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## ***Job Fair Preparation & Strategy***

The Northern Illinois University Job Fairs are open to students and alumni seeking professional career opportunities. Here are some helpful tips to make your job fair a productive experience.

### **Learn Who's Coming Ahead of Time**

- Visit the Career Services webpage for information on companies attending the job fair.
- Develop a list of employers with whom you plan to speak. Research their employment opportunities, company products and services.
- Keep in mind all the factors to consider regarding the job. They include location of employment, type of position, job responsibilities, corporate culture, pay and benefits.

### **Contact Employers of Interest Prior to the Job Fair**

- Send a cover letter and resume (via e-mail or ground mail) to companies you plan to visit at the Job Fair.
- Let the employer know that you look forward to meeting him/her at the job fair. Describe your educational and career background, qualifications, and experiences that best relate to the position requirements and the specific company.
- Schedule with a Career Services counselor if you need assistance preparing for the Job Fair, or writing a job search letter and resume.

### **Prepare a 45 Second Verbal Summary of Your Qualifications**

- Plan to engage in brief, formal interviews with employers regarding your qualifications and their employment needs.
- Review your resume and be prepared to present a 45 second summary of your educational and career background, qualifications, work experiences, and career interests.
- Be prepared to ask relevant questions.
- Describe how your skills match those of the position in which you are interested. Promote your abilities.
- Be prepared to schedule interviews with employers later in the day and/or second interviews in the following weeks.

### **Dress and Act the Part**

- First impressions are critical. Dress in conservative, well pressed, professionally tailored business attire.
- Approach employers with confidence and assertiveness. Make eye contact, smile, and shake hands firmly.
- Don't chew gum, drink, eat, or be rude.
- Don't ask about salary and benefits unless the employer prompts the conversation. If so, offer realistic salary expectations and appear interested.
- Plan to arrive as close to 10:00 am as possible – some recruiters may leave before 3:00 pm.

### **Take the Right Things With You**

- Place an ample supply of resumes (printed on white or off-white, 24 lb. Paper) in a folding, leather or leatherette folder or attaché.
- Take your calendar or date book in order to schedule interviews

**Continued on Reverse**

### **Develop a Plan of Action for the Day of the Fair**

- Visit first the employer(s) in which you have the strongest interest (your "A-List")
- Then visit with all employers whose positions look interesting.
- Record notes in between each employer contact – preferably on the recruiter's business card or company literature. Use these notes when writing thank you letters, conducting interviews, or evaluating job offers.

### **Learn What's Going to Happen Next**

- As you leave each employer, ask about the next step in the interview process and how you can advance your candidacy.
- If the employer suggests that you call if you are interested in the position, do so within two days. If you do not, s/he will assume you are not interested.
- Ask for a business card from all recruiters with whom you speak. Shake their hands and thank them for their time.

### **Follow Up With Your Job Leads**

- Write a thank you letter to each recruiter who discussed positions in which you were interested. This can be a mailed business letter, a mailed thank you card, or an emailed thank you letter.
- In the letter, remind the recruiter that you met at the NIU Job Fair, and reiterate your qualifications and interest in the position.
- Include a copy of your resume and any documentation requested at the Job Fair.

## ***Recruiters That Do Not Conduct Interviews & Do Not Collect Resumes***

Because of recent changes in recruiting practices, an increasing number of employers **do not collect resumes nor conduct screening interviews** at Job Fairs. You should not be surprised, insulted, or discouraged when this occurs. These companies simply take a different approach to Job Fairs, but remain very interested in NIU candidates - otherwise they would not have attended the Fair.

Such companies view the Job Fair as an opportunity to educate Job Fair participants about their company and its positions. But they are not conducting "screening interviews" of candidates. They provide attendees the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any information that they were unable to glean from the company's website, literature, or pre-Job Fair information session.

These recruiters typically do not accept resumes or business cards, and may not provide their own business cards. Instead, they encourage participants to apply for employment via their company's online job site. If the online system includes the opportunity to provide a cover letter, you can indicate your participation at the NIU Job Fair.

So you can see that the Job Fair is both an opportunity to "sell yourself" and to gain valuable information about the companies and positions to which you may be applying.