal business letter etiquette, whether you are sending an email or a hand delivered letter.
 - A thank you letter allows you to demonstrate your good manners, show appreciation, reiterate your interest in the organization and remind the employers about your qualifications. It also gives you the opportunity to clarify something discussed at the fair or discuss something you forgot to mention.

*If you have any questions about how to make the most of job fairs
please visit one of our resource centres today!*