

# Virtual Conference Guide for Students

Tips for optimizing your participation in virtual conferences and events





## **Before the Event**

- **Confirm you are registered for the event.** Upon registering, save your confirmation email and follow any post-registration instructions.
- **Test event access.** Log in to the system prior to the first day of the conference. Keep your username/password on hand for the event.
- **Download the conference app.** This often has helpful information and features like the conference agenda, speaker bios, and contact information for fellow conference attendees.
- **Complete your participant profile.** Add your headshot, bio, resume, LinkedIn profile and other details.
- **Review the agenda.** Know which sessions and events you plan to attend. Add them to your calendar. Schedule breaks for yourself throughout the event for food, water, restroom, and stretching.
- **Check your technology.** Confirm your headphones, microphone, webcam, and laptop are in working order prior to the event. Shut down and restart your laptop a day or two before the event to allow time for system updates.
- **Make a game plan for the career fair/exhibit hall.** Review the list of companies and professional associations participating and rank them by priority. Know your “must sees” so you can optimize your time at the event. Use this opportunity to expand your knowledge and network! Consider engaging with companies and professional associations you might not be familiar with or have not previously met.
- **Research your target companies.** Know general background information and recent news about your top companies. Create a list of thoughtful questions to ask the booth representatives about the company’s culture, career opportunities, training and development, resources, etc.
- **Prepare your elevator pitch.** Who are you? What should fellow conference attendees know about you? Your elevator pitch may include your name, school, major, graduation year, internship experience, career interests, goals, and reason for participating in the event. Share something unique (and brief!) about yourself to help those you talk with remember you. Your pitch should be around 45-60 seconds.
- **Review the attendee list.** Make note of the conference attendees you want to meet or reconnect with. Send them a message through the app, if possible, explaining your interest in connecting with them and request the opportunity to do so at the event.
- **Consider items you might need during the event:**
  - Something to take notes with/on
  - A copy of your resume for your quick reference
  - The event agenda
  - Conference Help Desk contact information in case of issues



## Day Of

- **Prepare your space.** Find a quiet and comfortable space for attending the conference. Make sure you have all necessary technology and information within reach. Set up a neutral and professional background. Be aware of personal items that may show in your screen. Make sure your space is well-illuminated so conference attendees can clearly see your face during video interactions. Have water and a snack nearby so you can refuel when needed!
- **Check your Wi-Fi bandwidth.** If possible, sit close to the router. Turn Wifi “off” on unused devices to free up bandwidth. If needed, ask your housemates to refrain from streaming during the event.
- **Check your technology (again!).** Make sure your laptop and other equipment are fully charged and functional.
- **Dress to impress.** Wear head-to-toe professional attire that is reflective of your professional brand and leaves conference attendees with a good impression. Some conference hosts will specify a recommended dress code for the event. If not, wear business professional attire.
- **Minimize distractions.**
  - Close other tabs on your computer. Turn off notifications on your phone and other devices so you can focus on the conference.
  - Notify members of your household that you are participating in a virtual conference to better manage potential disruptions.
- **Build your network.** Many virtual conferences will host virtual networking lounges, interest groups, chat rooms or other opportunities to meet attendees. Leverage these opportunities!
  - Virtual conferences offer a variety of communication methods to connect with other attendees. If you have meetings scheduled, confirm whether they are text, audio, or video meetings before joining the meeting.
  - Don't be afraid to reach out and introduce yourself to other conference attendees. Share your elevator pitch when joining new conversations.
  - Be aware of your audience and know whether the chat is one-on-one or a group conversation.
  - If you plan to reconnect after the event, establish the best way to do so before signing off.
- **Visit the career fair/exhibit hall.**
  - When you enter the booth, give your brief elevator pitch.
  - Let the booth representative(s) know why you are interested in the company or professional association.
  - Ask questions about the company and its opportunities, resources, benefits of involvement, etc.
  - Exchange contact information with the booth representative.
  - Confirm next steps (ex. job application, interview) if applicable.
- **Participate in keynotes, professional development and educational sessions.**
  - Participate in as many sessions as you can to expand your knowledge of the industry!
  - Join a few minutes before the presentation is scheduled to start.
  - Be sure your microphone is muted, unless the session is intended to be interactive.



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- Take notes. This can help you stay alert and allow you to better absorb key information.
- Write down the names and companies of speakers for future reference.
- During the presentation, identify 1-2 questions you could ask the speakers during the Q&A.
- Avoid the urge to check email or open other browsers during the presentation. You don't want to miss anything!
- Share feedback. Many virtual conference platforms will allow you to rate sessions and share feedback during or immediately after the session. Do this while it's still fresh in your mind.
- **Collect information.** Often sponsors and exhibitors will share digital handouts, videos, and other information. Save these resources so you can review them later.
- **Keep a list of action items.** How will you use the information you've acquired at the conference? Keep a list of to-do items for after the event. For example, 1) Submit online application for internship at ABC Insurance Company, 2) Follow up with Sheryl on offer to job shadow, 3) Review XYZ Brokerage's career brochure, 4) Conduct additional research on product recall insurance.



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## **After the Event**

- **Follow up with your new contacts.** Send new members of your network an email or a LinkedIn invitation so you can stay connected.
- **Say thank you.** Send thank-you notes to any attendee who spent significant time with you or interviewed you.
- **Complete your action items.** Circle back to your post conference to-do list and complete those items.
- **Provide feedback.** Most conference hosts will send a post-event survey asking for feedback on the event. This allows them to continue to continually improve the event and plan for future ones. Take the time to share your thoughts!