



How to Stand Out at Your Next Virtual Career Fair

In the virtual landscape, traditional recruiting strategies like on-campus events and career fairs won't work the same this fall. According to the majority of Handshake's 1K+ university partners, recruiting events won't be in person either.

When it comes to virtual career fairs, it's not enough to just show up. In the absence of a physical booth, employers will need to rely on more than colorful billboards and shiny swag to stand out. In a virtual setting, employers with a well-known consumer

brand will be easily recognizable. What can lesser-known companies do to outshine their competitors (and maybe even impress a leader or two)?

In this checklist, we'll show you how to prepare and stand out at your next virtual career fair.

Note: This fall, you can [join virtual career fairs on Handshake for free](#). Universities may still opt to charge a registration fee for attending.

Register (4 weeks before)

Before you get started, identify your recruiting goals and objectives for the fall (e.g. candidate reach, job hires, etc.).



Use those goals to map out your ideal talent personas, then plug that criteria into [Handshake's Search Students feature](#) to populate a list of qualified candidates. You can view which schools these candidates attend and [request to connect with those schools on Handshake](#) if you haven't already.



Tech takeaway: Tired of endlessly searching for the right candidates? Plug your criteria into Handshake Premium's Candidate Hub and we'll do the work for you by sending you weekly digests of your latest talent recommendations.



To find available [career fairs](#) which you can register for and attend, log into Handshake and navigate to "Fairs" from the navigation bar on the left-hand side. From there, you can search for career fairs by date, location (i.e. physical or virtual), keyword, and by open registration.



Tip: Be sure to keep your Employer Page up-to-date! Schools typically look at your Employer Page and verifiable information to determine validity before accepting your connection.



Once your fair registration has been approved, you'll receive a notification from the host school with a link to set your schedule, add sessions, and invite team members. You'll have the opportunity to create 1:1 and group (up to 50 attendees) sessions.

Invite (0-4 weeks before)

After you've identified and registered for the virtual career fairs you want to attend, the next step is to generate interest from the perfect candidates. There are over 6M students and grads attending over 1K schools on Handshake, so you're bound to meet a few matches.



Tip: More than 9 in 10 students and recent grads prefer to engage with employers that send personalized, proactive outreach, according to Handshake's Campus to Career report.




Invite candidates that meet your criteria to attend your virtual booth. You can personalize your message by referencing attributes such as their major or school. Give students insight on your company, what you stand for, possible career trajectories, and open it up for questions.



Include a thoughtful GIF or video, which can increase click rates by 26% and 21% respectively according to Experian, and appeal to today's social generation—Gen Z. Oftentimes it can take up to three messages or more to get students interested. Map out your sequence and ensure each message tells a story with a direct call to action.




Tip: Be transparent and share how you're supporting students through COVID-19. Check out these personalized messaging templates for inspiration. Schools are also offering marketing packages to aid with promotion—get in touch with your partners to see what's available.

- If a candidate is unfamiliar with your brand, they'll likely visit your Employer Page on Handshake before committing to meeting. Make sure your page is comprehensive and includes testimonials from employees that appeal to your target segments, rich photos and videos that showcase your culture, an honest description, and more.
-  **Tech takeaway:** Imagine inviting a computer science major to view your profile. Once there, that student sees testimonials from engineers at your company first. Handshake Premium partners can do just that with their Employer Page on Handshake. [Learn more.](#)

Host (aka your 'go live' date)



On the day of your virtual career fair, don't just plan to give a presentation—aim towards giving an inspired “Ted Talk” instead. While you may have a 30-minute session, consider how you can capture the attention of students in less than two minutes.

Check out our [guide to hosting virtual events](#) for content ideas.

- Determine what information your target audience wants to gain beforehand. One way to secure a higher RSVP-to-attendance rate is by collecting questions from students through your outreach and answering them live at your event.
 - Showcase photos, videos, and facts about your office, culture, employee resource groups, customers, and people. Present a brief overview of how your company is helping to change the world (and the careers of college students).
 - Make the experience interactive. Invite your interns, ambassadors, or a diverse leadership panel to connect with students in real time and gamify the experience by hosting a scavenger hunt during your session for a chance to win swag.
-  **Tip:** It might've taken your on-campus representatives at least a day to travel and attend on-campus career fairs. They only need to spare 30 minutes or so for a virtual career fair, making it a much easier avenue for these leaders to be present.

Nurture (1-2 weeks after)

You can view the profiles of students who attend your virtual career fair booth and message anyone you've interacted with in the past on Handshake. There's no limit on the number of messages you can send to students who've already engaged with you.

- Continue the momentum and remain top of mind by sending a message to qualified candidates one day after the fair. Be sure to include any relevant follow up resources and a link to your Employer Page and open jobs to learn more.
-  **Tech takeaway:** Employers using Handshake Premium can do this by scheduling Campaigns to personalize their invitations to students at scale, send reminders before their events, and pre-schedule follow ups to go out immediately after.
- Following the virtual career fair, invite your ambassadors to connect with qualified like-minded prospects and answer their questions via outreach, allowing you to deepen personally meaningful experiences throughout the candidate journey.
- Beginning this fall, Handshake Premium partners can begin scheduling one-on-one follow up sessions with those who are most qualified, evaluate these candidates, and assess the performance of their engagement efforts without ever leaving Handshake.
-  **Tip:** If you promised swag, don't forget to deliver! Including a friendly, hand-written note with your swag package can go a long way in earning the mindshare of early talent.

Enjoyed these best practices? Learn how Handshake can help you stand out during your virtual career fairs and virtual events by getting in touch with one of our experts.