Preparing for a Nursing Job or Career Fair
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You can always tell that the job market is beginning to open when you begin to see Open Houses or Job Fairs at local, or out of state hospitals or academic medical centers. This is a great way to meet face to face with a Human Resource professional, Nurse Recruiter, Nursing Manager or Hiring Manager. Similar to preparing for an interview, there are easy steps to help you plan and prepare for a Job or Career Fair.

1. If you have a hospital or academic medical center in mind that you would like to work, look on their website for upcoming Open Houses or Job Fairs. Take the time to review all the information, register if that is an option, submit your resume if that is required, and review start/end time, units/floors/satellite hospitals that might be participating, etc. and start getting prepared!! Do your homework…find out about the Hospital or Academic Medical Center.

2. Have a Plan - It is very easy to feel intimidated at such an event. Wandering around aimlessly will only enhance this feeling. A plan will help you to have some idea as to which units, floors, patient care areas, etc. you want to approach. An example of a plan may be to seek out the top 3 areas that interest you the most such as oncology, pediatrics or ICU. Many Hospitals or Job Fairs will publicize, in advance, the entry level positions or experienced positions they are seeking and provide a map or layout of the Fair.

3. Be open-minded and flexible; you might be surprised at what you find.

4. Dress for success and dress to impress!! Wear an interview suit (see the examples on the UK Nursing Career Center web page), conservative jewelry, conservative shoes and carry a leather portfolio or folder.

5. Bring extra copies of your resume on nice, bonded, conservative colored resume paper (beige, ivory, white or gray). Resume paper can be purchased at Staples, Office Depot or Wal-Mart. Bring a leather portfolio or folder, and a pen to keep everything organized and to take notes. You do NOT need copies of your cover letter. Your introduction to the Patient Care Manager or Nurse Recruiter “is” your cover letter.

6. If you have developed “targeted” resumes for your “top” areas of interest such as NICU, CVICU, MICU, Pediatrics, Oncology, etc. then bring those as well to give to those specific Patient Care Managers.

7. Usually Open Houses or Job Fairs will be held in a large room, with lots of tables and Patient Care Managers/Hiring Managers sitting at each table that are eager to meet with you.

8. Walk up to each table of your interest and shake their hand (firmly and look them in the eye) of each of the Patient Care Managers, or Nurse Recruiters. Prepare your 1 Minute Introduction. Tell them a bit about yourself.... “Hello, I’m Sue Strup. I’m a UK College of Nursing student and I’m graduating in May, 2015. I am also Nursing Care Technician in the Pool for UKHealthcare, and am a nursing student leader having recently worked on Dance Blue, my sorority fundraiser for St. Jude and I’m also a volunteer at the Refuge Clinic. I’m interested in working in the MICU where I will be doing my Nursing Synthesis.”

9. Answer their questions politely and professionally. When you feel the questions are winding down, begin to ask your questions (e.g., what they’re seeking in a new graduate, how many new grads to they anticipate hiring, BSN Residency program, staff development opportunities for new grads, orientation, etc.). Ask them if they would like a copy of your resume. Thank them and tell them that you hope to hear from them soon.

10. Collect their business cards so you can follow up with a thank you note.

11. After the Open House or Job Fair, write them a hand –written thank you note expressing your interest in the position that you discussed and that you are looking forward to interviewing with them.
12. You are all well-educated from one of the best nursing schools in the country...you have been taught resume and cover letter writing and interviewing skills....go with confidence and show them what you’ve got!! Good luck!!