

# **The College of Business and Technology: Using the Career Fair as An Effective Job Search Strategy**

## **The Ground Rules: Preparation = Success**

1. Research companies of interest; check out corporate web sites. If time is a factor, research those companies of greatest relevance to *you*.
2. Plan your strategy; which companies are mission critical to your goals? Visit those companies first, if possible. (“work personality” vs. “corporate culture”)
3. Recognize that companies have diverse reasons for attending; they are: soliciting resumes for full time and/or internship hiring; building name recognition on campus; pre-screening candidates for a campus recruiting visit; evaluating fit between academic programs and corporate needs; solidifying alumni connections; marketing graduate programs. These events may be staffed by HR professionals or by someone “from the field” who *may or may not* be comfortable in this role.

## **Bring:**

1. Numerous copies of your resume. If you have different versions, make sure you give the appropriate version to the right company. **NO TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS!** This is the employer’s first example of your work.
2. Confidence: be confident—not cocky. This is not the time for self esteem issues. Watch your body language; shake hands firmly, and make effective eye contact.
3. A smile.
4. A one minute “infomercial” about yourself which covers: your name, graduation date, major or degree program, what you seek, your career interests, and a summary of what attracted you to the company.

EXAMPLE: “Hi, I’m \_\_\_\_\_, a \_\_\_\_\_ major graduating in \_\_\_\_\_. I have career interests in the areas of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and am seeking an internship for summer 2007. In researching your company, I learned that you are evaluating your internet based marketing strategy and wondered if you could share more details with me about this new direction, especially in the area of global markets.”

*Let them know you have done your homework.* Ask about specific entry level jobs. Drop a name if you know one.

**Write your “infomercial” here:**

## **Attract employers by:**

1. Dressing professionally. Don’t drag “stuff”—backpacks, coats, etc.—with you. Have your resume in a portfolio.
2. Hooking them with what you’ve done.

3. Impressing them with your level of knowledge about the organization; you'll stand out from the rest.
4. Going solo—avoid the “rat pack” syndrome.
5. Arriving early in the day; some employers may need to leave a bit earlier than the event actually ends in the afternoon.
6. Being courteous. Don't interrupt an employer's conversation with another student.
7. Being honest. Don't fall into the “GPA story” trap.

**Eliminate your chances by:**

1. Confusing one employer with another employer.
2. Showing them you are “desperate” and will take any job.
3. Asking about salary.
4. Requiring the job to be located in Piney Flats.
5. Asking personal questions.

**Don't forget:**

1. Collect business cards—not cups, flashlights, and highlighters.
2. Grab brochures.
3. Jot notes on the back of the representative's business card for use in follow up correspondence. This helps them remember you in your thank you letter to the employer.
4. Say “thank you”—critical words as you move on to the next employer.
5. Give your resume to a person; don't just leave it on the table.
6. Ask for the time frame for the interview process or for their hiring cycle *as appropriate*.

*Handout adapted from the following sources:*

“Sell Yourself at the Career Fair” by Sally Kearsley

“How to Get the Most Out of Career Fairs” by Pamela S. Joell

“A Few Words about Career Fair Etiquette,” Career Recruitment Media, Inc., 1999-2004

“Employer Expectations of Students at a Job Fair” by Amber Palamares, *NACE Journal*, Winter, 2000