

Career Fair/Table Talk Tips

- 1. Prepare.** If you can find out in advance who is participating in an event, you can more easily seek out opportunities to chat with folks that you really want to talk to, and ask better informed questions. If you have the opportunity to sign up in advance for a slot to speak with a particular organization or employer, consider doing some research about the work that they do to better inform your questions.
- 2. Have goals for each networking event.** For example, going into the event, aim to have a brief conversation with at least five people, or follow up via email after the event with at least 1 person that you spoke with.
- 3. Work on your “elevator pitch.”** Your elevator pitch is a quick summary of what you do and where you see yourself heading. Have this ready in case you are asked about yourself.
- 4. Prioritize learning about the work attorneys do.** Conduct yourself professionally and don't be afraid to talk about yourself, but don't be preoccupied with making an impression.
- 5. Get comfortable with “banter.”** Take advantage of the transition time during networking events to banter with other people nearby. Bantering is a friendly, informal exchange and can be a great opportunity to build relationships. Avoid commenting on someone's appearance, but topics such as the weather, a book or program you watched, or something you are looking forward to, would be appropriate.
- 6. Ask open-ended questions whose answers you care about.** That's how you learn and how you come up with good follow-up questions. It also takes the focus away from any anxiety you might have about what to say. Examples of open-ended questions include, “What do you like about working on ___?” instead of “How do you like ___?” Create the opportunity for the other person to say something interesting.

7. **Focus.** Try to make the most of the time you have with the individuals with whom you are speaking . Keep in mind that you are the one with the primary burden to keep the conversation going and ask questions to gain the information you want. Listen to what they are saying. You should try to cover your prepared questions, but at the same time be ready to depart from them and follow worthwhile new topics which arise.

8. **Follow up.** Jot down the person's name and/or take the person's business card, make notes of what you talked about, and send a follow-up email promptly if you are interested in talking more.

Sample Questions You Might Ask at Career Fair/Table Talk Events

- What practice areas does your organization/agency have, or what issues does your organization/agency work on? What is your practice area?
- What does a _____ attorney do?
- What made you pick this practice? Did you know going into law school that this was what you wanted to do?
- What prompted you to go into public interest/public sector work?
- What do you like about being a _____ attorney? What do you find most challenging?
- Did you start this work right out of law school, or did you start out doing something else? (And if so, what? And how did you make the transition?)
- Tell me about your most interesting current or major cases / transactions. What projects are you working on right now?
- Who are your clients? How directly do you work with them?
- Has your practice/work changed a lot since you started doing it? In what way(s)? How do you think your organization/agency/practice will change in the next few years?
- Can you suggest things I can do during law school if I'm interested in this type of practice/work? (Classes I should take; other activities I should get involved with?)
- What did you do during law school and post-grad to develop and strengthen your commitment to working in public interest/ the public sector?
- What do you think are the most important qualities/skills for someone who wants to do this type of work?
- Is there a certain personality type that is a good fit for this work? Why is that?
- What kind of training did you receive as a lawyer that works in the _____ field when you first started?
- Is your work fairly steady, or does it have a lot of ups and downs?
- Do you work on a large number of small matters, or a smaller number of larger projects?
- Do you work a lot with others or on teams at your organization/in your department, or is your work more individual? Do you work mostly with other lawyers, or do you also collaborate with non-lawyers?
- Does your organization/agency have a summer internship program? Can you tell me a little more about the structure of the program?
- Would it be OK if I followed up with you sometime soon after this event?