

Network to Work Meeting

November 2020

RESOURCE DOCUMENT #1

Job Hunting During a Pandemic

What Does the Coronavirus Pandemic Mean for Your Job Search?

As many companies move to remote work to fight the coronavirus pandemic and some layoffs and furloughs are occurring, it makes sense to wonder if you should continue to send out resumes or just assume instead that no one is hiring for the foreseeable future. Career experts say it's best to keep networking and applying, and on behalf of A4TD I will add that we can confirm that there are jobs out there that our participants are getting.

The pandemic has given rise to the ***drive through job fair***, and in fact, A4TD has had a presence at some of these events. In a drive through job fair, you would line up in your vehicles to drive past employer booths, allowing you to pick up employer information and job applications from the safety and convenience of your vehicle. You may also have conversations with the individuals staffing the booths, and even fill out job applications on the spot.

Related to this is the ***drive through hiring event***.

What is a drive-thru hiring event?

A drive-thru hiring event is a non-contact adaptation of an on-site hiring event, where one or several companies offer information on employment opportunities to job seekers who remain in their vehicles for the duration of the event. Drive-thru hiring events are not a new concept but have grown in popularity in response to COVID-19 as a way for employers to connect with candidates to practice social distancing. These events are a great alternative for employers to connect with people who are ready to work.

Types of drive-thru hiring events

“On the spot”

Employers hold “on the spot” drive-thru hiring events to interview candidates on location the day of the event. These events can significantly reduce the waiting time in your job search as job offers are often extended on the same day. You can also expect the interview to take place without ever leaving your car. These events are designed to follow social distancing guidelines, but it’s recommended to follow the CDC’s recommendation of wearing a cloth face covering as a precautionary measure.

“Grab and go”

“Grab and go” is another format of a drive-thru hiring event that allows you to pick up a bag filled with one-page documents and brochures containing company information, employment opportunities and application instructions you can review at home. You can expect little to no face-to-face meetings with hiring managers or hand-shaking at these events. You’ll simply drive through, roll down your window and take the bag of resources from someone wearing a mask and gloves. Some “grab and go” drive-thru hiring events will also provide information about where you can find free WiFi spots in your city to apply for the jobs online.

How to prepare for a drive-thru hiring event

Spend as much time preparing for a drive-thru hiring event as you would for an in-person interview. The impact of this preparation will be noticeable in how natural your interview answers come across and how confidently you present yourself—without ever leaving your vehicle.

Here are a few tips to help you prepare for a drive-thru hiring event:

1. Review the event description

Prepare for drive-thru hiring events by checking the company website or event description for details of what to expect the day of the event. The event description will include valuable information like how to RSVP, a full list of role opportunities, salary information, medical and dental benefits, company perks, application instructions and directions to the event. Follow the instructions and RSVP in advance if required. Look for details like if job offers will be made on the spot or if this is the first interview within a series of interviews.

Other important details that may be included are the job requirements like certifications or technical training that will help you determine whether it’s the right fit for you. Employers may also let you know how to prepare in advance of the event, materials to bring and what to wear to the interview.

2. Bring copies of your resume

After reviewing the event description, review your resume to make sure you've positioned your experience to be relevant to the jobs being offered at the drive-thru hiring event. For example, if there is a particular role that interests you, tailor your "Professional Summary" section to state that you are seeking that specific position. Let the information in the event description guide the skills and accomplishments you highlight from your past work experience. Make sure that your resume is updated so the employer can easily see how your background meets the job requirements.

Bring at least five printed copies of your updated resume to the event to provide interviewers or hiring managers, if they are accepting them at the event. Even if you submitted a copy of your resume when you RSVP'd, you can expect limited access to the internet during a drive-thru hiring event due to the location. While a recent study shows that the coronavirus has a lifespan of 3 hours on paper, take precautions by handling application documents with gloves and wash your hands after accepting materials received from the event.

3. Prepare to be interviewed

Drive-thru hiring event interviews can be shorter than an in-person interview. Be prepared to answer common interview questions like "Tell me about yourself" with answers around two minutes long. These questions are designed to assess your qualifications for the role. These may include questions such as, "Which certifications do you hold, if any?" or "What experience do you bring to the position?"

Since you will be spending all of your time seated in your vehicle, wear comfortable and appropriate clothing to these events. Choose business casual clothing like khaki or dark-colored cotton pants and a polo or nice blouse. If you will be interviewing on the spot, wear a face mask and gloves—especially if you plan on shaking hands.

4. Prepare for on-the-spot offers

One of the benefits of on-the-spot drive-thru hiring events is that you may receive a job offer immediately after the interview. To shorten your time-to-hire, bring two forms of valid state or government identification with you to the event. Examples of acceptable documents include a state-issued driver's license or identification card, birth certificate, social security card or passport. You can find the full list of acceptable forms of ID on the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website.

5. Follow up

Before you leave the event, ask your interviewer or onsite personnel how you can follow up after the event. Ask if there is a business card for a hiring manager that you can take or if there is a website you should visit to formally apply. After the event, review the materials and make a shortlist of the

roles and companies that interest you most. Make a plan to apply online if needed and follow up within one week of the event. These hiring events are created to solve immediate hiring needs, so it's best to apply and follow up quickly.

How to find a drive-thru hiring event

These no-contact hiring events may be called drive-thru hiring events, parking lot hiring events, curbside hiring events and drive-in events. You can find these events advertised within your local newspaper, television ads or online using event management websites like Eventbrite and Glassdoor.

Here are some other tips for conducting an active job search during the pandemic and accompanying economic slowdown. Doing these things will allow you to focus on things you can control as well as lay the groundwork, open doors and rekindle relationships so that you will be fully prepared to ramp up your job search once this crisis eases.

Build relationships

It may be that you had been in an interview process when the position suddenly was put on hold or disappeared. That doesn't mean the position won't open up again in a few months. While some companies may postpone hiring while they figure out how to operate virtually, they will be hiring nonetheless. If you focus on building relationships with organizations of interest – including those where you may have been interviewing - you will be in a better position when the companies start hiring. This can include writing occasional letters of interest introducing yourself and your skills.

Get Comfortable Networking Online

Events will be cancelled for a while, so you'll need to find a new networking strategy. Look for virtual job fairs and other online events. Join professional groups on Facebook or LinkedIn and make yourself visible by joining conversations and making comments. Chime in on topics that allow you to demonstrate your knowledge.

Practice having a Virtual Informational Interview or Networking Conversation

Ask a friend, family member or professional colleague to help you by asking questions and giving feedback on your delivery. This person can also give you feedback on your technology set up – lighting, camera angle, etc. Once you feel comfortable, seek out some professional contacts to meet with you over a virtual cup of coffee.

Stay In Touch

Maybe you recently had a promising interview and a job offer seemed to be on the horizon, but now the company has moved to remote work and/or you haven't heard from the hiring manager. What should you do? Start by sending an email to the hiring manager. Acknowledge they may be

scrambling to adjust to pandemic-related workplace requirements. You might write something like, “I’m looking forward to learning more when it makes sense for your organization.” This shows that appreciate that the hiring manager is dealing with extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

You can also demonstrate thoughtfulness by asking if there is any way you can be of assistance. Connect with the organization on a human level. Maybe you’re contacting someone you’ve networked with in the past. Your email can simply say, “I wanted to reach out to see if there’s anything I can do for you. You’ve been so generous with your time, I want to return the favor if I can.”

Gather Information on Companies of Interest

The COVID-19 crisis can provide a unique glimpse into a company’s culture. If you follow a company on social media or by looking on their website, you may get a sense of how its leaders are dealing with the emergency and how they are treating their employees. For instance, is it letting employees work from home? Are they supporting workers in other creative ways? Did they lay off staff?

Use the Time to Reflect

Take advantage of your time at home to gain clarity about where you want to work and the type of role and title you're seeking. Make a list of your target industry, companies in that industry, corresponding job titles, and anything in particular you’re looking for. (O’Net online – www.onetonline.org - is a good resource for this task.) Apply to every posting you see that matches some or all of your criteria. Beyond job openings, you can also focus on the companies you want to work for and the individuals you can reach out to at those companies. The company might not have an open role yet but you can use your network to help you start making connections now.

Boost Your Skills

Now is a great time to work on bolstering your qualifications. Analyze job descriptions that are interesting to you and list the skills and experience required. Then consider whether: a) you have that exact skill, or b) if you have the skill but haven’t used it in a few years, or c) if you’re lacking the skill entirely. Are there skills you need to brush up on to make yourself an even better candidate when the job market picks up? One upside to the pandemic is that many free online courses are being offered right now that focus on skill development.

Sources:

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