

## How to Work a Career Expo Script

### Slide 1: Title

Thank you for viewing SFA Career Services' "How to Work a Career Expo" presentation.

I am a Student Career Advocate in Career Services, and I'll be guiding you through the in's and out's of navigating a career fair during this presentation. Make sure to grab a pen and paper because we're going to talk about a lot!

### Slide 2: The Importance

Attending a career fair can be a prime opportunity to secure a great internship or career – however, you have to do it right. Many times a career fair is often the first opportunity you have to make a great first impression with a potential new employer.

### Slide 3: Topics

Today we're going to cover three aspects of how to work a career fair so you can be as prepared as possible to make a first great impress. today's topics are:

1. How to prepare for the fair
2. "GO" time...the fair itself; and lastly
3. How to "make the cut" steps to take after the fair

### Slide 4: iSelf Assess

The most important piece of information you can understand when pursuing a career is yourself. You wanna be selling yourself in as with any other product you're selling you must know yourself inside and out in order to sell it effectively. At a career fair you're given an opportunity to learn about a variety of different options that a company may offer. So the more prepared you are to discuss what you have to offer, the more likely you are to find an opportunity that will fit just right. This is different than an interview. In an interview, you are pursuing just one position. You need to focus your qualifications, especially to that one role. First you must know what your goals are, both short terms and long terms. This is frequently one of the first questions a recruiter will ask when a candidate walks up to a booth. You should be easily able to rattle off what your goals are. You also need to know some other aspects about yourself. What are your strengths, weaknesses, likes and dislikes? By knowing this information, the recruiter will be able to help match you with an opportunity that best fits you.

### Slide 5: Notebook paper

Depending on your schedule, you may have limited time at the fair. Login to your Jobs4Jacks account to view a list of participating companies a few days before the fair. This list will have each company's website listed. And frequently the position titles, job descriptions from positions they tend on hiring for. Take some time to review each company's websites and job descriptions. Then go to the fair with a list of 5 companies you would like to visit. Hopefully you will have enough time to visit other companies you have interest in, but your Top 5 are those companies that you MUST hit. You can research the opportunities at a variety of resources including...the company's website, your network of friends – do they work there, do your friends – friends work there – how about your parents or your parents' friends. In addition to positions descriptions and company information available you should also research industry characteristics and company culture to help you prepare find out who they are, what they do, and why you want to work there. With this knowledge, you will be able to talk intelligently with recruiters at the career expo and impress them! Don't just rely on picking up company literature and reading it at the Expo. In many cases, you will have to take to the recruiter before having a chance to read their pamphlets.

## **Intro before Slide 6**

Now that you're prepared for success before the fair, it's now GO TIME! Your success at the career fair will depend on many factors, so let's dive into that now! We'll discuss:

1. What to expect the day of the fair
2. Creating a game plan to navigate the fair
3. The actual conversation with a recruiter
4. And finally, general do's and don'ts of a career fair.

## **Slide 6: Attire**

A neat and organized appearance can go a long way in making a good impression. Making sure your clothes are clean, pressed, and fit is half the battle. Spots on ties, runs in hose, or wrinkled clothes can do more damage than you think. When it comes to hair, basically DON'T try to make a statement with it and you should do OK. Neat, clean, and conservatively styled are all you need to remember. When you check-in at the fair, you will be given an adhesive nametag that goes on your right chest. Why? Because as you shake hands, you want your nametag to angle towards them. No matter what the dress code states for the fair dressing conservatively and professionally is always the best bet. Wear a suit even if it may not be necessary. It makes a professional statement, even if the attending recruiter are dressed business casual or casually. Yes, a suit can be expensive, but consider it to be a very wise investment. You will also need it when you start to interview so you might as well purchase it now. Be careful of the trends that can influence your appearance you won't want to wear your "clubbing" clothes to the fair! What's the earring or piercing rule? Basically if you're a guy, no earrings are appropriate. For a woman, stick to your basic earrings, one on each ear. Piercings anywhere else are pretty much considered inappropriate. In any case it's better to be safe than sorry. Dress for success. Think conservative, and remember a few things. Wear a suit, be careful of trends, earrings or piercings, neat and organized, name tag on right hand side of your chest, clothing that is clean and pressed, neat professional hair style, even consider lightly spraying your hands with antiperspirant for a nice dry handshake.

Here are a few examples of items not to wear to any professional networking event. Items such as casual jeans, formal dresses, workout clothes, uncomfortable shoes, and shorts of any length. Remember dress for the job that you want, not for the job that you have.

## **Slide 8: Hand Shake**

Your handshake will set the tone for your conversation with potential employers. Before anything else, practice your handshake! Whether it be with your coworker, family member, or best friend, practice as much as you can so that it becomes second nature. When going in for the handshake, engage their full hand, with both palms meeting. Be sure to grip their hand firmly, but do not crush it! Look at your potential employer in the eye and SMILE! Smiling makes you much more personable. Pump your hand 2 to 3 times and then release. What kind of handshake do you use?

Search the top 10 worst business handshakes on YouTube, and make sure you avoid using any of these handshakes when meeting someone new.

## **Slide 9: Elevator speech**

Aside from having a firm handshake, walking up and introducing yourself to a recruiter can be a daunting aspect of attending a career fair. The easiest and most widely used technique today is to put together an "elevator pitch." The premise behind an elevator speech is this challenge: How would you concisely and accurately "sell" yourself to a potential employer if fate placed you both on an elevator, and you only had the time it takes to get from the top floor to the bottom floor? Developing a great elevator speech is the key to a great first impression and start to a solid conversation with a recruiter.

To begin, you will want to introduce yourself by stating your name, major and graduation date.

Next, state your reason for attending the fair. Are you there to network, as you are not graduating for another three semesters? Or are you there seeking immediate full-time employment or an internship?

To follow-up, you'll want to mention a point or two about the organization, just to prove that you have done your research.

Lastly, and probably the most important part of the elevator speech, is to communicate how your skills, education and experience relate to available career opportunities, or to what you are seeking in a position.

I know that that sounds like a lot of information to include in just 15-30 seconds, but it's definitely attainable! Here, let me give you an example of an elevator speech to help if you're looking to create your own:

"Hi! My name is Mary Smith and I am a senior Marketing major, seeking a full-time marketing position upon my graduation this December. I recently completed an internship with XYZ & Associates, a prominent marketing research company in New York City. My internship was a vital learning experience and afforded me the opportunity to be introduced to the ever-changing marketing industry, as well as developing extensive skills in conducting marketing research and analysis. One thing that particularly caught my attention about Sample Company is being rated a "Top 50 Employers to Work For" for five consecutive years! I fully appreciate your organization's stance on participating in philanthropic work and professional development of the individual. This, among many other reasons, is why I am interested in pursuing a career with Sample Company."

See, that wasn't so bad, was it?

You will want to be careful that your speech doesn't sound too scripted – so be sure to practice several times prior to the fair.

Practice out loud in front of a mirror. Practice out loud with a family member or friend. Practice until it rolls off your tongue without thought or hesitation.

It is important to be armed with solid answers to the questions that recruiters might have! For example, can you tell me a little about yourself. This is probably the first thing the recruiter will ask. Answer by reciting your elevator pitch. Tell me about your skills. Use your fingers and count off your top four or five skills. Finally offer a short example of how and when you used each skill. Why did you decide to major in \_\_. You probably have a great reason for choosing your major. Tell your story and include details and use body language to bring your story to life.

What do you know about our company? 40% of the people interviewed don't know a thing about the company they want to work for. So make sure you do. Before you go to a job fair, visit the job fairs website. Find out who they are. What they do, and what makes them special.

Why do you want to work for us? Here are some honest answers. You shop there. Use their products. You have a friend or relative who works there. You've heard good things about the company. Be ready to offer two or three examples of the good things you've heard. What motivates you to do a good job? Money is not a good answer. Instead try to use this...having responsibilities and getting a pat on the back when the job is done right. Tell me about your proudest accomplishment. Go ahead, tell your story. What are your career goals. If you plan on making a career in this industry say so...it's an important selling point.

### **Slide 10, 11: Conversation**

Having questions for recruiters is just as important as being prepared for their questions. Asking the recruiter questions about their company and the positions show that you have taken the time to research the company and express interest. Examples of questions to ask recruiters can include:

- Could you describe the ideal person for this job?
- Can you describe a typical day for someone working as an \_\_\_\_\_ at your company?
- What are the major challenges the new hire will face in this position?
- How soon do you plan to fill this job?
- What do you like most about working for your company?
- Can you describe the company culture and management style?
- How many people are in the department?
- What kind of training do you offer?
- What's the next step? How can I arrange an interview?

Make sure to actively listen and express positive body language while the recruiter is talking to you. Make good eye contact and nod your head to show you are engaged. Don't just ask questions and drift in thought.

### **Slide 13: Portfolio**

There are several pieces of information that you can bring with you to the fair. First and foremost, and a career fair MUST is a professional, well-written, mistake-free resume. Make sure to have someone proofread your resume prior to the fair to ensure that it's error free. You will also want to bring multiple copies. Even though you have chosen your top five, you will hopefully have time to visit many more than that and you will want to be prepared. Along with your resume should be a list of pre-contacted references, preferably professional references. Since you will be targeting your top five companies you will also have an opportunity to tailor a cover letter to those companies. However, be forewarned, you will want to make sure to give the right cover letter to the right company. There have been instances in the past when recruiters have received a cover letter not addressed to them or their company. Although it can be a funny situation, it's not the correct impression you want to leave.

Becoming more common are candidates bringing business cards in lieu of resumes. I'm not sure I'm sold on this concept yet, but it's an option I thought I'd tell you about.

For those of you pursuing a career in advertising, public relations, graphic designs, or etc., bringing your portfolio with you would not be a bad idea. The companies may prefer to wait till an interview to review but it doesn't hurt to have one with you.

Cheat sheets can be helpful with your top five companies. Right before you approach the booth, review your cheat sheet to remind yourself of some top points you want to mention to show you've done your research.

So you developed your elevator pitch, handshake, professional documents, and your outfit for the career fair is clean and pressed. It's GO time.

Before you go into the fair, give yourself a pep talk. This is important. Recruiters want you. If they didn't need employees, they wouldn't be at the fair. So don't be shy about introducing yourself to the recruiters.

At our fairs, we provide a bag, purse, and coat check-in area. You don't want to carry any unnecessary items into the career event. Your items will be stored in a secure location and will be accessible to you throughout the fair.

### **Slide 15: Create a game plan**

You've already logged-in to Jobs4Jacks to preview the list of companies attending the fair, and have decided on your top 5. Once you arrive to the fair, you will be provided with a map of where the companies are located. Map it out so you can make the most of your time.

Some experts recommend practicing on less desirable employers before hitting your top 5 choices. Other experts recommend visiting your top 5 choices first before recruiters get tired and the lines get long. Do what works best for you. If you find that one of your top 5 is busy, go to your next stop and come back.

The lines will die down at some point, and you want to make sure you talked to everyone you planned. Ideally, you will have enough time to hit up more than your top 5. So you don't want to spend your whole fair waiting in line. You will also want to know what your next week or two schedules looks like. 90% of the time, you will just be learning about an organization and they'll give you directions on how to follow up or proceed after the fair.

Career fairs are typically loud, busy, and hectic – especially during peak times. The fair usually starts to slow down within 30 minutes to an hour. Some people may be tempted to attend during that time does they do not feel like they have to rush. However, I wouldn't recommend it as some recruiters would close up shop early and you may miss out on the opportunity to visit one of your top 5's. It is also very likely that your top 5 are the same as other attendees top 5. So be prepared for lines. If you are in a line, and you still have other organizations to see, feel free to step away for a bit to see the others and then come back.

Also, if you notice that the recruiter is giving the same shepel to all the candidates feel free to step in and listen. You can still give your elevator speech after the candidates walk away but I'm sure the recruiter will appreciate you saving their voice.

In today's economy, many of the companies that have traditionally been top hires may have reduced or even eliminated hiring. However, you will still most likely see them at the fair. Even though a company may not be hiring, they may still want to keep their name out there. Don't get discouraged by this. Start talking. Make a short interesting and memorable conversation. Offer your handshake, give your elevator speech, answer any recruiter questions, ask any questions to keep the conversation going, express interest in the position, and give your resume or follow up otherwise. Make sure to end with a request including, but not limited to, how should I follow up with you and when.

Be sure to grab their business card and to take good notes. Don't try to just rely on your memory. Take this as an opportunity to learn, but then focus most of your effort on those that are currently hiring. You may also come across companies that don't accept resumes at the fair. Don't take this personally. It is most likely a company policy. If they don't take your resume, just ask them how they would like you to proceed. You may be directed to email it to them. They may direct you to a company website to complete an online application, or they may not tell you to do anything depending on their staffing needs. Just ASK!

Many times a recruiter will tell you what steps should take from here. Be sure to listen. If they tell you to apply online, or to send a resume, or to sign up for interviews...DO IT! You'll be listening to many different people that day and it's likely that you should forget what you're doing next. So feel free to take notes after you leave the booth if necessary.

What if you haven't researched a company that interests you? Ask for some literature from the company's booth, go somewhere quiet and read it. If there is a long line of individuals at the booth, you can even read the literature while in line. Also, you might try eavesdropping on the people in front of you to hear what the recruiter says.

What if you want to talk to the recruiter but you have to leave? Recruiters leave plenty of business cards on their table or booth. Take the recruiter's business card. When you get home send him/her an email and a copy of your resume. Sell yourself and ask for more information.

What if you start feeling "fair fatigue?" Take a walk around the building to recharge. Go through your documents in a secluded area so you have a minute to gather your thoughts.

### **Slide 18: Do's and don'ts**

To summarize here is a list of some career fair do's:

- Remember to couple your elevator speech with a well-developed and firm handshake.
- Check for fresh breath
- Smile, use eye contact and show your personality, but remember to remain professional
- Ask open-ended questions and listen carefully to the recruiter
- Collect company literature and business cards and offer your resume
- Thank recruiters for their time and follow up

### **Slide 20:**

Alright! WHEW! You made it through the career fair, but the journey has just begun! You may have tons of company literature, pens and several business cards from recruiters. So...now what? Besides those items, here are some things to not leave the fair without:

- Notes about contacts you made
- Information about organizations you talked with
- A better sense of your career options, and...
- Self-confidence in interacting with employer representation

### **Slide 21: Say thank you**

Recruiters see MANY candidates at the career fair, and even though you made a GREAT impression on the recruiter, you always want to follow up. Remember all of those business cards you got? The best thing you will want to do is make your follow up personal. If there was something that you talked about with the recruiter that would make you stand out and help them to remember you put that in your follow up.

As far as how to follow up, that's up to you. An email is immediate, whereas a card shows a little more effort. Both have their advantages, so do whichever you feel is more appropriate. The most important thing is that you DO IT!

Another method of follow up is via the phone. This is not standard today, but is an option just be careful to not move to stalker status. As I mentioned earlier, if a recruiter asks you to email a resume to them, to complete an online application, or to sign up for an interview on campus...do it!

A positive first impression can quickly be ruined if you don't follow up appropriately.

### **Slide 22: Making the cut topics**

Depending on your graduation date and also they company is hiring or not, they may not be able to pursue a company immediately. If that is the case, file that information away. I recommend having a career opportunities folder or notebook where you keep notes, business cards, and company literature.

Write down who you met with, so you will remember down the road, you will remember the important details and who you can follow-up with. You will also want to be accessible when a recruiter contacts you for a follow up conversation or potentially an interview. You want to be flexible. Remember you are

one of many at the fair. So if you're not available when they need you to be, they may move onto the next person.

**Slide 23: CS contact information**

Contact Career Services at 936.468.3305 or via email at [careerservices@sfasu.edu](mailto:careerservices@sfasu.edu). We are located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Rusk Building, or visit us on line at [www.sfasu.edu/careerservices](http://www.sfasu.edu/careerservices) . Don't forget to log-in to your Jobs4Jacks account to view registered employers. Upload a well-written, error free, copy of your resume and will see you at the fair.

Thank you again for viewing "How to Work a Career Expo." See you at the Career Expo!

\*\*\*\*\*