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News briefs from around the globe
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Indonesia volcano erupts 3 miles away blast still audible, muddy rain falls on villages [Podcast]
Car drives into harbor 3 dead after driver misses turn, falls into Rhode Island shipyard [Podcast]

How to make the best out of the Career Fair Issue

Many employers use career fairs—both on and off campus—to promote their opportunities and to pre-screen applicants.

Career fairs come in all shapes and sizes, from small community-sponsored events to giant regional career expositions held at major convention centers.

Most career fairs consist of booths and/or tables manned by recruiters and other representatives from each organization.

For on-campus events, some employers also send alumni representatives. Large corporations and some government agencies have staff who work the career fair “circuit” nationwide.

An employer's display area is also subject to wide variance. It could be a simple table with a stack of brochures and business cards and a lone representative or an elaborate multimedia extravaganza with interactive displays, videos, posters and a team of recruiters.

Fashions and Accessories

Generally, the appropriate attire for career fair attendees is more relaxed than what you’d wear to an actual job interview. In most cases, “business casual” is the norm. If you’re unsure of the dress code (particularly for off-campus events), it would be wise to err on the overdressed side—you’ll make a better impression if you appear professional.

Think of it as a dress rehearsal for your real interview! Remember to bring copies of your resume (or resumes, if you have several versions tailored to different career choices), a few pens and pencils (have backups—they have a way of disappearing), a folder or portfolio and some sort of note-taking device (paper or electronic pad). Keep track of the questions asked and answers received by your fellow career fair attendees. You might pick up some valuable information, in addition to witnessing some real-life career search “dos and don’ts.” In order to maximize your career fair experience, you must be an active participant and not just a browser. If all you do is stroll around, take company literature and load up on the ubiquitous freebies, you really haven’t accomplished anything worthwhile (unless you’re a collector of key chains, mousepads and pocket flashlights). It is essential to chat with the company representatives and ask meaningful questions.

Here’s a great bit of career fair advice from Stanford University’s Career Fair guide: “Create a one-minute ‘commercial’ as a way to sell yourself to an employer. This is a good way to make the transition into ‘self-marketing mode’ without the formality and possible intimidation of a one-on-one job interview. It’s an opportunity that’s too valuable to miss.

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Stop, Look and Listen

Keep your eyes and ears open—there’s nothing wrong with subtly eavesdropping on the questions asked and answers received by your fellow career fair attendees. If you’re listening attentively, you might pick up some valuable information, in addition to witnessing some real-life career search “dos and don’ts.” In order to maximize your career fair experience, you must be an active participant and not just a browser. If all you do is stroll around, take company literature and load up on the ubiquitous freebies, you really haven’t accomplished anything worthwhile (unless you’re a collector of key chains, mousepads and pocket flashlights). It is essential to chat with the company representatives and ask meaningful questions.

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Food with Tom!

Do you like eating food? How about free food at nice restaurants? Ever want to tell the world exactly what you think of said food? The Tech will be beginning a new column to chronicle the foodie experiences of new writers every other week...The Catch: They’ll be going head-to-head with Tom Mannion who will be reviewing the same restaurant. If you have ever thought you were more of a gourmand than our resident master chef, now’s your chance to prove it! Email us for a spot on the list at tech@caltech.edu
The main thing that determines how your interview goes is your aptitude. The only way the interviewers can determine how fit you are for the job is through self-presentation, and this is where dressing comes into play.

The hands-down best outfit for guys is a standard suit with a white shirt. Here, check your socks, polish your shoes, make sure your shirt is ironed, clean your nails, wash you face, brush your hair, etc. In short, look neat.

Girls, you have more options. First, you need to choose between pants and a skirt. Next, you have more color and fit options, and then you have accessories. No matter what you decide on, again, look neat.

One important note on suits: make sure you know how to wear one! Practice walking, sitting, gesturing in it. Girls, check how your skirt behaves when you sit down and don't wear shoes you can't walk in.

Guys, please, learn how to tie a tie! Your mom or girlfriend may not always be there to do the job. Once you've figured out the dress code, pick out an appropriate outfit that is neutral and well-toned. No stripper heels or douchey sunglasses.

What you wear may not determine the final decision, but it will certainly have an impact. Make sure that what you wear is in good condition and groom yourself thoroughly. Figure out what the atmosphere is and dress conservatively while making your personality come out through subtle details. Now go out there and be confident!
CNA is a not-for-profit organization that conducts objective, empirical research and analysis to help decision makers develop sound policies, make better-informed decisions, and manage programs more effectively.

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We look for people with the training and ability to reason soundly and to apply scientific techniques imaginatively—people who can see beyond surface details to the core of a problem and devise logical, practical solutions.

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All applicants are subject to a security investigation and must meet eligibility requirements for access to classified information. CNA is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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**University On-Campus Recruiting**

**Fall Career Fair: Brown Gym**
Tuesday October 16, 2012

**Interviews: Career Development Center**
October 17, 2012

**Research Staff Recruiter:**
Dr. Brad Ng, VP & Director, Institute Public Research

Dr. Kristen Beverly, Managing Director, Institute Public Research
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Choosing between competing job offers

CHRIS ENNSTRON
Freelance Writer

The first question many of your friends will ask when you receive a job offer is “What does it pay?”

For many college graduates this consideration is near the top of the list, which is not surprising. Most students have invested thousands of dollars in their education, often racking up high student loan balances. Most graduates are looking forward to paying off that debt. Also, the value of a salary is easy to understand, the more zeros after the first digit, the better.

In order to evaluate a salary offer you need to know what the average pay scale is for your degree and industry. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is a good source of salary information for entry-level college graduates. Their annual Salary Survey should be available in your campus career center. Make sure you factor cost-of-living differences when considering salary offers. For example, you may need an offer of $76,000 in San Francisco to equal an offer of $40,000 in Huntsville, Ala.

Bonuses and commissions are considered part of your salary, so take them into consideration when evaluating an offer. It’s also important to have a good understanding of an employer’s policies concerning raising. Be sure to weigh all job offers on salary alone. Students tend to overemphasize salary when considering job offers. Money is important, but it’s more important that you like your job.

Who’s the Boss?

Who you work for can have a much bearing on your overall job satisfaction as how much you earn and what you do. First, analyze how stable the potential employer is. If the company is for-profit, what were its earnings last year? What are its projections for growth? If the job is with a government agency or a nonprofit, what type of funding does it have? How long has the employer been around? You could receive the best job offer in the world, but if the job is cut in six months, it won’t do you much good.

Corporate Culture

There are three aspects to a work environment: 1) the physical workspace, 2) the “corporate culture” of the employer, and 3) fellow co-workers. Don’t underestimate the importance of a good workspace. If you are a private person, you probably will not be able to do your best work in a cluster of cubicles. If you are an extrovert, you won’t be happy shut in an office for hours on end.

Corporate culture comprises the attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values of an organization. What’s the hierarchy of the organization? Is there a dress code? Is overtime expected? Do they value creativity or is it more important that you follow protocol? Whenever possible, you should talk to current or previous employees to get a sense of the corporate culture. You may also be able to get a sense of the environment during the interview or by meeting your potential boss and co-workers during the interview process. Ask yourself if the corporate culture is compatible with your own attitudes, beliefs and values.

Your boss and fellow co-workers make up the last part of the work environment. Hopefully, you will like the people you work with, but you must, at least, be able to work well with them professionally. You may not be able to get a good sense of your potential co-workers or boss during the interview process. But if you do develop strong feelings one way or the other, be sure to take them into consideration when making your final decision.

Like What You Do

Recent college graduates are seldom able to land their dream jobs right out of school, but it’s still important that you at least like what you do. Before accepting a job offer, make sure you have a very good sense of what your day-to-day duties will be.

What are your responsibilities? Will you be primarily working in teams or alone? Will your job tasks be repetitive or varied? Will your work be challenging? What level of stress can you expect with the position?

Location, Location, Location

Climate, proximity to friends and family and local population (i.e., urban vs. rural) should all be evaluated against your desires and preferences. If you are considering a job far away from your current address, will the employer pay for part or all of your moving expenses? Even if you are looking at a local job, location can be important—especially as it relates to travel time.

A long commute will cost you time, money and probably more than a little frustration. Make sure the tradeoff is worth it.

Time is on Your Side

It’s acceptable to request two or three days to consider a job offer. And depending on the employer and the position, even a week of consideration time can be acceptable. If you’ve already received another offer or expect to hear back from another employer soon, make sure you have time to consider both offers. But don’t ask for too much time to consider. Like all of us, employers don’t like uncertainty. Make sure you give them an answer one way or another as soon as you can.

It’s Your Call

Once you make a decision, act quickly. If you are accepting a position, notify the hiring manager by phone followed by a confirmation letter or an email. Keep the letter short and state the agreed upon salary and the start date.

Remember that a job offer is a two way street. It’s not just what you get, but what you give. Be sure to thank the employer for their time and interest. It always pays to be polite in your correspondence. You never know where your career path will take you and it might just take you back to an employer you initially rejected.
Rules to make the most out of networking

THOMAS J. DENHAM
Partner at Careers in Transition LLC.

Many people use the classified ads as their sole job search technique. Unfortunately, statistics show that only 10% to 20% of jobs are ever published—which means that 80% to 90% of jobs remain hidden in the job market.

For this reason, networking remains the number one job search strategy.

Networking Defined

A network is an interconnected group of supporters who serve as resources for your job search and ultimately for your career.

Some great network contacts might include people you meet at business and social meetings who provide you with career information and advice.

Students often hesitate to network because they feel awkward asking for help, but it should be an integral part of any job search.

Though you might feel nervous when approaching a potential contact, networking is a skill that develops with practice, so don’t give up. Most people love to talk about themselves and their jobs and are willing to give realistic— and free—advice.

Eight Keys to Networking

1. Be Prepared First, define what information you need and what you are trying to accomplish by networking.

2. Be Targeted Identify your network. For some, “I don’t have a network. I don’t know anyone,” may be your first reaction. You can start by listing everyone you know who are potential prospects: family members, friends, faculty, neighbors, classmates, alumni, bosses, co-workers and community associates. Attend meetings of organizations in your field of interest and get involved. You never know where you are going to meet someone who could lead you to your next job.

3. Be Professional Ask your networking prospects for advice—not for a job. Your networking meetings should be a source of career information, advice and contacts. Start off the encounter with a firm handshake, eye contact and a warm smile. Focus on asking for one thing at a time. Your contacts expect you to represent yourself with your best foot forward.

4. Be Patient Heena Noorani, research analyst with New York-based Thomson Financial, recommends avoiding the feeling of discouragement if networking does not provide immediate results or instant answers. She advises, “Be prepared for a slow down after you get started. Stay politely persistent with your leads and build momentum. Networking is like gardening. You do not plant the seed, then quickly harvest. Networking requires cultivation that takes time and effort for the process to pay off.”

5. Be Focused on Quality—Not Quantity In a large group setting, circulate and meet people, but don’t try to talk to everyone. It’s better to have a few meaningful conversations than 50 hasty introductions. Don’t cling to people you already know; you’re unlikely to build new contacts that way. If you are at a reception, be sure to wear a nametag and collect or exchange business cards so you can later contact the people you meet.

6. Be Referral-Centered The person you are networking with may not have a job opening, but he or she may know someone who is hiring. The key is to exchange information and then expand your network by obtaining additional referrals each time you meet someone new. Be sure to mention the person who referred you.

7. Be Proactive Stay organized and track your networking meetings. Keep a list of your contacts and update it frequently with the names of any leads given to you. Send a thank-you note or email if appropriate. Ask if you can follow-up the conversation with a phone call, or even better, with a more in-depth meeting in the near future.

8. Be Dedicated to Networking Most importantly, networking should be ongoing. You will want to stay in touch with contacts over the long haul—not just when you need something. Make networking part of your long-term career plan.

Questions to ask during a networking meeting

• What do you like most (least) about your work?
• Can you describe a typical workday or week?
• What type of education and experience do you need to remain successful in this field?
• What are the future career opportunities in this field?
• Why do people enter/leave this field or company?
• Which companies have the best track record for promoting minorities?
• What advice would you give to someone trying to break into this field?
• With whom would you recommend I speak? When I call, may I use your name?

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For the most part, modesty is an admirable trait. But it's of little use during a job interview. The purpose of an interview is to find the best candidate for a particular job. Employers want to know about the knowledge, skills, attributes, and experience that distinguish you from other job candidates, and they won't know what makes you special unless you tell them. However, most employers won't go out of their way to hire someone who comes across as cocky or arrogant. So how do you balance the two? How do you put your best foot forward without seeming conceited and egotistical?

Choose What to Talk About

Start with the job posting and make a list of all the preferences and requirements. Try to match them with your own knowledge, skills, and experience. Make sure that you have examples ready for as many of the preferences listed as possible. If leadership experience is preferred, scrutinize your past for examples of it. If the job requires knowledge or skills that they have not been listed specifically in the job posting, find out all you can about the company and the job you are interviewing for. If you have certain experience or knowledge that you think would make you do the job better, don’t hesitate to talk about it. The employer is looking for the best candidate for the job. Looking beyond the job posting could help separate you from other applicants.

It's not easy to do, but you may have to leave out some of your most impressive skills and achievements. Talking about skills, accomplishments, or experience with no relevance to the job does not help the interviewer identify you as a strong job candidate, and could easily be interpreted as bragging.

Many recent college graduates make the mistake of limiting their discussion to their college coursework, or jobs they had that are directly related to the one they are interviewing for. Students should be willing to talk about any type of knowledge or skills that they have acquired that are relevant to the job they are interviewing for,” says Micael Kemp, Director of Career Services at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Volunteer experience, leadership positions in a sorority or a fraternity, extracurricular activities, and even work experience at retail or fast-food jobs can be sources of information. “Many students underplay work experience gained at places like grocery stores or fast-food restaurants,” she continues. “But employers deeply appreciate people who have gotten their hands dirty and aren’t afraid to work hard.”

Story Time

Reading off a list of knowledge, experience, and accomplishments is a mistake for any boring interview. Your job during the interview is to keep the interviewer interested in what you are saying. Many career advisors suggest that job candidates prepare a reservoir of stories that they can pull from during the interview. People are naturally drawn to stories. It’s why we read novels and why we watch movies. Also, stories allow job candidates to show interviewers their skills and knowledge instead of just telling them. “Interviewers need to see the word that you have a particular skill or attribute. They need specific examples, and stories are a good way of providing that,” says Cynthia Redwine, former Director of the Engineering Career Resource Center at the University of Michigan, College of Engineering.

Stories have the added benefit of being easy to remember. Employers want to hire people as you, as you use a particular story to demonstrate your qualifications during the interview—and for the interview who must access during the interview—and for the interview. Students should be willing to talk about any type of knowledge or skills that they have acquired that are relevant to the job they are interviewing for,” says Micael Kemp, Director of Career Services at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

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Final Advice

Take time to prepare for the interview. Never walk into an interview with the intention of “winging it” no matter how qualified you think you are for the position. If you are having trouble coming up with stories or examples for the interview, make sure you talk to friends, family members, coworkers, professors, and career advisors.

Students sometimes make the mistake of telling employers about job-related knowledge or experience that they don’t have. While candor is an admirable trait, such frankness is out of place in a job interview. Employers don’t want to know why you can’t do the job, but why you can do it. Employers want to hire people who are excited and proud of the work that they have done. “You have a responsibility during the interview—not to brag, but to give the employer the best picture of what you can do of the job they hire you,” says Kemp. “It’s your responsibility to make sure they see the best picture of you or not ask them questions.”

Facebook at the Fall Career Fair

Learn how we ship code daily to over 955 million people around the world.

Brown Gym
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Taking a Casual Approach

“Office casual” is becoming the accepted mode of dress at more and more companies. The rules, however, for casual attire are subject to tremendous company-to-company variance. At some, “casual day” is a Friday-only observance, where the dress code is slightly relaxed—a sports coat and slacks for men and slacks and a sweater for women. At others, especially entrepreneurial computer companies, it’s shorts and sandals every day.

The safest fashion rule for new employees to follow is dress about the same as your most conservatively attired co-worker. As a new hire, don’t try to “push the boundaries” of casual attire.

Fashion Arrexts: 1) Never wear denim jeans or shorts unless the vast majority of others do; 2) Don’t dress too provocatively—you’re at work, not at a dance club; 3) “Casual” doesn’t mean “sloppy”—your clothes should always be free of stains or holes; 4) Workout wear belongs at the gym.

Play It Safe: 1) Chinos or corduroy slacks are usually a safe bet for both sexes; 2) As for formal business attire, buy the best that your budget will allow; 3) If you will be seeing clients, dress appropriately for their workplace, not yours; 4) Go to the mall—most department and specialty stores have sections devoted to this style of office attire.

A Few Words About Career Fair Etiquette
1. Don’t interrupt the employer reps or your fellow job-seekers. If someone else is monopolizing the employer’s time, try to make eye contact with the rep to let him or her know that you’re interested in speaking. They may be doing a favor by giving the recruiter an out. If all else fails, move to the next exhibit and plan to come back later.
2. If you have a real interest in an employer, find out the procedures required to secure an interview. At some career fairs, initial screening interviews may be done on the spot. Other times, the career fair is used to pre-screen applicants for interviews to be conducted later (either on campus or at the employer’s site).
3. Sincerity always wins. Don’t lay it on too thick, but don’t be too blasé either. Virtually all employers are looking for candidates with good communication skills.
4. Don’t just drop your resume on employers’ display tables. Try to get it into a person’s hands and at least say a few words. If the scene is too busy and you can’t get a word in edgewise, jot a note on your resume to the effect of, “You were so busy that we didn’t get a chance to meet. I’m very interested in talking to you.” Look around the display for the recruiter’s business card (or at the very least, write down his or her name and get some literature with the company’s address) and send a follow-up note and another copy of your resume.
5. If you know ahead of time that one of your “dream companies” is a career fair participant, do some prior research (at minimum, visit their website and, if available, view their company DVD). A little advance preparation goes a long way and can make you stand out among the masses of other attendees.

Palyon Medical Corporation is one of the most recent additions to the area’s biomedical sector. Based in Santa Clarita, Palyon designs, develops and distributes medical devices and equipment for the treatment of chronic pain, spasticity and other neurological diseases. The company has developed an innovative implantable drug delivery system which delivers targeted doses of medication directly to the spinal area.

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Email williamn@alumni.caltech.edu for more information.