TIPS FOR THE WORLD OF VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS

How do Virtual Fairs work?

Virtual career fairs feel similar to online discussion posts. After you log in, you can choose to “enter” chat rooms within the virtual career fair. Each room houses a different employer participating in the career fair. When you enter a room, the employer receives a notification. At that point a representative from the employer will greet you via a chat function. Once they greet you, they will be looking to receive some engagement from you in return, so be sure to have some questions ready.

Others already in the virtual room may be in the midst of a conversation and you are welcome to chime in. You can also opt to chat privately with an employer, where you may ask about open positions, details about the organization and your qualifications. Employers may even want to video chat with you face to face, so be sure to dress professionally, just in case!

HOW DO I PREPARE?

Don’t attend a virtual career fair with zero preparation! These are the things you’ll want to do ahead of time to set yourself up for success:

1. Register ahead of time

You will need to register beforehand. With in-person fairs, you had the option of just showing up the day of the event, but in order to participate in a virtual fair, you’ll need to register ahead of time in order to access the fair. You’ll also want to upload your resume so that it is accessible to employers.

2. Research participating organizations

After registering, take some time to review the organizations attending the career fair. You’ll want to get an idea of which companies you’d like to meet with. You also don’t want to walk in unprepared—learn about the companies and think of questions you’ll want to ask. Remember to explore some companies you are not familiar with. There may be more employment opportunities out there than you realize.

3. Prepare your resume

This is a no-brainer, yet so important. Because you’re going to provide your resume to employers you meet with, you’re going to want it up-to-date and spotless for the optimal first impression. If you haven’t had your
resume reviewed by Career Services lately, submit it for a virtual review. But don’t wait till the last minute, if you want the feedback in time to make changes to your resume! Be sure your resume is uploaded into the career fair platform and use a PDF version to cater to employers on both Macs and PCs.

Prepare tailored questions for the employers. Virtual events give you more power to investigate the company since information should be readily available on the event page. But beware — information flows both ways. The employer is also at the computer and can just as easily look you up. Check on your social media to be safe. Make sure the privacy settings are set at the highest level with the exception of LinkedIn. This is a great time to show of your LinkedIn profile, and customizing your URL for LinkedIn is a great idea too. Depending on the platform being used you may have the option of uploading your LinkedIn URL or a URL to an online portfolio.

4. Practice your pitch

How will you introduce yourself? Why are you interested in the company? What types of positions are you seeking? How is your previous work experience relevant? What do you plan on asking the representatives at the virtual career fair?

You’ll want to spend some time mulling over questions like these so you’re ready to answer them without hesitation when the time comes. Your well-thought-out responses could impress a recruiter—and even allow you to stand out from the crowd of applicants.

5. Make sure your technology is ready to go

You’ll want to make sure your device is capable of supporting you in the virtual career fair. While it is definitely preferable to have camera capabilities in case an employer would like to speak with you face to face, you don’t necessarily have to have a device with a camera. To avoid shaky camera syndrome, use a desktop, laptop or propped-up tablet rather than a smartphone that you’ll need to hold throughout the conversation. You may want headphones if you cannot attend from a quiet, private location.

The night before is a great time to make sure your technology is ready to go. Is your virtual career fair profile properly registered? Are your web browser and flash player up-to-date? Are your documents organized and ready to go?

Try to connect to the fair from a location with a strong enough internet signal that you won’t be disconnected during a conversation. Better yet, if you can hard-wire your Ethernet cable into your computer, you won’t have that problem. But if a disconnect does happen, just get back in there and apologize to the employer. They will understand. It happens to us all!
DURING THE VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

Once you log in, how can you stand out from the crowd at a virtual career fair? Here are a few pieces of key advice:

1. **Wear a professional outfit**

You can expect to interact with employers at a virtual career fair through chat functions. However, some employers may wish to speak with you face to face. Be prepared! Make the most out of this opportunity to make a connection by looking professional and presentable. This means button up shirts with collars, preferably a tie and jacket if you have them. Ladies make sure your top is not too form fitting nor too low cut, especially in case you end up with a bad camera angle. And don’t forget pants! What if you accidentally drop your tablet? Plus you’ll feel more professional and confident if you are fully dressed professionally and this confidence will shine through to employers.

2. **Attend from a distraction-free environment**

In addition to your professional attire, you will also want to plan out where you’ll be attending the virtual career fair from. A quiet location is ideal—and camera capabilities mean that you’ll want to ensure it’s distraction-free for employers. Make sure the room employers may see from the other end of the camera, is clean, quiet and well lit. The recruiter will be taking note of everything they see, and you want the emphasis to be on you, not your background!

3. **Be ready to put yourself out there**

At virtual career fairs, it’s all the more important to exert yourself to make connections. Once an employer engages you in a chat, the ball is in your court to introduce yourself and ask questions about the organization and open positions. Attendees must present themselves to employers and feel confident doing so. Try a power stance and positive self-talk for 10 minutes before you login. It really does help!

4. **Use clear, professional business communication**

Being a virtual career fair, much of your communication will be done through written interactions in the chat function of the platform. To make a great first impression, you’ll want to demonstrate articulate written communication. Correct grammar is important and text lingo, slang, or emoticons will not be appropriate. No “yups,” “Ks” or “sups
5. **Demonstrate strong body language in video chats**

Just like in a traditional career fair, you’ll want to present yourself as a confident and competent job seeker. One way that employers pick up on this is through your body language. If you’re on a video chat with a recruiter at the virtual career fair, you’ll want to stay conscious of your body language.

On camera, it’s even more critical to hold eye contact with the employers. Speak clearly and avoid slouching. Keep hand gestures to a minimum so you don’t distract the person you’re talking to or block your face from the camera.

6. **Ask for next steps and contact information**

When talking to recruiters at the career fair, don’t hesitate to be forward and offer to send a copy of your resume. You can also ask about the next steps in the process—whether that means getting in touch with human resources, filling out a job application or sitting down for a formal interview.

Even if you’re focusing more on networking rather than job seeking, before parting ways with a recruiter, be sure to take down their contact information. Some employers may have it uploaded and accessible within the virtual career fair platform. If not, ask how you can stay in touch. You’ll need this information for following up after the virtual career fair.

**AFTER THE VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR**

Don’t let your efforts go to waste by neglecting to follow up with connections after the virtual career fair.

1. **Reach out the next day with a thank you**

Whether it’s an email, phone call or hand-written thank-you note, be sure to reach out to the connections you made at the career fair, thanking them for their time and further expressing your interest.

Because recruiters at career fairs come in contact with many candidates and resumes, you can use this chance to refresh their memory and remind them about why you’re a promising candidate, why you’re interested in the company and the skills or experience you bring to the table.

You may also want to send them your resume if you haven’t already, along with your portfolio or work samples if you have any. You can also stay in touch by adding the recruiter on LinkedIn.