

# **FACE TO FACE: MAKING THE MOST OF A TABLE-TALK PROGRAM**

## **BEFORE THE EVENT: PREPARE FOR SUCCESS**

**Who'll be there?** Find out what organizations will participate in the event.

- Where are their offices?
- What do they do?
- Whom do they hire?
  - Class year?
  - Individuals with particular backgrounds or qualifications?  
(it may still be a good idea to talk to them now for future reference, even if you don't fit their current hiring guidelines)

**Make a priority list.** Who do you want to meet with most? What are *your* criteria?

- Places with immediate openings you might fill?
- Places that do exactly the work that interests you?

**Research the organizations that interest you.**

- Look at any material the organization provided the organizers of the event.
- Check out their websites.

**Develop thoughtful questions.**

- What do you want to know, and what questions will reflect your interest as well as your advance preparation?
- Use the suggestions in CDO's Networking Made Easy handout to get started.
- Prioritize your questions.
  - If you can only ask a couple, what should they be?
  - If you end up with lots of time with the employer, what else can you ask?

**Prepare your introduction:**

"Hi, I'm Susie Student and I'm interested in an environmental law internship. I majored in ecology at Jackson College." "I'm Joe Student. I was excited to find out you were coming today, because I'm hoping to work in labor law and want to find out more about your agency."

**and a *short* summary of your background, accomplishments, and goals.**

**Get your 'marketing' materials ready.**

- Make sure your resume is up-to-date and sets you off to best advantage.
  - Career advisors are happy to help you with resumes and cover letters.
- Prepare a list of 2-4 references (work and/or school, not personal).
- Prepare a writing sample.
- If the organization indicated what materials they wanted from candidates (e.g. writing samples, reference lists), assemble them with your resume ahead of time.
- Take extras – better too many than too few!

## **AND AT THE EVENT: MAKE THE BEST IMPRESSION / LEARN THE MOST**

### **Dress for success.**

- Wear a business suit if possible. If not, dress as you would in an office. Even if you talk with a public interest attorney who is wearing jeans, *your* appearance should show the seriousness of your interest in the organization.

### **Greet the organizations' representatives warmly; introduce yourself.**

- Smile. Shake hands firmly (but don't break their fingers!)
- Your body language conveys a message as well as your words, and enthusiasm is an essential element of success in both informational and job interviews.
- Make eye contact with the person you are meeting.

### **Ask your questions.**

- Show sincere interest. One employer who has participated in job fairs told us that she can tell immediately who is truly interested in her program.
- Be flexible. You may only have a minute or two if there are a lot of people wanting to talk with the same employer, or you may have the attorney to yourself for quite a while. Either way, you want to convey your interest and enthusiasm and learn as much as you can.
- Be aware of what's going on around you. Are there other students waiting?
- Take your cue from the employer. Watch for non-verbal and verbal signals that you should wind up the conversation or that the attorney wants to hear or tell you more.

### **Ask for business cards.**

- Ask every attorney for his/her card before you leave the table. Ask how they prefer to be contacted and check that on the card. Make notes on the back of date, event, reminders of the conversation..
- Collect any brochures or informational materials.

### **Ask if the organization's representative is accepting resumes.**

- Don't just thrust your resume and other materials at the employer.

### **What if there are too many other students to give you time to talk to the employer?**

- Try to secure a business card.
- Tell the employer that you see she/he is quite busy and ask if you may call them at a future time. If there isn't even a chance to do that, email or call after the event and try to schedule a 15 minute appointment (see CDO's handout on informational interviews).

### **Have fun!**

- The art of being relaxed and enjoying interacting with attorneys, while making a positive impression on them can be learned through practice. This skill will be critical to your success as a lawyer in any field.