Tips for Participating in Virtual Career Fairs

Preparing for The Virtual Career Fair

- **Register Ahead of Time**: Registering ahead of time will allow you to see the list of employers participating in the fair.
- **Set a Calendar Reminder**: A virtual event can easily slip your mind. Set up a calendar reminder for a few days prior to the event, then one day prior, and then 2 hours before.
- **Update Your Resume**: To make an optimal first impression your resume should be spotless, proofed, concise and up to date. Be sure that it is tailored to the positions you are interested in speaking to the employers about. Also, the same is true for your LinkedIn account. Upload a PDF version of your resume to your profile so that it is accessible to employers.
- **Research Participating Companies**: After you’ve registered, take time to research the companies participating in the career fair. Select five that most interest you and then another five that you consider second tier. Focus your research on these. Be sure to use online newspapers, business journals, LinkedIn and other social media accounts in your search. Your research will also help you formulate intelligent, insightful questions that you can ask the employers.
- **Prepare Your Pitch**: Think about how you want to introduce yourself, and why you are interested in that particular company. Which of your skills, accomplishments and past work experiences do you want to highlight? How will that benefit the employer? Use the research you did to help you develop key messages about how you can be a valuable part of the team.
- **Test Your Technology**: Ensure that your device or computer is capable of supporting the platform being used to host the virtual career fair. Download any necessary software for the fair, if needed, and leave time for any troubleshooting you may need to do. Do a dry run the day before the event to avoid any last minute surprises. Technology has a way of presenting problems at the most inconvenient times. Expect to have issues. Prior to logging on to the event, double check that you have a full battery charge and a good internet and Wi-Fi connection. You may want to hard-wire your Ethernet cable to your computer to ensure a solid connection.

While a desktop, laptop or tablet with camera and microphone will enhance your experience, it is not required. However, you do want to avoid a handheld device as much as possible. Attending the event in a dedicated home office or other quiet, private space is preferred, but if you cannot, consider wearing headphones. (Refer to last page of handout)

During your dry run, practice looking into the camera rather than the person/image on your screen. By looking into the camera, it is more like giving direct eye contact and can help you show enthusiasm and interest – don’t forget to smile.

- **Get organized**: First of all, organize the company and contact information that you’ve researched into a spreadsheet that you can update as you speak with employers during the event. Have your resume handy along with any pertinent documents for the companies you’ll be speaking with—the job descriptions and your list of questions.

Hopefully, you are attending the virtual career fair from your home office. Keeping in mind that you’ll be doing video chats with employers, look at your office space from the vantage point of your camera. Open your computer camera and take a look at your space from the perspective of your camera. Remove anything that looks unprofessional. Make sure the room that you’re in is clean, quiet and well lit.
During the Virtual Career Fair

- **Dress Professionally**: Most likely, you’ll be interacting with employers through chat functions. However, there may be employers who want to speak with you face to face. Dress for the event in professional attire for your industry, just like you would if you were going on an in-person interview. Dressing professionally will help show employers that you are serious and help put you in the right frame of mind, showing confidence. Be on the safe side and dress completely (a.k.a. put on pants). You never know when you may need to get up from your seat while speaking with an employer.

- **Be on Time**: If you registered for a specific time slot with an employer, use common courtesy and be on time. Tardiness can be enough to cause an employer to not consider you as a viable candidate.

- **Keep Muted**: Keep the microphone on your computer or device muted at all times except when you are verbally conversing with the employer. This will eliminate any potentially distracting noise, echoing or reverberation.

- **Use Professional Communication**: Demonstrate clear, articulate written communication when using the chat function. Just like your resume and cover letters, grammar matters. Text lingo (i.e. LOL or OMG), emoticons and slang is unacceptable. Though a virtual career fair may seem less formal, don’t forget to be polite and use appropriate professional verbiage when speaking to an employer (i.e. Mr., Ms.).

- **Exhibit Strong Body Language**: During a video chat, stay conscious of your body language. Present yourself in a confident, competent way through direct eye contact (looking into the camera not the screen image) and sitting up straight. Avoid distracting the employer by keeping hand gestures to a minimum.

- **Take Notes**: Have paper and pen at hand during the virtual career fair so that you can jot down interesting and important information you hear. Use your notes to help you formulate personalized thank you notes to each employer you talk with.

- **Ask for Next Steps and Contact Information**: Offer to send your resume to recruiters during the virtual career fair and ask about next steps in the process. Be sure to take down their contact information so that you can follow up after the event.

After the Virtual Career Fair

- **Send a Thank You**: Send a thank you to each recruiter and/or employer you made contact with at the virtual career fair. Thank them for their time, and if there is anything in your notes that you want to mention, now’s the time. Your personalized thank you note is a way for you to refresh the recruiter’s memory of you and remind them why you are a great candidate, why you are interested in their company and the skills and experience that make you someone the company can benefit from. An email, phone call or even a hand-written thank you is appropriate. Hopefully, your thank you note will help keep your name and resume at the top of his/her mind.

- **Follow Through**: Follow through by sending any documents you may have discussed during the virtual career fair. If the recruiter asked you to send your resume, any work samples or your portfolio, be sure to do so within 24 – 48 hours after the event.

- **Stay in Touch**: Consider adding the recruiter and/or employer you spoke with to your LinkedIn contacts to stay in touch periodically.
Basic Equipment Needed to Attend a Virtual Career Fair

There are many virtual meeting platforms available. To name some of the most popular:

- GoToMeeting
- Zoom
- Microsoft Teams
- Webex Meetings

Many of these offer similar capabilities including: Screen sharing, Chat features and File sharing.

- Screen Sharing allows the presenter to show participants their monitor screen.
- Chat feature allow the presenter the ability to type a message or question in the “chat box”. You have the option to make your comment open to view by everyone attending or to just the presenter.
- File sharing gives those attending the option to show their documents to everyone on the call.

To attend a virtual career fair, the most basic equipment is required for successful communication with employers using any virtual platform.

**Laptop or Desktop with Camera and Speakers and Microphone**

- Most laptops come with quality internal cameras, speakers and microphone.
- If you have an older computer, you most likely have an external camera and speakers attached to your computer via USB ports. You will need to use your phone to dial in to the audio of the virtual career fair.

**Webcams**

- External cameras that attach to your desktop computer.
- Don’t forget to open the lens cover if yours has one before joining a virtual event.

**Headphones**

- Using headphones will minimize the chance of echo from your microphone picking up the audio from your own speakers. The large over the ear models are good for sound quality, while earbuds are less obvious in your actual video image.

**Wireless Router**

- A good video call connection is integral to attending a virtual event by minimizing blurred or grainy video or “stuttering” and dropped connections. Wireless routers can help to give a quality connection between your computer and the video platform being used by the employer. The connection can be influenced by how old your router is and how many devices are using it. Newer routers may support faster WIFI technology.