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|| How to ace your participation in  
|| a virtual career fair

# How to ace your participation in a virtual career fair

According to Forbes<sup>1</sup> virtual events hosted in 2020 were valued at \$78 billion and this is set to grow – even if we reach a point of hosting hybrid events. A post-Covid event outlook report published by Bizzabo Blog<sup>2</sup> tells us that 93% of organizations plan to invest in virtual events. **Virtual events are here to stay, we need to be GREAT at planning, hosting, and maximizing our investment in them!**

Essentially, a virtual career fair makes use of a 3D online platform which allows employers and students to connect in a virtual setting. Most of the platforms used for a virtual career fair offer customizable features from bespoke exhibitor booths with downloadable content to stream-able videos and even live webcasts.

So, how should you prepare for a Virtual Career Fair and what should you do to get the most out of the live career fair days?

<sup>1</sup> Forbes, 15/12/2020, What virtual events might look like post-Covid, Shama Hyder.

<sup>2</sup> Bizzabo Blog, Post-Covid event outlook report



## Preparing for a virtual career fair

As with any career fair, a great deal of your success will depend on good preparation and effective marketing and communication prior to the event.

Below are some pointers on how you should prepare:

- ✔ **Customise your booth:** take care to ensure that your booth reflects your company's brand and identity. Use exciting, dynamic language (and please, no spelling or grammar mistakes!) that will appeal to your target audience and share content that creates an impact and showcases information that you think students will be looking for. Your booth should be easy to navigate and colourful. Make use of video clips that provide a virtual tour of your office or facilities and make use of "a day in the life of" snippets to give insight into what it might be like to work for your organisation. Once your booth has been set up, make sure you check it – or better still, ask your recent graduate hires to have a look at it and make improvement suggestions.
- ✔ **Set objectives:** be clear on what you hope to achieve by attending the virtual career fair, what type of candidates you are targeting and how you will measure your success after the event. For example, is your key objective to create awareness and build your brand, to build your pipeline or to gather quality applications for vacancies that you advertise via your profile?
- ✔ **Spread the word:** the number of students who attend the fair and/or visit your booth will be proportional to how well you communicate details about the fair and generate excitement and interest in the event. Use your social media handles to share information about your participation in the event, use email blasts if you have access to student email addresses and be sure to share information via your careers site. Ask recent graduate employees to help spread the word and, if you have strong influencers as part of your social media following, ask them to start up a conversation about the upcoming event.
- ✔ **Get the basics right:** you will be required to upload your company profile on the virtual career fair platform. Make sure that the tone and messaging of your company information are suitably customised for students. Provide contact details and ensure that you provide the relevant links to your company website and social media profiles. You will probably also want to provide links to your online application system so that students can apply directly to your vacancies. Make sure the links are easy to find and are working properly.



## What to do on the live career fair day/s

On the career fair day/s you will have the opportunity to interact, engage and communicate with students in real time. This may take place through a chat facility, or via video, depending on the platform you are using.

The following will help you to prepare for the live days:



### Attending your booth

Give careful thought to how many staff you will have attending your booth – and find out how many can be online at once (this may vary, depending on the platform you are using). Anticipate peak times (for example when the fair opens and over lunch time) and ensure that you have enough staff online at these times. It makes sense to have staff attend in shifts so that energy levels remain optimal!



### Prepare staff who attend your booth

Make sure that the staff attending your booth are well-prepared. Show them around the Virtual Career Fair before the live days, familiarise them with the software platform and what to expect. Do they need specific login details? Make sure they know how to use the chat tool and ensure they have the information they will need to answer questions students are likely to ask. You might want to provide some conversation “prompts” and talking points to help break the ice – for example, chat about what majors a student is covering, when they will be graduating or what attracted them to visit your booth.



### Host a live webcast

If you have access to appropriate webinar technology such as Zoom, Webex, Teams, BlueJeans or GoToWebinar, you will be able to host a live webcast or webinar during the career fair. This allows for live question and answer interactions or, you could use an interesting topic or influencer to attract students to a webinar hosted by your company. Find out if there is a webinar schedule and book a slot that does not overlap with key competitors.



### Clarify next steps

When you chat to students, make sure you are clear on what they should expect after the virtual career fair – when and how will you follow up with them? Follow through on any promises you make.



## After the event

As with any career fair, the key words are “Follow-up, Follow-Up and Follow-Up!” Ensure that you use the leads you have generated. Be quick, establish connections after the fair and stay ahead of the competition in doing so! Analyze your results and review whether you met your objectives. Find out from the team who attended your booth what they thought worked well and what did not work so well – and then use this information to prepare for the next virtual fair you attend.

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