Meet the Accountant Night Preparation Guide

Thursday, September 12, 2013
5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Dauch College of Business and Economics

ASHLAND UNIVERSITY
CAREER SERVICES CENTER

254 Hawkins-Conard Student Center
Office Hours: 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
7:30 am – 4:00 pm summer semester
Monday – Friday and by appointment
419.289.5064
www.ashland.edu/career
Where Do I Begin?

Meet the Accountant Night is a great way to interact with potential employers and enhance your networking and communication skills. Whether you are a freshman, sophomore, junior or senior, you will find this event to be beneficial. Employers are expecting you to look professional, introduce yourself and share a summary of your background/career goals. This guide will help you to prepare for the event.

Preparation Before the Event
Before meeting the accountants, there are three key elements to effectively prepare yourself: assess yourself, assess the organization and create a plan.

During the Event
Employers are seeking students who can confidently articulate their experience, demonstrate compatibility and carry themselves professionally in an honest and sincere manner. During the event, successful networkers display a positive attitude and first impression along with verbal and nonverbal competencies.

After the Event
The process is not over once Meet the Accountant Night has concluded. It is just as important to practice the proper “follow-up” techniques, which include sending a professional thank you letter and/or email to the individuals you met. It is also important to assess the company and review your performance, so that you can improve your networking skills.

Preparation before Meet the Accountant Night

Assess Yourself
*Develop your 30 second pitch*
It is very important to clearly and concisely speak about yourself. Practice networking by reciting your 30 second pitch aloud to your friends and family members. Practicing will help reduce anxiety during the event by making you better prepared. See page 3 for how to develop your 30 second pitch.

Assess the Organization
How do you know what organizations are attending the event? A list of participants will be posted in Eagle Mail and on the Career Services website at: www.ashland.edu/career. Research the organizations to know as much as possible about them before Meet the Accountant Night. This information may be found on the organization’s website, through internet searches, resources in the Career Services Center (CSC) Resource Room and/or by asking the organization directly for information.

Prepare for the event by gathering the following information (to assist with research, Reference USA is available at www.ashland.edu/career):
- Facts about the organization (size, services, products, reputation, location).
- Purpose of the organization (vision, mission, values, culture).
- Current events, news and publications that the organization has released.
- Relevant information about your specific areas of interest.
- Public or private organization.
Finalize Your Plans
Be sure to bring plenty of resumes printed on quality resume paper. The Career Services Center offers resume critiques. You can email your resume to resume@ashland.edu or drop it off in the CSC, and a career assistant will provide suggestions and send your resume back to you. Please allow at least 24 hours for your resume to be critiqued Monday – Friday. This email will not be checked on the weekends. You can also come in for a walk-in appointment with a career assistant M/F 12:00 – 5:00 pm; T/W/TH 10:00 am – 5:00 pm. If you do not have a resume, plan to visit the Career Services Center to meet with a career assistant to help you develop your resume. You will want to see a career assistant at least twice to make sure you are developing a resume that best markets your skills. Meet the Accountant Night is Thursday, September 12, so allow enough time to have your resume reviewed a couple of times.

You should also prepare:
- A list of questions to ask the employers (be certain answers are not available via your own research).
- Your professional attire well in advance. See the tips below on professional dress.

Determine Your Professional Dress
If you are a junior or senior looking for an internship or full-time position, you should wear a professional suit. While you may not wear a suit to work every day, wearing a suit to a networking event shows that you know how to dress as a professional and that you want to present your best image possible. Use the following guidelines to help you make the best possible impression.

Suit Tips for Women:
- Choose a suit (skirt or pants) in a conservative color (blue/black/gray/brown).
- Wear suit skirts at knee length or longer.
- Choose a closed toe and closed back shoe that coordinates with your suit and has a mid-sized heel.
- Wear a blouse with a conservative neckline.
- Wear pantyhose at all times when wearing a skirt suit (even in warm weather). The color should coordinate with the suit or remain neutral.
- Keep hair, makeup and accessories professional; everything in moderation.

Suit Tips for Men:
- Choose a suit in a conservative color (blue/black/gray/brown).
- Wear a white or light-colored shirt.
- Choose a professional tie which coordinates with your suit color.
- Wear shoes that are black or brown and coordinate with your suit color.
- Wear a belt in a color that matches your shoes.
- Choose socks that match your shoe color.

Additional Tips:
- Be sure your clothes are clean and pressed.
- Avoid wearing strong perfume, scented lotions or aftershave. The employer may be allergic.
- Carry a portfolio to hold copies of your resume and business cards.
- Make sure that your shoes are polished.
- Avoid clothing and accessories that are too casual.
- Do not smoke prior to the event.
- Do not drink alcohol at least 24 hours prior to the event.
- Consult with the Career Services Center if you are unsure of how to develop your professional image for an interview.
If you are a freshman or sophomore and you do not have a suit, business casual attire may be worn instead of a suit. Professional dress is recommended if you are actively seeking a job or an internship.

**Business Casual Tips for Women**

Women can wear dress slacks, dresses, skirts, blouses, sweaters, dress shoes (closed toe and closed back) and dress socks or pantyhose. Women should avoid wearing tight or revealing clothes and dresses/skirts that are above the knee.

**Business Casual Tips for Men**

Men can wear dress slacks, collared shirts, button-down shirts and leather dress shoes or loafers. Business casual does not mean a full suit, but parts of a suit are encouraged such as a tie or sport coat.

**Additional Tips**

Business casual dress may not be a full suit, but your professional attire is important. Be sure that your appearance is neat so you look presentable to the employers. You should not wear casual clothes.

**Developing Your 30 Second Pitch**

Be ready to provide a 30 Second Pitch when being introduced or meeting a new contact.

*Your 30 Second Pitch should include the following:*

**Introduce yourself**

- Your name
- Area of interest
- Current class level (i.e.: junior) and major and minor (if applicable)

**Clearly articulate the talents you want the employer to know you possess**

- Skills related to your career goals
- Three professional qualities you possess

**Have an objective. What do you want to accomplish during the event?**

- Express interest in a company, organization or industry
- State your short term and long term career goals

**Sample 1**

Hi, my name is Jane Apple. I am graduating with a degree in accounting this May. During my studies, I had a great opportunity to intern in the business world and study abroad in Spain and New Zealand. I am very interested in career opportunities that combine my course work and travels abroad. Would you be willing to share experiences and any advice you may have about being an American business professional working internationally?

**Sample 2**

Hi, my name is Joe Apple. I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me. I am a _____ major and a _____ minor. The accounting courses I've taken so far are (name at least 2 courses.) I also participate in (name student organizations/ sorority/fraternity/community service, etc.) As an expert in the field, what advice do you have for me as a (state your class level) accounting student?
During the Event

Possess a Positive Attitude
A positive and professional attitude is imperative during the entire event. Practice these actions:

- Greet everyone you meet with a smile and firm handshake.
- Use positive words to express your interests when answering questions.
- Do NOT talk negatively about former supervisors, co-workers, jobs or organizations.
- Smile and show enthusiasm throughout your entire discussion.

Create a Strong First Impression
The first impression you make while networking is critical. You need to display confidence, professionalism and poise. An employer will remember if the first impression you made was a positive one. Keep the following items in mind to create a positive impression during the first ten seconds of the discussion:

- Smile and greet each person with a firm handshake.
- Make appropriate eye contact.
- Use appropriate grammar.
- Do NOT chew gum.
- Be sincerely interested in what the interviewer is saying and respond with questions or comments related to information he/she provided.
- Show enthusiasm and interest in the organization.
- Be respectful of everyone you meet and appreciative for the time spent speaking with you.

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication Skills

Verbal Communication: When answering questions, be sure to use examples whenever possible. By using examples, employers will know what experiences you have had in the past and what skills you could bring to their organization. Examples can be taken from the classroom, leadership, work, community service and life experience.

Ask employers for their business cards. After you leave the table, turn the business card over and make notes about your conversation. Do not do this in front of the employers; take a few steps away.

Be sure to use proper grammar at all times while networking. Avoid slang and fillers such as “like”, “um”, “cool”, “awesome”, “yeah” or “you know”. It is appropriate to take a moment to think about and formulate your answer once a question has been asked.

Nonverbal Communication: Be sure your nonverbal communication is appropriate during the event. Stand tall, smile and deliver a firm handshake. Maintain eye contact with the employer and do not look around the room when having a conversation. Do not take notes or fidget while talking. It may become distracting to the employer.

Employers expect participants to be a little nervous, but you can still be an effective communicator. By practicing your 30 Second Pitch aloud, your conversations will flow much easier with employers.
After the Event

Follow Up Techniques
It is important after a networking event to demonstrate your understanding of business etiquette by sending a thank you letter within two days of the event via email or regular mail. This is also an opportunity to develop your written communication skills. Remember to continue to build rapport and always contact the employer if asked to do so. If they request to speak to you by phone, you can write a script of what you would like to say to the employer and practice it aloud before you call. Use the script as a guide to follow during the phone call. Consult the Career Services Center Interviewing Guide for more detailed information.

Using the AU Career Connect Employment Database

Whether you are seeking an internship or a full-time position, you will want to use AU Career Connect when conducting a job search. Employers post available full-time, part-time and seasonal jobs and internships to this system. If you are searching for an internship, part-time or full-time position in your hometown or another part of the United States, AU Career Connect has partnerships with CareerBuilder, CareerRookie, Juju, and Internships.com that will allow you to search other geographic areas.

To access AU Career Connect go to the Career Services page in the myAU portal or to www.ashland.edu/career and click on the AU Career Connect icon. Please follow the directions to log in. If you need assistance accessing the database, please call the CSC at 419-289-5064. Also, if you have already established an account in AU Career Connect and do not remember your user name and password, please click on the “forgot password” link or call the Career Services Center.

How Can the Career Services Center Help?

The Career Services Center offers a variety of services to assist students and alumni with career-related topics. These services include the following:

* **Career Coaching Services** – The Career Services Center provides assistance in the areas of self-assessment, career exploration, and decision making through individual appointments.

* **Internship and Job Search Assistance** – The Career Services Center has several web-based job search management tools for students to use free of charge. You can also meet individually with a staff member or career assistant to discuss your internship or job search.

* **Resume and Cover Letter Assistance** – Career assistants are available to assist students and alumni in developing and enhancing resumes and cover letters to ensure the documents are marketing candidates the best way possible. A Resume Writing Guide and a Cover Letter Guide are available on the Career Services page in the myAU portal under the Handbooks and Guides link. (You will need to log into the portal before being directed to the Handbooks and Guides page.)

* **Mock Interviews** – Students are able to participate in M.I.K.E. (text Q&A) and Interview Stream (video Q&A) virtual interviewing systems. After completing both virtual interviews, students are able to participate in mock interviews in the Career Services Center, which are videotaped and reviewed to help students identify their interviewing strengths and weaknesses. To schedule a mock interview, contact the Career Services Center at 419-289-5064.
Career Resource Room – A variety of career information is available for student use. Materials are also available to assist students with internships, resume writing, job search techniques, and interview skills. Computers and printers for job search activities are located in the Resource Room for student and alumni use. In addition, career assistants, who are student paraprofessionals, work with students on a walk-in basis and help them with career research, resume and cover letter development, and job search techniques. Current walk-in hours are listed on the Career Services website. A list of books available in the Career Services Center’s Resource Room can be viewed in LibraryThing, our online library database. LibraryThing can be accessed through the direct link, http://www.librarything.com/catalog/AUCareerServices, or through the Career Services myAU portal page.

Alumni Services – Alumni are encouraged to take full advantage of the services provided by the Career Services Center.

Career Services Center myAU Portal Page – All students are encouraged to visit our myAU portal page, located at https://myau.ashland.edu/StudentServices/CareerServices/pages/default.aspx, which contains information about services available, web-based programs, upcoming events, etc.

Internship and Job Search Tools – The Career Services Center provides a variety of job search tools for students and alumni. These tools include the AU Career Connect employment database, CareerShift, Eagle Exploration, Glassdoor, Going Global and NEOIntern. These web-based tools can be accessed via the Career Services portal page or website.