

## NETWORKING AT A CAREER FAIR

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Networking at an on-campus Co-op and Career fair is a unique experience—you have the chance to connect with many employers at once, and to hone your networking skills.

At our Co-op and Career fairs, local, national and international organizations are invited to set up displays, provide company literature and talk to student and alumni about job opportunities and company details. Organizations usually send two types of people to career fairs: human resources staff and departmental staff.

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### Why do organizations attend career fairs?

- Organizations are often looking to recruit employees for summer positions, co-op work terms and full-time positions
- Recruiters and managers can speak with many candidates over a short period of time
- Organizations can check out UVic student and grads
- Organizations can promote themselves on campus

### Why participate?

- Get first-hand knowledge about specific occupations
- Practice networking
- Find out why employers chose their line of work, how they got in, what they do, and what they like or dislike about their jobs

### How to prepare for the fair

Don't just show up on the day of the fair—have a game plan. Research the companies or organizations you are interested in by checking out their websites. Bring up-to-date hard copies of your résumé. Dress professionally and develop and practice a short introduction that explains your interest in each organization.

Use samples to prepare your 20-second introduction (remember to practice out loud with someone first so that you don't sound scripted). It might sound like this:

*My name is \_\_\_\_\_ (handshake). I'm a third-year economics student and I'm particularly interested in \_\_\_\_\_. I know that your company does work in that area. Could you tell me a bit more about it?*

OR

*Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ (handshake). I'm going to be finishing my degree in sociology this May. I'm really interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement, particularly forensic work. Could you tell me how I would go about applying for that work with your organization?*

## Questions to prepare

You should also put together a list of questions that you want to ask each organization. This will show the organization's representative that you're serious. Questions might include:

- How does one enter this field/profession?
- How did you enter it?
- What are typical entry-level job titles?
- What competencies (knowledge, skills and attributes) are important for this work?
- What are the most relevant majors for this work?
- Are there specific courses that you recommend I take?
- How are the prospects for this work in Victoria? What about elsewhere?
- What are the educational/training requirements? Would I need more than an undergraduate degree for employment or advancement?
- Do you have any advice for someone who is interested in this work?
- Do you know of anyone that I could contact to learn more about this work?
- Can you suggest materials that I could read to learn more about it?
- Do you hire students for summer jobs or co-op work terms? When and how do you advertise these positions?
- Could you suggest any volunteer work that might help me get some experience in this area?
- What kinds of positions will you be recruiting for and from which academic backgrounds?
- How important is having related summer work?
- How would you describe the culture of your organization?
- How is the company responding to (...a current event)?

Don't be shy—prepare to take notes and make the most out of your time with the representative.

## What to do on the day of the fair

Make sure to dress appropriately on the day of the fair—look professional. Bring copies of your résumé and wait your turn. Act professionally by introducing yourself by name, offering a firm handshake and asking your main question. Ask for business cards and provide copies of your card if appropriate. You might want to ask your contact if you can email or call to follow up on your discussion. You can also ask whether you can keep in touch. Make sure to thank each person for their timewith first-hand information about career paths in health education.

## After the fair

Follow up with your contacts by sending a thank you note or inquiring about a job opportunity that you had discussed. If you told the contact that you'd be sending a résumé or cover letter, make sure to do so. If your contact said that you could keep in touch after the fair, send them an update every month or so to tell them how your career search is going. You'll be surprised at what will come out of developing and maintaining the relationship.

## Sample thank you card

Dear John,

Thanks very much for taking the time to speak with me today. Sharing your experience as a manager at Marks' Work Warehouse gave me a lot of insight into what your day-to-day job entails, as well as what the culture is like in your organization. I was really impressed with how you described the importance of teamwork in running a successful business, and the steps you described in how you motivate your staff. I also walked away with a positive sense of Mark's Work Warehouse's commitment to global sustainability an corporate responsibility. I would love to stay in touch and if you hear of any opportunities that may be a fit, please feel free to contact me at \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely, Jane A. Student