

## SHOWTIME: GETTING THE MOST FROM CAREER FAIRS AND RECRUITMENT EVENTS

*Job fairs and recruitment events give you a valuable opportunity to speak face to face with company representatives and industry professionals. Making a good (or great) impression in these circumstances will help you stand out. Follow our tips to network more effectively with employers and best market your skills! While our advice applies to all recruitment fairs, it will especially come in handy for the annual University of Windsor-St. Clair College Job Fair.*

**Do your research:** If you're heading to a company-specific or multi-company recruitment event, thoroughly research the employer(s) you plan on meeting. Most fairs will provide a publicly available list of attendees. If you can't find one, ask. The more you already know, the better prepared you will be to ask meaningful, worthwhile questions. Part of your goal at a career fair is to gather information you can't find through existing sources. Employers expect that you know what their company does, what products it makes, and/or which customers it serves. Know how you could realistically contribute were you to join the company.

**Have your resume ready:** Prepare a resume that presents your education, skills, and background clearly and concisely. Estimate the number of employers you plan to visit and bring twice that many copies. Also, be prepared to fill out applications at the event. Some employers may not accept hard copy resumes and will instead require you submit an on-line application. This does not mean they are giving you the brush off.

**Know what you are:** If you think about it, career fairs are ideal opportunities to communicate your professional branding message. What do you *mean*? What do you *represent*? If a recruiter had to describe you briefly, what could he or she say that would differentiate you from dozens of other applicants? To help this process, try or touch on a memorable personal quality or experience that makes you unique.

**Know what you want:** It's important to have a clear goal in mind before delivering a pitch to a recruiter. How can somebody else help you get what you want if you're unsure yourself? *Why do you want to work in the industry you're targeting? Are you looking for a stepping-stone position or a lifetime vocation? In what cities are you comfortable working?* Know what you want and you'll have an easier time getting it.

**Prepare and perfect your elevator pitch:** Imagine you're in an elevator and your dream employer walks in. You have about thirty seconds to convince him or her that you would make the perfect employee. Who are you? What do you do? How can you add value to a company? The best possible first impression is one that has been thoughtfully prepared and practiced. By composing a short and snappy speech that explains why you'd make a good employee, you'll be ready to take advantage of the next job opportunity to come your way. A strong pitch should clarify your job target, touch on your qualifications, and say something about your unique skills and individual value. If you're a student, you should start with your name, university, and major. Write on paper and edit yourself ruthlessly. Eliminate fluff so as to use your time to your advantage. You want to memorize your pitch without sounding rehearsed. *Consult our "Perfect Pitch" document for significantly more information on this topic.*

**Dress for success:** Dressing professionally is a significant part of acting professionally. Unless you've been specifically told otherwise, dress for recruitment events like you're dressing for a job interview. Keep in mind that not all "dress clothes" are created equal; it's important to understand the difference between eveningwear and business attire. Both men and women should avoid loud colours and patterns, shiny fabrics, revealing clothing, too-tight silhouettes, and distracting decorative details. For trousers, skirts, and jackets, stick to neutral, professional colours like navy and grey. When wearing dress pants, ensure you are wearing dark dress shoes.

**Practice positive body language:** Be evaluated on more than your resume by letting your nonverbal communication and etiquette skills shine. This type of advice can come across as patronizing, but it's true. Use a firm handshake, practice good posture, and make direct eye contact. Smile! Be friendly, speak clearly, be engaging and keep a positive attitude. Avoid chewing gum and wearing headphones.



**Prepare impressive questions:** Preparing questions for employers ahead of time show interest and initiative. That said, never ask for information you could have found on the employer's website; your goal as an asker of questions is to demonstrate your knowledge and thoughtfulness, not your curiosity. Remember to ask open-ended questions beyond, "What traits and experiences do successful candidates possess?" For example, "I see you are hiring for X position. Could you tell me a little more about this role?" *Listen* to company representatives when they're speaking, and actually take note of what they say.

**Think beyond advertised opportunities:** Career experts agree that a *majority* of jobs are unadvertised. If you truly wow a recruiter, you may be surprised to see which doors open up.

**Don't come on too strong:** As in any networking situation, never outright ask for a job if the possibility has not been presented to you. Similarly, don't initiate any conversation about salary and benefits. Listen politely and attentively, and never interrupt. Furthermore, toe the line between demonstrating your research and coming on too strong. While it may be possible to research a recruiter's personal life on Facebook or Twitter, keep your conversation professional.

**Bring what you need to bring:** Be sure to arrive fully prepared. For example, the University of Windsor's Job Fair requires attendees to bring valid student identification. Choose a professional-looking portfolio or bag to elegantly store your resumes and any documents you pick up on the day.

**Have an open mind:** While preparation is clearly an integral part of recruitment fairs, you will likely find yourself exposed to unexpected opportunities. If time permits, always put yourself in a position to learn something new. If nothing else, meeting recruiters outside of your expected area of interest gives you the chance to practice initiating and conducting conversation in a lower-stakes context.

**Be courteous:** As a student, you are representing your university as well as yourself. While it's important to leave an impression, try not to monopolize the time and attention of company representatives; self-centred behaviour in a recruitment setting can suggest an imperfect fit with a company's workplace culture. Be respectful of other students who are waiting to speak to the representative by keeping your questions brief.

**Send a "thank you" note:** If you have a particularly meaningful conversation with a new connection (e.g. a recruiter), be sure to get a business card or other contact information. Send a note later that day to express your gratitude for his or her time and help. Aside from being courteous, this will strengthen your connection.

**Practice makes perfect:** Career and Employment Services at the University of Windsor holds "Preparing for the Job Fair" workshops ahead of the annual Job Fair. Click here to view the current workshop schedule. Workshop details are also available on the Career Events Calendar in mySuccess.

Co-op, Career and Employment Services: [www.uwindsor.ca/cces](http://www.uwindsor.ca/cces) | mySuccess: [success.uwindsor.ca](http://success.uwindsor.ca)



@CCES\_UWindsor



facebook.com/CCESUWindsor

**CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES OFFERS A VARIETY OF RESOURCES TO HELP YOU LAUNCH YOUR CAREER:**

Job searching • Career planning • Work experience • Career preparation workshops • Personal appointments • Resume critiques  
Mock interviews • Interest testing and assessments • Job fair and networking opportunities • Volunteer Internship Program (VIP)



University  
of Windsor  
[www.uwindsor.ca](http://www.uwindsor.ca)