

Employers, who are recruiting on campus, frequently hold information sessions to provide additional information about the company and any current openings. These are also excellent opportunities to make a positive impression with the representatives. This tip sheet provides advice and points out resources for additional information.

WHY ATTEND AN INFORMATION SESSION?

Often the company representatives play an important role in the resume screening process and are looking to put a face to the names on applications. The sessions also provide you with an opportunity to ask representatives about the skills they are seeking and their hiring process. They are an excellent way to gather information about a company and to make contacts for the future. The information you gather about the company and their opportunities can help you decide if you wish to pursue employment with that organization.

If you are interested in the company, but not the positions they are currently advertising, consider attending the information session anyway. Recruiters appreciate meeting any students with an interest in their organization and may be able to tell you about openings in other areas of the company. Ask the recruiter about opportunities related to your career interests and find out how to apply.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

The information session will usually start with a presentation by the employer. The presentation typically includes an overview of the company and specific information about the positions advertised at the Career Centre. A question and answer period usually follows the presentation. Many companies will serve food and drink after the presentation and question period. At this point in the session, students have a chance to speak with company recruiters individually or in small groups.

HOW DO I PREPARE?

To make a positive impression, do your homework!

- Read the job posting carefully, if there is one.
- Research the company and industry thoroughly. Go beyond the organization's website. For more tips check out the Company Research tipsheet as well as the Resources & Links within the Find Employment section of the Career Centre website http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/work_resources.html.
- Prepare thoughtful questions to ask in the group and with individual recruiters – having done your research beforehand will help.
- Prepare a 30-second business introduction outlining your skills and practice with a friend or family member. Try not to sound too rehearsed – just remember the key points.

WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

During the question and answer period, ask things that are relevant to everyone. For example, you might ask about the future direction of the company or the typical career path for entry-level candidates. Make sure that you don't ask for information that you could get by doing some basic research.

During the mingling part of the session, you have the opportunity to speak one-on-one with a recruiter. Now is the time to ask questions that show you have researched the company thoroughly and are aware of industry trends. You should also be ready to talk about why you are interested in the company and the position. When you end your conversation with a recruiter, thank them for their time and ask them for a business card. If you have one of your own, offer it to the recruiter (see the networking business card section of this tip sheet for more information). Try to speak to several recruiters, as they can offer different perspectives and may discuss their impressions of students afterwards.

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE

Making a good impression also includes following the rules of business etiquette. For more information, Quintessential Careers has a collection of quizzes and articles on etiquette at http://www.quintcareers.com/job-hunting_etiquette.html. The most important things to remember are the following:

- Be punctual; arriving late will disrupt the session.
- Dress in business attire, unless the employer specifies casual dress.
- Do not monopolize a recruiter's time.
- When you end a conversation, be sure to thank the recruiter and ask for a business card.
- Don't ask basic questions about how to apply; you should already know this from the job posting.
- When you ask a question, listen carefully to the response.
- Speak about how your skills fit with the company, not just about yourself in general.
- Always approach a recruiter on your own, and not with a group of friends.

WHEN FOOD AND DRINK IS SERVED

- Do not take any food until invited to do so.
- While the employer is presenting, try to remain in your seat.
- Take smaller portions, rather than loading up your plate.
- Skip the alcoholic beverages.
- Never take the food and then leave the information session.

NETWORKING BUSINESS CARDS

When attending networking events, it is not always feasible to pass out a handful of resumes. The company will probably be receiving your resume through the regular application process already. So what do you do? You can use networking business cards, which have the look and feel of a traditional business card, and give you the opportunity to provide critical career and contact information with people who you meet in social and professional situations. You can find out more information about networking business cards at http://www.erin.utoronto.ca/careers/pdf/Networking_Business_Cards.pdf

HOW TO FOLLOW UP

Generally, companies hold information sessions a few days before applications are due. In this case, you will not have time to send a thank-you letter to recruiters before you submit your application. Instead, you can mention in your cover letter that you attended the information session. Include the name of the recruiter you spoke with and comment on any relevant information you gathered. If you are in a position to write a follow-up letter, you can consult such books as *How to Say It in Your Job Search* available in the Career Resource Library for tips and key words to include.

FINDING OUT ABOUT EMPLOYER INFORMATION SESSIONS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Visit the *UTM Career Centre website* or sign up for our *Electronic Newsletter*: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/newsletter.html>
- If you are registered for the *Graduating Student Employment Service (GSES)* in your final year, some employer information sessions are noted on the GSES postings
- Review the *UTM Career Centre Effective Networking Tip Sheet*: http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/pdf/Eff_Networking_tipsheet.pdf.
- *Effective Networking Workshops* are held regularly at the UTM Career Centre. Check our calendar of events: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/calendar.html>
- Meet with an *Employment Advisors* or *Career Counsellors* to practice your 30-second introduction
- *The Art of Mingling* book, by Jeanne Martinet (2006)

This tip sheet is intended as a counselling document and the information is subject to change. (Updated June 2011)