



How to Navigate a Virtual Career Fair

As in a face-to-face career fair, it's important to be as prepared as possible when connecting with employers virtually. After all, this is the first impression the recruiter will have of you; follow these steps to maximize your chances of turning a chat into an interview.

PREPARE BEFORE THE FAIR

- ❖ **Identify the companies** you're interested in speaking with. Many platforms will allow job seekers to see the list of companies registered prior to the event. You may also be able to see what jobs the company is recruiting for, information about the company, and what times they anticipate having recruiters available to chat. Organize this information in a way that makes sense for you.
- ❖ **Prepare your resume.** You may have the opportunity to develop a profile in the virtual career fair platform. Make sure that your resume is accurate and error-free. Consider setting up an appointment with a UCC counselor to make sure your documents accurately and professionally present your experiences.
- ❖ **Complete your profile.** The platform may allow you to upload portfolios and link to social media pages, include details about your experiences, and indicate which companies you are interested in. Make sure that your profile is as complete as possible with the information that makes sense for your desired field.
- ❖ **Plan to dress professionally.** Some recruiters may invite you to join a private video chat, so be prepared! If you only dress from the waist up, with absolute belief that the interviewers will never see you from the waist down – something will happen and they will see your pajamas or cargo shorts or whatever casual clothing you have chosen that doesn't match the professional attire you are wearing! Also, remember that how you dress affects your mindset.
- ❖ **Find a quiet space** so that you can focus on your interactions with the recruiters. Pay attention to the lighting, the chair you sit in, and the background behind you to ensure that these are all appropriate for a video conversation.
- ❖ **Test the software.** Log in and test the software before the day of the fair.

PRESENT YOURSELF CONFIDENTLY VIA TECHNOLOGY

- ❖ **Be adaptable.** In virtual career fairs, the majority of communication will occur via chat boxes. However, there can be the possibility of having video conversations with recruiters as well.
- ❖ **Get your best angle.** Install the camera at eye height. Do not stare down into a camera. If necessary, prop up the lap top or adjust the monitor camera to be at the appropriate height for you to look straight ahead. This allows for a more natural, conversational tone to your answers than if you are staring down at the interviewers.
- ❖ **Make "eye contact".** Practice looking at the camera as you answer questions. You can glance down to see the reaction of your audience to what you are saying, but always look back up to the camera.
- ❖ **Pay attention to nonverbals.** Just as in a face-to-face interview, you must appear relaxed and confident. It will be difficult for you to assess your interviewers' responses if they do not provide verbal and nonverbal cues. Be sure to smile as you look at the camera.
- ❖ **Minimize background noise.** If you are connecting from a shared space, use headphones to help reduce extraneous noises. If you're at home, remind others that you will be in a video interview and ask for quiet with no interruptions. Post a sign on your door to that effect. If you must deal with issues or an emergency during a conversation, apologize, mute the audio, and deal with the problem quickly. Demonstrate that you are a professional who can solve problems.
- ❖ **Manage your technology effectively.** Watch your battery usage. Shut down extraneous software programs and turn off any pop ups or reminders. You want high quality in both video and audio. It is recommended that you connect to wired internet lines rather than wireless in order to ensure the best quality possible.



CONNECT WITH RECRUITERS

- ❖ **Be proactive.** Within the virtual environment, it is very easy to observe and not participate. However, the way to stand out in the virtual setting is to engage with the recruiter. Often, employers have a general chat room that's available for any registered attendee to enter, but they also have the capability to start private chats with job seekers.
- ❖ **Use professional communication.** Pay attention to your grammar and spelling and avoid using slang and emojis. This format is a great way to showcase your professional communication skills. If you are worried about grammar or spelling, consider using a browser extension that will check your text as you type.
- ❖ **Don't be afraid to ask questions.** Ask informed questions based on your prior research and preparation. If the company posted that they are looking for a project manager, asking "What positions are you recruiting for?" shows that you didn't do your research. Instead, ask "What are you looking for in a project manager?" to show that you prepared ahead of time.
- ❖ **Treat the conversation as an informal interview.** Be prepared to introduce yourself with your "elevator pitch", demonstrate how you can contribute to the company, and talk about your strengths and weaknesses.
- ❖ **Adapt your elevator pitch.** It's important to be concise and direct in the virtual setting. Include information such as what type of position you're seeking, what makes you a good fit, and how you would contribute to the company. Feel free to type this out ahead of time and paste it into the chat box if that would help you!
- ❖ **If you create notes, don't read them verbatim during a video conversation.** While it can be helpful to create notes to prompt your answers for common questions ahead of time, reading a paragraph of text during a video chat will be obvious to a recruiter. Help yourself avoid the temptation to read from a script by preparing potential answers in bullet format.
- ❖ **Address what happens after the fair.** Before the conversation ends, ask about next steps and the best way to follow-up after the virtual fair.

AFTER THE FAIR

- ❖ **Follow-up.** After the conversation, write a few notes to remember the recruiter, interview questions, and other details. This information can be helpful for writing thank you notes and for any type of second interview or follow up you might have with the company.
- ❖ **Write thank you notes!** The best way to connect with the recruiter may be through email, so send a well-written thank you note that emphasizes how you match the needs of the organization. Keep the email short – 3 or 4 sentences only.