How to Work a Networking Event

BE PREPARED
Conduct research about the organizations and industries before the event. Use trade journals, industry publications, business publications, and websites to gather information.

Four great websites for industry and company research are:

- http://careers.usc.edu
- http://www.hoovers.com
- http://www.vault.com (through connectSC)
- http://www.wetfeet.com

Make sure to bring business cards so that you can exchange contact information easily. If you do not wish to be contacted at work or are currently unemployed, print business cards with your personal contact information on them. Also, make sure to bring plenty of copies of your resume.

Prepare a 30 second commercial/statement about your professional background and describe why a potential hiring manager should hire you.

ATTIRE & ATTITUDE
Wear professional business attire. First impressions are important. Pay attention to your entire look: shoes, hair, tie, nails, nylons, and posture. Be sure to wear a great smile.

When meeting people, present yourself in a positive light. Conveying confidence and an enthusiastic attitude are critical. Be excited about the possibility of working at a particular company. Your attitude will influence the results of your job search.

DEVELOP PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS
Don't be shy! A networking event provides an outstanding opportunity for you to meet a number of interesting people and make valuable contacts at the same time. When meeting people, find out who they are and what is most important to them. The first step is to strategize. Which people at the event are you most interested in making contact with? You may start by identifying those in the room connected to departments of interest. Remember to smile and introduce yourself.

Networking begins with having a conversation. Use your knowledge of the industry or organization to initiate a dialogue. A networking contact could result in “inside information” about what is happening in your field of interest, or you may simply gain valuable advice about how to conduct a successful job search.
Remember, there are many people at the event and your time is limited. Make your conversations brief—about three minutes, so that you can have time to network with several new contacts. In that time you want to introduce yourself, express your interest in the organization and industry, and explain how your professional experience can help the organization. You may also want to ask one or two questions. Be sure to exchange contact information for further follow-up. Remember to network and exchange business cards with your fellow alumni as well. You may find that they also have valuable knowledge and additional contacts.

FOLLOW-UP
As soon as possible after leaving an event, jot down some notes about the conversations you had. If you collected business cards, write quick notes on the back of cards to remember the individual and remind yourself of when and where you met them for later follow-up. Create a database of your networking contacts.

Stay in contact with the people you meet. This way, they are more likely to think of you when they hear of a job opening. The week after the event, send a thank-you note to people you had a successful exchanges with. Ask new contacts if they have time for a formal informational interviews. Periodically send your new contact an e-mail or give them a call to keep your network active.