

ACTIVITIES

SECTION 1

Career Fairs

School-sponsored Career Fairs are a ready-made opportunity to get in front of students and share good information about your company, jobs in your industry, and the education and skills students need to succeed.

What Is a Career Fair?

Many schools sponsor Career Fairs (also known as Career Days) to introduce students to the wealth of job and career opportunities available with local employers. For these events, employers usually set up booths or tables where they can provide students with materials or show multimedia presentations about their companies, while answering student questions. Career Fairs generally are targeted to high school-age students who are beginning to think about college and careers, but they can also target younger students.

In addition to giving students an opportunity to visit with many employers individually, Career Fairs also can include group presentations for all students by employer representatives, college and career counselors, and other speakers. Some Career Fairs also incorporate mock interviews (see page 35) and other activities.

If you are going to do a more formal presentation as part of the Career Fair, please see *Section 2: Classroom Visits, page 21*, for some presentation pointers.

The Benefits Of Career Fairs

Benefits for the student:

- Students learn about jobs and careers in various fields, including salaries.
- Students have opportunities to meet individually with professionals and ask questions about their work, their companies, and their industries.
- Students gain a better understanding of the skills and education required for jobs in various industries and fields.

Benefits for the employer:

- Employers have the opportunity to nurture student interest in jobs and careers with their company and in their industry.
- Employers can help students understand the education and skills they need to secure jobs with their companies.
- Employers are part of an event showcasing a range of local companies that are committed to supporting education and future employment for today's students.

Benefits for the employee volunteer:

- Employees gain valuable experience as ambassadors for their companies and industries.
- Employees have the opportunity to 'give back' by nurturing the next generation of the workforce.
- Employees enjoy greater job satisfaction after creating an enriching experience for students.

Making It Effective and Educational

BEFORE THE CAREER FAIR

Ask about logistics. Establish contact with the school or the career fair organizer so you know the agenda for the day and what is required of presenting companies. Here are some questions to ask:

- How much/what kind of space will we have for our booth/table? To what extent will we be able to decorate the space with banners, signage, etc.?
- How long will the career fair last?
- How many employees should we bring?
- Will electricity be provided? Is there wireless Internet access?
- What equipment do we need to bring—e.g., audio/video, easels for signage, power chords?
- Can we use video (if appropriate)?
- Is it OK to bring handout materials and giveaways (pens, etc.)?
- Are students roaming from booth to booth at random, or is the school encouraging them to sign up for one-one-one conversations with specific employers?

Ask about what's happening in the school. Speak with the school or career fair organizer about the students and what they are doing in school:

- What is the background of the students attending the career fair? Do they have any prior knowledge of STEM jobs or STEM careers?
- Are there specific school-wide themes, initiatives, career/technical education programs, or afterschool programs that address STEM? If so, what are they, and how can the career fair reinforce or build on the lessons they impart?
- Is the school asking students to document or reflect on what they have learned at the career fair? What can presenters at the career fair do to lay the groundwork for those activities?

For other tips on questions for teachers and schools, see “How Can You Put the ‘Learning’ in Work-Based Learning?” page 6.

Bring a video. Consider bringing a video about the company to air at your booth throughout the event. Talk to colleagues in recruiting and marketing to see what is available that would be appropriate for student audiences. (A broad overview of the company or industry is best, with minimal jargon.) If nothing exists, consider putting together a video of interviews with various employees about their jobs—what they do on an average day, and the skills and education their jobs require.

Bring leave-behinds and giveaways. Make sure you have attractive, informative, and, if possible, exciting materials to share about your company, including brochures and other handouts. Don't bring highly technical or jargon-filled materials. You should also consider bringing notepads, pens, or other giveaway items for students who stop by your booth. Think of clever giveaways that highlight what the company makes or does. Ask the school how many giveaways and other materials you should bring.

Pack a sign to spruce things up. Bring a banner or company signage you can use to "brand" your space and make it more attractive.

Check your seating. Make sure you have chairs available for one-on-one conversations with students. You may also want extra chairs so students can sit and watch your video or multimedia presentation.

Secure appropriate permissions. If you want to post or share images or information about individual students who participated, work with the school to secure photo releases. Schools and businesses need parental consent to post or share images of minors.

DURING THE CAREER FAIR

Count the numbers. Keep track of how many students you talked to during the day.

Arrive with answers. Be prepared to talk with students about the following topics:

- What does your company do, and to what extent is it operating in a thriving industry?
- Why is your company's work important and relevant? What key problems does the company address in the world?
- How does the company express its values through activities such as honoring diversity, supporting important community causes, protecting the environment, etc.?
- What are the job and career opportunities in your company and your industry?
- Are these job opportunities likely to increase in the years ahead, and in what job areas do you see the most growth?
- What is it like to do your work (including a description of your typical day and your responsibilities)?
- How does your work make the world a better place?
- What are the educational and skill requirements for people in your position? For others in the company and the industry?
- What are some of the skills you apply on the job on an everyday basis, including math, science, writing, communications?
- How much do you work alone, and how much do you work as part of a team?

Remember that you will probably have only a few minutes to chat with each student who comes by. Be prepared to give an elevator speech about your company and job that lends itself to follow-up questions from the student.

For additional tips on how to speak to a young audience about STEM careers, see “How Do You Connect With Young People,” page 8.

Make an impression. Leave students with an exciting picture of what it is like to work at your company, and make sure they understand what skills/degrees/certifications they need to enter a career in your industry.

Following Up

Reach out and say thanks. Follow up with the school after the career fair to express your thanks and to offer additional support and resources for students, as appropriate.

Think about what’s next. Consider offering follow-up activities to give students an even closer look at your company and jobs in your industry, such as job shadowing, company tours, and other activities explored elsewhere in this guidebook.

Telling the Story

Internally

Write it up. Consider writing up an account of the career fair for your company’s intranet or newsletter. Get quotes from the teacher or students. Emphasize the value of speaking with and inspiring young people in STEM careers.

Acknowledge your colleagues. Send a thank you note to your colleagues who participated with you. Copy your Human Resources office.

Externally

Send a press release. Determine, with your company’s communications department and the school’s, whether it makes sense to send a press release or coordinate with media outlets about the event.

Share on social media. Send the school a tweet, Facebook post, or Instagram photo from your personal or company account thanking them for including you. Coordinate with your communications department to strike the most appropriate tone for these communications.

Resources

1. Career Fair Materials Checklist

This checklist should help you determine if you are bringing everything you need to a Career Fair so you can leave a good and lasting impression.

- ✓ Banners/signage for your company's booth
- ✓ Brochures and other handouts about the company
- ✓ Short video presentation about the company and its employees
- ✓ "Freebie" giveaways for students—pens, notepads, stickers, etc.
- ✓ Sign-in sheet
- ✓ Business cards
- ✓ Drinking water
- ✓ Adequate seating
- ✓ Power cables/laptops/video screens/other technology (as needed)