How to Work a Networking Fair

What employers want:
- To market their agency/organization/practice area
- To check out the competition
- To check out the pool of available applicants in a “no risk” way

What attendees want:
- To find out information about a number of different potential employers in a short amount of time. Time/cost effective.
- Compare/contrast employers
- Make contacts/connections with potential employers

Preparing before the fair
- Pick out business casual attire to wear at the fair
- Know the details: which employers are attending; start time; location; parking, etc.
- Get your materials ready: even if not interviewing, bring copies of your resume in a nice folder to give to employers at Table Talk
- Research participating organizations that you are interested in

Table Talk
- Starts at 12:15pm and lasts until 1:15pm
- Room full of employers, you move around the room meeting the employers, talking about what they do, and getting to know them
- They might not have funding for summer positions or a formal clerk position, but this does not mean that they would not be interested in having a law student work for them over the summer as a volunteer, or who could get their own funding
- Bring copies of your resume, to give the representatives of groups you are interested in
- Employers may be busy, you may have to wait, or circle around and come back

What you do at the Table Talk
- Approach the tables confidently, make eye contact, shake hands, and introduce yourself with your name and class year
- Ask questions that exhibit your knowledge of the office
  “I was really interested to learn that your office represents teen parents. Can you tell me what that’s like?”
- Ask questions about the person’s role in the organization
  “How long have they been there, what they like about their work.”
- Be prepared to talk about yourself, why you’re interested in them and what you have to sell.
  “I’m very interested in juvenile work because I used to be a junior high school special education teacher. I’m looking forward to combining my knowledge of child development, my ability to communicate with that age group and my knowledge of the education system with my legal skills to help children who are in the juvenile justice system.”
Do not monopolize an employer - keep in mind that there are many students attending who want to speak to employers and many speakers that you want to speak to. If there are no job openings, ask to leave a copy of your resume. “I realize you’re not interviewing for jobs today but I’d be very interested if a position became available. May I leave you a copy of my resume?”

End strong – eye contact, firm handshake, “It’s been nice talking with you. Thank you for your time.”

Follow up

- If very interested in an employer, you can follow up with a thank you letter, even if you didn’t interview with them.
- “I enjoyed meeting you at Wednesday’s networking fair and learning more about the Juvenile Rights Project. The firm’s commitment to helping individual children as well as making system wide changes is certainly unique. As I mentioned, I would be very interested in being considered for a summer clerking position. Thank you again for your time.”

Sample Questions for Government/Public Service Networking Fair

1. Who are the agency’s clients?
2. What is a typical career path for someone coming in at my level?
3. How can I best utilize the degree/background I have?
4. What professional societies or associations should I join?
5. What are the various law and law-related positions in the organization?
6. What local community groups, government agencies, etc does the group work with?
7. What kind of training/internships/volunteer opportunities are available within the organization?
8. What is the atmosphere of the workplace (formal or casual)?
9. Ask why the person likes working for the organization. What kinds of cases or issues are you currently working on?
10. What are the most necessary skills for this field?
11. What do you consider to be the greatest drawback of your job?
12. What personal attributes are required in order to do this type of work well?
13. How is the hiring done? Through the grapevine? Through direct application?
14. What type of classes, degrees, experiences are helpful for entering this type of work?
15. What are your office’s funding sources? What are the office’s greatest challenges for the coming year?
TEN RULES FOR WORKING COCKTAIL PARTIES & RECEPTIONS

Rule #1: Introducing Yourself
Provide your name and a descriptor. View the descriptor as a 30-second commercial. Make sure it’s interesting to the person you’re about to meet. When in a business-social setting, especially when you’re meeting potential clients, introduce yourself in a way that will help you become memorable.

Rule #2: Introducing Others
Ask yourself, “Who is the most important person in this business context,” then present the less important person to the more important person. As an example in the law firm context, a senior partner is viewed as more important than a new associate. Therefore you would say, “Ms. Senior Partner, may I present New Associate.”

Rule #3: Arriving at the Event
Arrive on time — this is an extension of your work. If you’re arriving alone, thank the host or hostess, go to the bar, get a beverage, wrap the beverage in a napkin and carry that beverage in your left hand.

Rule #4: Use the Buddy System
Whenever possible, attend cocktail parties with another person. The two of you can “divide and conquer” — doubling the number of contacts you make in half the time. Prearrange a rescue signal.

Rule #5: Approachables
If you’re attending an event alone and you don’t immediately recognize any of the other guests as an acquaintance, introduce yourself to an ‘approachable.” These are the people who are more typically known as “wall flowers.” Never forget that these people can be important and valuable contacts.

Rule #6: Nametags
Wear your nametag on your right lapel.

Rule #7: Remembering Names
LISTENING is the real key to remembering names. During introductions, many of us make the critical error of thinking about what we’re going to say next rather than listening to what the other person is saying. Listen as the other person provides their name and descriptor. You will increase your chances of remembering that name if you begin to use it right away or associate it with another person you know well.

Rule #8: Breaking and Entering
Should you wish to enter into a conversation that is taking place among a group of people, approach the group, listen to what is being said, and make eye contact with other participants. After another member of the group asks a question, feel free to introduce yourself and ask a follow-up question.

Rule #9: Exiting a Conversation
When you’re ready to leave one conversation and move onto another, let the other participants know how pleased you were to have met them and then move on. This is the appropriate time to ask other participants if they would like to exchange business cards.

Rule #10: Send a Thank You Note
A key rainmaking skill is the art of becoming memorable. Because writing thank you notes has become a lost art, every time you send one, you enhance your chances of being remembered. An effective thank you note requires you to write three simple sentences:
1) Describe the event. Thank you for inviting me to the XXXI reception.
2) Describe something about the event that made it unique. I cannot begin to tell you how much I enjoyed the numerous conversations I had with colleagues regarding issues affecting the high tech industry.
3) State your next action step. I hope we can get together soon for lunch Ill call early next week.