

Top Tips from Career Destinations: Standing out from the crowd at Careers Fairs

1. Research, research, research.

Do your research on the different organisations attending the Fair. This helps you to plan who you want to talk to, know what jobs they have available and decide what questions you want to ask – it makes you look enthusiastic and you won't ask obvious questions that they have answered on their website or provided in the Careers Fair brochure.

Some questions you might want to ask:

- What can I expect to do in my first year?
- Where will I be based?
- What is a typical day like?
- What do you most enjoy about working for this organisation?
- Do you offer a formal preceptorship scheme?
- What support do you offer for further study i.e. Top Up Degree, Master's modules?
- Can I organise an informal visit prior to application or interview?
- What are the long term career prospects like within this organisation?
- How is the work life balance?

Remember you are talking to people who work for or recruit for the organisation, so they can give you insight that the corporate website can't. However, keep your questions professional in tone. Also bear in mind that some organisations offer a broad range of opportunities so it is worth researching all the positions an organisation offers, to make sure you don't miss a potential opportunity.

2. Be prepared:

Have a think about your strengths, what you have to offer the organisation and why you want to work for them. Some exhibitors give mini interviews at the Fair, whilst others set up future interviews from candidates they have met. Spending some time thinking about your skills beforehand will stop the inevitable 'erms' and 'umms' if you are put on the spot.

Remember exhibitors will have lots of students to see and may have to cut you short if they are busy, so try not to monopolise their time. Prepare to be concise by knowing which are your most important questions and then exchange contact details if you have lots of questions that remain unanswered, so that you can send a follow up email.

Take a notepad and pen with you to write down notes or names of the people you talk to. It will make you look more professional.

3. Dress to impress:

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. The staff at Careers Fairs are usually closely linked to the recruitment process and may be taking notes on you as well, so make sure it's for the right

reasons. Leave your shorts, jeans and flip flops for the beach - dressing smartly will make a good first impression and show that you are professional.

4. Timing:

Think about when you want to arrive at the Fair, how many stands you want to visit and when the Fair might be busy. Larger organisation stands may be busier so be prepared to visit another stand and come back. And remember; don't leave it too late as some exhibitors may have to leave early.

5. Body Language:

Act confidently, not arrogantly. A firm handshake and eye contact help to make a good first impression and if you're really nervous, practice a few of your questions before you approach the stand. Remember to introduce yourself, what you're studying, what your career interests are and the organisation position you're interested in.

If it is your first Careers Fair it can be a bit intimidating so if you want to practice speaking to someone new, visit the Career Destinations stand first to calm your nerves.

6. Freebies:

Employers may bring freebies to attract you to their stand. If you've spoken to the employer and they offer you a pen or freebie then take one but don't just grab these and run!

7. CV – to give or not to give?

If you want to hand over a CV – make sure it is up-to-date and relevant to the stands you are going to visit. Print out a few copies and put them in a folder to keep them in good condition. If you need help with your CV, attend a Career Destinations CV workshop.

Some exhibitors may ask you for your CV whilst others may explain that all applications have to be completed online. If your conversation with the employer has made you think of something you should add/remove from your CV, don't feel pressurised into handing it over. Instead take contact details, make the changes and send your CV the next day.

8. Follow up:

Check with the employer what the next steps are – when should you hear from them/when is the application deadline? If you have agreed to send your CV, make sure you do this within 24/48 hours – this shows you are interested and they are likely to still remember you! Remember to thank the person you spoke to in the email and remind them where they met you.

9. Expand your horizons:

Whilst you might go to the Fair knowing the exact employers you want to speak to, don't forget to have a look at the other stands to see what they are offering. Fairs are ideal opportunities to discover career paths you may not have thought of so don't limit yourself to only talking to one or two exhibitors!

10. A final tip...

Set your Facebook/Twitter profile to private – employers can and will search for potential candidates and could reject you from things they see on these sites! Consider using LinkedIn for networking with employers.