

How to Maximize Yield of Free Merchandise at Virginia Tech

Throughout the school year, a variety of organizations come on campus to promote their cause. Many of them also hand out free merchandise or offer free food for attending, or even just showing interest. These events can be anything from a tech talk by a company, to a booth on the drill field celebrating the organization's 50th anniversary. This guide teaches you how to effectively maximize your yield from these organizations.



Organizations

Many organizations hold events throughout the year, and they can either be student led, from the university, or a commercial/federal entity. These organizations include VTU, the Career Center, and companies like Cisco or the National Security Agency.

The companies that come to campus are usually holding some event for university relations or student recruiting. They can be a tech talk, or an info session where you can network with future employers, and in addition they give out things such as car chargers, stickers, pens, bags, and phone accessories. Many tech talks and seminars like the Microsoft information sessions or a Bloomberg talk on language processing also provide free refreshments like pizza and sandwiches. The only requirement is to attend the event, and the rest is up to you.

Now, the student led organizations do not have as much funding as any company or university funded organization, but they still have swag to offer. They can often be seen around the drill field, or the quad handing out smaller items like plastic sunglasses, pins, ribbons, or popsicles. However, they usually require signing up for a mailing list, or filling out a small survey about their cause, such as a survey about the dining halls. These are minimal tasks that can only help out your peers.

Many of these organizations can be found holding their events throughout the year, but the best time to find them is during the beginning of the semester. This is when everybody is getting resituated after the break, and everybody is looking forward to new classes and opportunities.

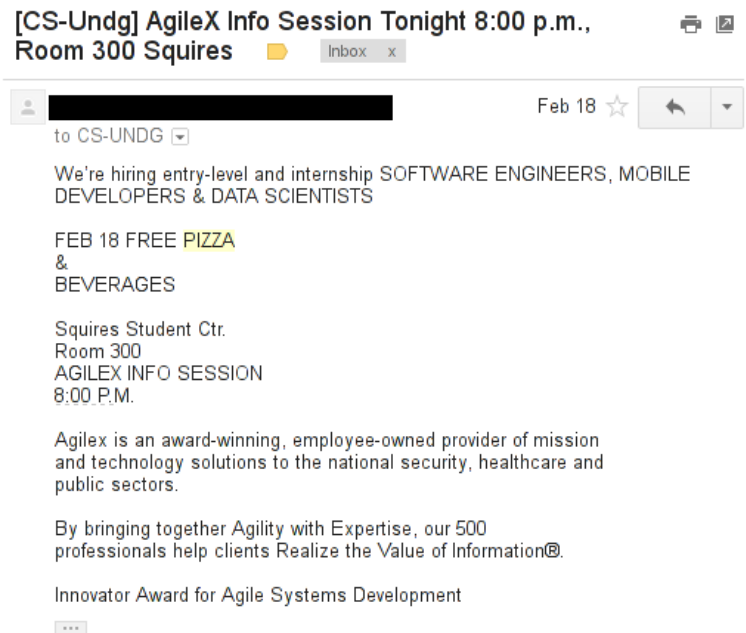
The best and biggest time to find these events is the beginning of the academic school year, at Gobblerfest. Gobblerfest is an event where all the university organizations, and even some non-university associated ones, come together at one place to try to garner interest for their cause. Attending the event is free, and as is much of swag that they giveaway. The only exception is the food that local food joints sell to advertise for business. Overall, many students

come with the expectation of lots of swag, and are not disappointed with their newly acquired drawstring bag full of goodies.

Another big time to come is the Computer Science Resource Consortium (CSRC) career fair, if you are a Computer Science major. Much like Gobblerfest, companies give out free merchandise at their booths, as well as giving a chance to network for employment opportunities, which is always a good thing. This career fair is special, as they provide catering for delectable refreshments like marinated meatballs and cheesecake bites; a nice break from pizza.

Steps to Maximizing Yield

1. Sign up for listservs (CS, business, clubs).
 - This notifies you via email of the meetings and events, which will state if there is free food. This is your biggest source throughout the year, as it lets you know as soon as events are announced.
2. Check out university advertisements.
 - These can be the little cards at dining halls or posters hanging around campus. Many are lying around Squires or the dining halls
3. Check <http://cs.vt.edu/food>
 - This is a calendar of CS events that will have food.
4. Find the location.
 - After finding out where it is, know specifically which building it is. This is specifically for freshman or others who are not familiar with campus. Check out a detailed map at <http://map.vtluug.org/>
5. Prepare for the event.
 - While it is usually not a requirement to do anything but attend to get the free stuff, it is always good to prepare for special event, such as practicing speech to talk to employers, or find out what the organization is doing at the meeting. Leaving a good impression can lead to opportunities more valuable than free swag.
6. Attend.
 - This is obvious. Go to the event and enjoy what it has to offer.
7. Follow up
 - This can vary depending on the event. For a student club meeting, this could be signing up for membership or the listserv.
 - For a career fair, you can follow up with the recruiters you talked to thank them for speaking with them. Providing feedback for the organization providing the career



fair is also a plus.

- Once again, followup is not required but it can provide you with better opportunities than free swag, which is truly maximizing yield.

Glossary

- **swag** - free merchandise from an event.
- **career fair** - an event where companies try to recruit students for jobs, as well as give free stuff
- **VTU** - Virginia Tech Union. organizers of many events that host things with free admission and merchandise
- **Squires** - Squires Student Center. a common venue of events that host free events
- **CSRC** - Computer Science Resource Consortium. A career fair for CS students that is notorious for free catered food
- **listserv** - email mailing list. This is a list of emails that an organization notifies for notices, including events.
- **CS** - Computer Science. A field of study in Virginia Tech's engineering department.
- **drill field** - location on Virginia Tech's campus. This is the big grassy field located at the heart of the campus.