

HOW TO PREPARE FOR CAREER FAIRS



McGill

CaPS

Career Planning Service
Service de planification de carrière

CAREER FAIRS

Career Fairs are great opportunities to meet employers, develop contacts, and find out more about jobs and opportunities within a field and/or company. Most Fairs are organized by industry or field (i.e. Education, Social Work, Technology, Management...) and include a wide range of employers within that sector. They may also be specific to a particular geographic location. Depending on their size, organizations are usually represented by 1-3 employees; often an HR representative or department head, along with one or two professionals in the field.

The great thing about a Career Fair from a job search perspective is that a lot of the work has been done for you. Employers have already been identified and contacted and are keen to meet potential employees. At Fairs on University campuses, they are also usually aware that many students will be attending to explore options and find out more about what the company does.

The list of upcoming campus career fairs can be found here: www.mcgill.ca/caps/students/services/careerfairs

Below are some tips to help you make the most of a Career Fair:

Preparation

- Prior to the Fair, research the organizations that will be attending, to get an overall sense of what they do, their size and scope, types of positions etc.
- Brainstorm questions you would like to ask them
- Think about what you would like to share with them, i.e. a brief description of your background, skills and interests, and why you are interested in their company
- Put together your CV and have it professionally reviewed. Keep it general enough to appeal to the range of different employers who will be present
- Dress appropriately! While some career fairs can be relatively casual, others have strict dress codes. In general, it is recommended that you dress as if you are going to a job interview

What to bring

- Copies of your CV, as many employers will be accepting CVs directly at the Fair
- Business/Contact cards (see p. 3 for details)
- A positive, open-minded attitude

* It is not necessary to bring Cover Letters for each employer at a Career Fair.

At the fair

- Ensure your cellphone/pager is turned off
- Stop at the registration table and get a name tag
- Especially at large events, or if you are attending your first career fair, it can help to take a brief walk around the room(s) first to see the layout and plan your approach, get a sense of the atmosphere, and give yourself a chance to breathe!

- When you greet an employer, smile, shake hands, make eye contact and introduce yourself
- Share information about your background and interest in the company
- Be curious. Ask open-ended questions about the industry, the organization, the types of positions they hire for, and what they look for. Remember that the company representatives who attend Career Fairs are happy to talk!
- Listen attentively to their answers!
- Keep an open mind. If you have time, talk to some of the employers you know very little about to see what you can learn
- Ask for a business card or contact information for future follow up



Making a Business/Contact Card

Education

- Indicate degree(s) followed by majors/minors in brackets
- Indicate school if desired

Languages

- Indicate if you are bilingual and note the languages in brackets in order of fluency

The Do's and Don'ts:

- Do avoid too many abbreviations
- Don't overcrowd your card
- Don't print your card on flimsy paper or with perforated edges
- Do add value to your card by printing on the back (e.g. use it for a French version)
- If you chose to place a logo/graphic make sure that it is appropriate for the recipient
- If you have varying business card versions (with different addresses or information on them), distribute them accordingly

Name

- List the name you prefer to be called e.g. Matt vs. Matthew

Telephone Number

- Highlight your numbers by putting it in bold or a larger text
- Ensure you have a voice mail which indicates your name and does not have an unprofessional message which might confuse the employer or give them a negative impression of you

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Address

- If living away from home while at school, you might want to use your permanent address, rather than your temporary one
- In some cases you might want to consider printing two sets of cards with the varying residential information

Email

- Preferably not a hotmail, yahoo, or other free email service account
- Every student has a McGill email account for life, even after graduation. Such an address also makes you look more professional and is rarely blocked by spam filters

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