THE ULTIMATE CAREER FAIR PLANNING GUIDE
FOR EMPLOYERS

B BRAINSTORM
STRATEGY GROUP INC.

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SIMPLE STEPS TO MAXIMIZE YOUR ROI

Career fairs can be a highly effective part of campus recruiting and brand building. But when you add all the time and costs, they require a significant investment.

Follow these steps to maximize your career fair ROI and attract the right candidates.

ABOUT BRAINSTORM

Brainstorm Strategy Group accelerates the ability of employers to attract, engage, and recruit students and graduates through training, consulting, and research. Visit brainstorm.ca or consider registering for the Campus Recruiting Forum in Canada (CampusRecruiting. ca) or the U.S. (CampusRecruitingForum.com).

PLANNING AHEAD

1 SET YOUR GOALS

What's the #1 reason you are participating in career fairs?
Is it to create awareness of opportunities? Change current perceptions of what you do? Collect resumes? Convey culture? Build your brand?

Our #1 goal is: _____

_____

Who are your target students?
What attributes are you seeking? What majors are you focused on? What job types (internships, grads, co-op, part-time, etc.) are you seeking? What specific roles are you seeking to fill?

Our target students are: _____

_____

Make sure everyone involved knows your goals – both those on your team and your supporters on campus.
Plan your interactions at the career fair around these goals and targets. Consider what information you need to collect, how you want to categorize your potential candidates, and what your follow-up process after the fair should look like to support these goals and plan accordingly.

2 RESERVE YOUR SPOT

Select your target schools, research the dates, and populate your calendar.
Selecting target schools is a big topic for another time; ultimately it should be based on past successes or new initiatives/markets you are testing.

Make your bookings and follow all the instructions carefully—each campus works a little differently.
Be sure to provide each school with all of the required details and don't miss the chance to supply your logo or anything else that will help you stand out.

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Take the time to call your contacts at each campus and ask for suggestions, tips, and ideas that may not be published.
Sometimes there are "informal" things that are very good to know—better booth locations, signage details, and so on.

3 ORGANIZE YOUR STUFF

Make sure your booth is clear and impactful; keep key messages to a bare minimum (one or two is ideal).

Order your printed materials.
A simple hand-out with details that may not be on your website can make their visit with you feel more valuable (e.g. precise steps, timelines, and hiring activities on that campus).

Keep materials minimal, students don't like waste.

Make sure that your website, social channel details, and any means to connect with you are included.

Consider having signage that tells who you're looking for (majors, job titles, job types) to ensure you spend your time with the right students.

Select and order giveaways.
Most employers will have them; there's no "right" item, but it should be something useful so your branding is around for a while.

Make sure that all your reps have large quantities of business cards and get nametags made if they don't already have them.

4 REVIEW THE LOGISTICS

Check and check again that you know how to find the location (campuses can be insanely complex and often have similarly named places).
If you're in town ahead of time, go check out the location.

Double-check all the times, etc. and remember any pointers your campus contacts provided.

Make sure that all materials are coming with you or are delivered in advance (but not before the allowable date or they may go missing).

Bring a portable dolly; sometimes distances from drop-off locations are far.

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BEFORE YOU GO

5 PICK THE RIGHT REPS

It's a best practice to be in a position to pick-and-choose your campus representatives. Ideally it should be in the direct interest of your reps to attract strong candidates. Some employers make participation on campus part of employees' personal objectives and/or recognition.

They should be knowledgeable about your organization as well as the school and programs of the campus you are visiting; ideally some are alumni of the campus.

They should be knowledgeable about the specific areas you hire for and ideally work in that area themselves (don't rely 100% on HR reps!).

Reps should be outgoing people that bring lots of energy to your booth and their interactions with students.

The composition of your team should reflect the people you are hiring in terms of gender, education, diversity, age, etc.

Have enough people to provide relief—fairs are exhausting; you need breaks, so make a schedule that ensures your booth is never too empty nor too crowded.

This is the most important section on this checklist—are you bringing your best?

6 TELL THEM YOU ARE COMING

Maximize your time on campus by spreading the word that you'll be there.
Use your social channels; website; past interns and student ambassadors; alumni; and, reach out to any campus clubs, associations and other groups you partner with on campus.

Take advantage of any promotions the fair hosts offer and be sure to provide them with all the requested details, logos, etc.
Consider providing something more than cookie-cutter text, make it meaningful.

Book time to meet with any of your partners on campus while you're there.

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7 MAKE SURE YOUR JOBS ARE POSTED

Post them both on your site (unless you don't want them so widely available) and on that of the school hosting the fair.

8 ADAPT TO EACH CAMPUS

Leverage your local reps and have them prepare a briefing summary for each campus so your team knows the local names, traditions, teams, programs, etc.

9 HAVE A PLAN FOR RESUMES

Decide if you are going to accept paper resumes at the fair and how you'll manage them.

If you are not going to accept resumes at the fair, be ready to explain the appropriate application procedure AND be sure students don't feel brushed away.
Students hear "just go to our website" a lot which isn't helpful in building relationships. You need to ensure they understand the value of having met you in person.

Consider accepting online applications at your booth—there's an app for that (actually there are a few).

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DURING THE FAIR

10 AT THE BOOTH

Don't eat at your booth—take breaks for that.
But be sure to drink plenty of water though, you'll get dried out quickly.

Try to stay off your technology and focus on engaging with students.

Don't send them to the website too soon or rely too much on printed materials. Let them know why your conversation was a valuable addition instead of just going to the website).

Go for walks to stay energized and rest your legs/feet/back...
Take the opportunity to meet some other employers (campus recruiters love to share).

Keep any presentation (live or on screen) as brief and compelling as possible—no more than a few minutes.
Note: if you are relying on the venue's WiFi, have a backup plan if it fails or is too slow.

11 HAVE A PLAN FOR HIGH POTENTIAL CANDIDATES

Introduce them to a senior colleague at the booth to give them a sense of progression and promotion.

If possible, schedule an interview with them on the spot.

You might not be able to remember everyone you meet, but have a means to ensure you don't let high potentials get away or be forgotten.
Some recruiters have one pocket (or pile) for high potentials and another for the rest.

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12 TALKING TO STUDENTS

Make sure all your reps understand your goals, target students, hiring processes, the positions you are hiring for, and have reviewed the campus brief you prepared.

Be ready for questions about other positions in your organization and know where to refer students.

Focus on the WIIFM—"what's in it for me"—factor.
When talking to students, culture and values are important, but everyone needs to know what's in it for them first.

Be ready to respond to concrete WIIFM questions: salary, benefits, learning and development, vacations, flex time, work-life balance, etc.

Remember how little you knew at their age.
Don't assume they know a lot about you—many companies have similar sounding names and lots of divisions that do different things; yours may not be one of the companies they researched in advance, but they may still be a good fit.

Ask relevant specific questions ("Are you studying supply chain management?") instead of questions that may make them uncomfortable ("What do you want to do when you graduate?").

Be clear about what you are looking for so they can self-select in or out of the process—it saves both of you time.

Stay open-minded; remember that many roles you hire for don't have "performing well at career fairs" as a requirement.

If you can, give them tips for getting hired with your company.
This makes the whole event and investment of their time feel more worthwhile.

Try to differentiate your company culture.
Use specific examples and stories of actual employees' experiences.

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AFTER THE FAIR

13 DON'T LEAVE YET!

Although things may slow down near the end, don't leave early. That makes everyone look bad.

If you're shipping materials from the fair, be organized with everything you need—packaging, your courier contact details and account number, waybills, etc.
Be prepared to wait for the courier to pick up.

14 FOLLOW UP WITH EACH NEW CONTACT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Meet with your team to consolidate your lists of new candidates and categorize them for following up. Create an action plan.

Call or email each of the contacts you've made as soon as possible.
Some may already have interviews booked with other companies—or even job offers.

15 FOLLOW UP WITH CAMPUS CONTACTS

Complete any evaluation forms or surveys to help improve the fair in future years.
It'll only take a few minutes and may pay dividends in the future.

Say thanks.
Your partners running the fair may be burned out from all the hard work. What better time to send a message thanking them and acknowledging the efforts they made?

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