

Hosting YOUR OWN VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

Consideration, planning, promotion and preparation ensure success. Below you will find key considerations and recommendations to help you envision your next virtual event.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TECHNOLOGY IN ORDER TO HOST A VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR?

First, you will need to select a virtual platform to use for your event and there are many different platforms currently offered. To determine which one fits your needs it is important to consider how user friendly the platform is. Some platforms will offer robust functionality but may be more difficult to navigate. Other platforms offer less options but easier navigation. Before making your final selection, you may want to consider requesting a demo or trial access to learn about its capabilities and mimic how your guests will navigate the system during the virtual career fair.

In addition, ensure that the virtual platform is supported by strong customer service and technical assistance so that you will be able to get help before, during and after the event. Whether or not the platform is accessible for job seekers with disabilities is another key consideration. For example, some platforms offer features like screen reader compatibility, speech to text, and sign language interpreters on standby during the event.

Provide all event participants (including recruiting employers/organizations and job seekers) with how-to tutorials or instructions in advance of the event. Tutorials may already be available through the virtual platform. If not, consider creating your own in order to provide the best possible outcome for everyone in attendance.

HOW DO I DETERMINE MY VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR BUDGET?

Effectively building and managing an event budget will play a key role in selecting the platform you will use to host your virtual career fair. You may want to consider a nominal fee for recruiting employers/organizations to help offset the cost. Understanding your break-even point based on each platform will help inform your decision-making. For example, some more robust virtual career fair platforms may require a larger investment. Platforms can range in cost from \$500 to \$50,000, depending on how robust the offering is.

Based on current industry trends and environment, this may mean charging more for each participating employer/organization and/or increasing the number of employers you invite. If this is not realistic, you may want to consider choosing a less expensive platform with less options. A number of platforms also offer varying levels of access and features based on your budget. It is best to have an open conversation with all potential software companies with realistic expectations in order to make the best decision for your needs.

HOW DO I DECIDE WHO TO INVITE TO MY VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR?

To determine your target audience, ensure you are clear about the purpose of your event and communicate this purpose to all stakeholders through your marketing materials. For example, will your event be a general career fair, an industry-specific recruitment event, or perhaps a networking focused event? Clear communication will aid recruiting employers/organizations and job seekers you invite in determining whether or not the event will meet their needs.

HOW DO I DECIDE WHO TO INVITE TO MY VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR? (CONTINUED)

Industry specific virtual career fairs tend to be more effective than general recruitment events that are open to all academic programs and industries. At a targeted event, job seekers are more likely to have the type of background the recruiting employer/organization is seeking. Job seekers tend to prefer more focused, industry specific events, as they are easier to navigate and allow them to make meaningful connections with target employers/organizations. Participating employers/organizations tend to also see higher application numbers and higher levels of engagement in their chat sessions at focused events.

HOW MANY COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD I INVITE TO PARTICIPATE IN MY VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR?

Regardless of the purpose of your event, it is recommended that you have a maximum of 50 participating employers/organizations. A greater number can overwhelm job seekers as they try to identify target employers/organizations and plan their time at the event. Limiting the number of participating employers/organizations will allow job seekers enough time to have meaningful conversations with those they are most interested in connecting with.

HOW CAN I EFFECTIVELY PROMOTE MY EVENT TO INCREASE ATTENDANCE?

Offer incentives for registering ahead of time to both employers/organizations (i.e. early bird rate discount) and job seekers (i.e. prize incentives for early registration and attendance). Build an effective communications plan that takes into account the lead-time necessary to reach both audiences.

PRO TIP: Typically, the earlier you can get employers/organizations to commit, the easier it will be to encourage students to attend by sharing how many employers are expected to attend and their company/organization names.

Your marketing and communications plan should include all of the different channels you regularly use to communicate to your audience(s), plus any additional opportunities specific to this particular event. For example, you may encourage registered employers/organizations to assist in marketing efforts through their own channels. It is helpful to create marketing assets for participating employers/organizations to ensure consistency of message and event branding. Consider creating a hashtag to share with all attendees and use it consistently across all communications to start conversations with employers/organizations and job seekers.

Create a communications calendar per audience including e-blasts and social media to map out frequency and topics of communication. Ensure you include a call to action in each communication, based on your desired outcome.

WHY SHOULD MY CAREER CENTRE HOST A CHAT ROOM OR SESSION AT MY VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR?

It is strongly recommended that your campus career centre to participate in your virtual career fair by hosting a chat room or session on the day of the event. This will enable your career centre to provide real time support, and answer student questions about the event, the employers/organizations participating, and job search strategies. A chat room or session will also provide your career centre with a great opportunity to share additional resources with job seekers.

HOW LONG SHOULD I SCHEDULE MY VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR FOR AND WHAT ASPECTS OF THE EVENT DO I NEED TO SCHEDULE?

Your virtual event requires a set date and time that attendees can input into their calendars. Virtual career fairs, like career fairs, can range from a couple of hours to a full day event. Considerations for determining an appropriate length for your event include how many employers /organization and job seekers you are expecting to attend and the format of the event. If you plan to offer scheduled employer/organization information sessions during the event, you will want to allow time for this. It may also be helpful to schedule the timing of chat sessions during the event.