

Tips for Inviting Employers to Participate

If employers will be one of the target audiences for your college and career event, you will likely need to do some outreach to get them to attend. It's also a good idea to think through their participation in order to design an event that will be valuable to employers and make them want to participate in similar events in the future.

Event Planning

Employers need to feel that their decision to participate in a college and career event is a good use of their time. You can help with this by:

- ▶ Making sure your event has a clearly articulated purpose, and defined audiences
- ▶ Planning and publicizing your event with enough lead time so that you have a good turnout
- ▶ Producing an event that is well-organized, with details on participation clearly communicated
- ▶ Ensuring that attendees (i.e. students, adult learners, job seekers) are informed as to who the employers will be at the event and what they are seeking to get out of it (i.e. recruit employees for current openings, meet internship prospects, develop relationships with educational institutions and training programs etc.)
- ▶ Encouraging networking during and after the event through structured activities and/or introductions day of
- ▶ Providing attendees with a list of the employers at the event and include who they're seeking to connect with, and links to their websites and/or primary contact person so attendees can follow up after the event.
- ▶ Warmly welcoming employers and designating staff/volunteers to check-in with them throughout the event
- ▶ Gathering feedback from employers through day-off feedback, surveys and follow-up conversations
- ▶ Anticipating employer needs (such as adequate space for tabling and/or smaller spaces for on-site interviews) and amenities (such as free coffee and lunch) that will make employers have a nice experience and help them meet their goals. Some employers may need access to wifi and/or electricity for their tables.

Outreach

Once you have an event planned with employers in mind, you will need to engage in outreach to get them to attend. Below are a few things to keep in mind:

- ▶ Select employers based on relevancy to your purpose and target audiences. If an employer only has one or two positions to fill, a one-time opportunity or is seeking specialized or hard-to-find skills, it likely won't be worth the time for them to attend the event. However, if an employer has several positions open, is seeking entry-level candidates, is hiring for a variety of skillsets, or recruits candidates on an ongoing basis, there's a greater chance they will meet their goals through your event.

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- ▶ Consider geography, sectors and size of company/organization:
 - Where are college or career events already taking place in your region? Where are the gaps? Employers who can't take advantage of an existing event may be more likely to travel distance to your event. Also consider how far an attendee might be willing to commute for school or a job.
 - If you'll be focusing on a certain industry or will have a few different employers from one industry, tell employers that you'll be targeting your outreach to students / job-seekers with interest in that industry. The greater the pool of interested/qualified candidates, the more likely they are to attend.
 - Large employers may be more likely to dedicate resources to a college and career event than a small business or nonprofit organization.
- ▶ Before you reach out to an employer, consider who will be sending the invitation. Is there someone within your organization who has existing relationships with employers? Is there an organization who has these relationships and would be willing to partner with you to do outreach? Will one person be the contact for all employers? Give thought as to who you will want to "own" the relationship before and after the event.

Invitation

After you've decided who will contact the employer, draft an invitation and/or talking points for your outreach:

- ▶ If you've never worked with a company before, describe the benefits of attending, what kind of audience you are targeting and how many attendees you expect.
- ▶ To the extent possible, address likely questions such as:
 - Has this event occurred before? If so, what was past attendance?
 - Which other employers participated?
 - What was the mix of attendees like?
- ▶ Include relevant statistics from past surveys (i.e. *80% of employers found last year's event to be helpful in meeting their recruitment goals*) and other data points that demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) for employer participation in the event.
- ▶ Link the event to existing efforts in your region and highlight your partnerships with regional, state and industry organizations on the event. Many employers are frequently contacted by educational institutions and other organizations who want to connect with them. It will be helpful for them to see your event as part of a continuum of solutions for their staffing needs and connected with existing efforts, not "another thing."
- ▶ Anticipate the problems employers may be trying to solve by participating in your event, and lead your invitation with these solutions. See sample text below for an example.
- ▶ Some employers may be happy to send staff to your event as a community service. Others may have a concrete business objective for your event. With this in mind, limit the community impact message in your invitation so it doesn't drown out the tangible ROI the employer may be looking for in order to say "yes."

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Example Invitation # 1: College Career Fair

Held in both the fall and spring semesters, the Engineering Job & Internship Fair is ideal for employers looking to fill internship, co-op, part-time and full-time opportunities in the field of Engineering.

Before the event begins, our College of Engineering & Applied Sciences (CEAS) pre-professional societies (i.e.SHPE, NSBE, SWE, etc.) host a networking mixer. The mixer provides employers with the opportunity to network with our exceptional student group leaders and their members in a smaller, more intimate environment before the fair begins at 12pm. You will also have the opportunity to connect with professors during our Faculty Networking Luncheon from 11am - 12pm.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are looking to hire software engineers, or for other information technology (IT)-related roles, the IT/Computer Science Job & Internship Fair is ideal for you - see date below. Those looking to hire engineers outside this area (i.e. civil engineering, mechanical engineering, etc.) should attend this event.

Example Invitation # 1: High School Career Fair

Dear Community Member,

On behalf of _____ High School staff and students, we would like to cordially invite you to participate in our _____ on _____ from _____ in _____.

Our High School strives to provide our students with meaningful experiences that will enhance their college and career readiness by providing them with the tools and pathways for their future. The College and Career Fair offers students an opportunity to learn more about higher education and careers they might be interested in.

As a professional, you can directly respond to student questions regarding the joys and challenges of your profession and offer them individual advice on required training and networking for their career choices.

We hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our young adults by participating in this years' event.

Please register by _____, by completing this registration form ([link](#)). Should you have any questions, please contact _____ at _____ or _____.

Thank you for your commitment to our students and community.