

# How to Approach a Corporate Representative

(and not drop the ball once you have caught it)

Corporate Committee, The Engineers' Joint Council

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# 1 The Game Plan

This article seeks to address the questions that one might have with regards to approaching people from companies/corporations/(Industry in general). Who exactly are these people? What does the Engineers' Joint Council (EJC) have to do with them? Why do we need their help? When we get it, how to we keep it? Corporate relations are a keystone in EJC's financial health, and creating/maintaining healthy contacts is essential to its survival.

That's where you come in! As a member of the Corporate Committee (or anyone else in EJC who is curious as to how to approach corporate representatives), it is your job to get corporations to sponsor (give money in exchange for campus exposure/opportunities) EJC and the Engineering Community at different University events. Without further adieu, let's get started!

# 2 Establishing Contact

The first step in Corporate Relations work is to determine what corporations would make suitable sponsors, and to establish contact with those corporations. Suitable corporations are any and all in the tech industry. The best way to get contact information (short of attending an internship/career fair, which is the absolute best way) is to go on the internet and search for "recruiter" or "university relations," stipended to whatever corporation you were looking for contacts with (a good place to start is craigslist). From this information, you will most likely find an email address or a phone number (or both). If you find an email address, you should establish contact with both a cover email and a formal PDF invitation sent as an attachment. Guidelines for these documents are as follows:

## 2.1 The Cover Email

The cover email is extremely important because it grabs the attention of whoever reads it. Perhaps the most important element here is the email subject. This is, after all, what the representative will judge when he/she is deciding whether or not to mark your email as spam. The subject should first list the University name, then the event, and finally, the fact that there is in fact a formal invitation enclosed. Consider this example subject, used for EWeek:

`UC Berkeley Engineers' Week (see enclosed Invitation)`

Notice that "Engineers' Week" is not abbreviated (representatives probably won't know what "EWeek" is!).

The next part of the cover email is the email itself. This email should quickly state the purpose of the attachment without going into the details of the event itself. As with the subject, and example (for EWeek) appears below:

Dear Mr. Crook,

On behalf of all of UC Berkeley, I would like to invite you to the largest sponsored Engineering event held throughout the school year, EWeek. Please see the enclosed invitation for details.

Feel free to respond to this email with any questions or inquiries regarding this event.

My cell phone's voice mail has been unreliable lately - if you email me with your phone number, we can talk directly.

Sincerely,

Christopher W. Fletcher  
Phone (mobile): (310) 869-0400  
Email (alt): chris.w.fletcher@gmail.com

Foothill Student Housing  
Christopher Fletcher  
Building #2, Room 2B61A  
Hearst & Highland  
Berkeley, CA 94720-2292

Feel free to use the above example as a template for your correspondences. If you do not, however, be sure to include the following in your cover email:

1. Why you sent the email (paragraph #1).
2. How to respond to the invitation (paragraph #2-3).

Essential to #2 is that the representative should indeed respond to continue down the information pipeline in making the sponsorship possible. This may sound obvious, but it does actually encourage representatives to respond. Lastly, be sure to include any relevant information pertaining to how to best contact you. Whether it be that your cell phone doesn't work, and that the best form of communication is by email, don't put yourself in a position where a potential sponsor backs off because he/she tried to reach you by malfunctioning means and could not get through to you.

## **2.2 The Invitation (Cover Email attachment)**

The next part of your email (the meat, so to speak) is the actual invitation. The invitation will be sent as a PDF attachment to your cover email. It should be formatted as a formal business letter. The invitation should go into more detail about what attending/sponsoring the event will entail. The invitation should *not* discuss logistics (besides the date(s) when the event is

taking place). Logistics are covered in follow-up correspondences. A template invitation (again, from EWeek) is shown below:

Building #2, Room 2B61A  
Hearst & Highland  
Berkeley, CA 94720-2292  
(310) 869-0400  
cwfletcher@berkeley.edu

April 2nd, 2007

David Crook  
National Semiconductor  
2900 Semiconductor Dr  
Santa Clara, CA 95051

Dear Mr. Crook,

The Engineers Joint Council (EJC) of UC Berkeley would like to invite you to be a sponsor of EJC's annual Engineers Week. Engineer's Week, also known as Eweek (April 17-20), is a week where student societies on campus showcase their finest. This event raises awareness for projects such as CalSol's Solar Race Car, Civil Engineerings Steel Bridge and Concrete Canoe competitions, and much more. This week-long event highlights the contributions of engineering to our daily lives to the rest of the Berkeley campus and community.

Dedicated students and faculty from every corner of the College of Engineering have worked very hard in ensuring the success of this event. However, this event could not be feasible without generous sponsors such as yourself. The main goal of E-Week is not simply to celebrate engineering contributions, but to help engineering students build social networks within the student population in addition to academia and industry. Your generous sponsorship will help us achieve these goals by bringing students together through interactive events, and also by sparking an interest in your industry and company. In addition, you will be directly supporting all the engineering societies on campus.

As a sponsor of our event, you can expect substantial amounts of publicity, as well as the interest and gratitude of over 4000 engineering students. Your company will be able to hold informational sessions, where new products and opportunities can be presented. In addition, your company will be able to host a table alongside our engineering societies on Corporate Day (April

17), and be featured as a sponsor on all our advertisements, such as t-shirts, posters, fliers, and announcements.

We would be pleased and honored to have you as a sponsor of Engineers Week, and we look forward to working closely with you. Thank you for your consideration and support for the students of UC Berkeley Engineering!

Sincerely,

Christopher Fletcher  
EJC Corporate Relations Committee

Unlike the cover email, it is important to maintain consistency with regards to the formal invitation. For this reason, a template invitation will be provided for every event that requires sponsorship. For all events, the template will be similar in structure. Most important to consider is **what information needs to be changed for each corporation that you send the letter to**. NOTHING looks worse to a Microsoft representative than receiving an invitation addressed to Google. The provided Cover Email and invitation simplifies this problem by personalizing the invitation only as far as representative name/address goes. As can be seen in the invitation, the only company-specific information is the representative's name ("Dear Mr. Crook...") and the address directly above it. Likewise, the cover email only personalizes the greeting.

### 3 Maintaining Contact

Congratulations! You have made contact with a corporation. Now, how do you keep that contact? You have sent out your invitation to the event in question and have gotten a reply expressing interest. What do you do next? From the above invitation, the representative's most likely response will be that he/she requires more information (the logistics alluded to in the last section). Depending on the representative, correspondence at this point will either be via email or phone. Sometimes, though, representatives will ask to meet in person. The best ways to maintain contact are first in person, then by phone, and lastly by email. This order stresses the personal contact that you have with the representative. If the representative knows you in person, he/she is less likely to forget about the sponsorship. Likewise, email correspondence is just that: a dime-a-dozen. Realistically, aim for an over-the-phone conversation. This is easy (doesn't require the planning that an in-person get together does) but still puts a voice behind the name. When you and your representative determine a mutually appropriate time to talk (try to cater to their schedules as best you can), be ready to answer the following questions:

1. What types of events the sponsor would be taking part in & at what

times/places those events will be held at

2. How much money EJC would be asking from the sponsor
3. What the sponsor's role in the events will be

For #1, you will either have to have an idea of the event from EJC, or have the event's schedule to give a full answer. This is sometimes not available until several weeks before the event (which may be far down the road from when you make the call). If this is the case, tell the sponsor that you will get exact details as soon as they become available. This response should satisfy most potential sponsors, as long as a general outline is provided in the invitation letter. Sometimes, though, sponsors will want to know exact logistics immediately, and not proceed until they have them. Don't panic in this situation! This means that the sponsor probably wants to take part in the event (as they want to find out exactly where they need to be for it). In this case, give the same response, and tell your Corporate Committee Chair (Christopher Fletcher in the case of EJC), who will try to get the information even faster. For #2, EJC will give you a dollar amount to request from sponsors BEFORE you start contacting them. For EWeek in 2007, we asked for \$200 per company. For #3 (which IS different from #1), the sponsor will want to know if his/her company's presence is more for informational or recruitment type purposes. In other words, is the corporation making an appearance to better familiarize Engineering Students with that corporation's mission/projects/etc? Or is the corporation there to get students' resumes and find potential job applicants? This information will also be provided to you by EJC, on an event by event basis.

When contacting your corporate representatives, do so in the professional manner that you would a job recruiter. You are representing EJC to the corporate world with each and every email/phone-call you make. Always respond in a timely and polite fashion. Remember, corporate representatives are taking time out of their busy schedules to talk to you!

## 4 Requesting Donations

Corporate sponsor donations are a keystone of the Corporate Liaison Committee's role in EJC. The money we collect increases EJC's annual budget, and further fuels other College of Engineering Student Societies. So the question is: how does one go about asking a corporate sponsor for money, and how does the money get from them to us?

To recap at this point: we have established contact with a corporation, and have (in some form) corresponded multiple times with the corporation, to the point where they have agreed to attend an event. Very briefly, we discussed how much money to ask for. Again, this is a floating amount to be determined

by EJC at the time of the event. What should not change, however, is how you ask for it.

Once a corporation agrees to attend an event, the typical understanding is that they are financially sponsoring the event. In this case, the corporation will oftentimes ask you how much is being asked of them, before you even have a chance to tell them. If this is the case, just reply with the amount agreed upon by EJC for that event. If the amount is around \$200, the corporation shouldn't have a problem paying (\$200 is a *very* small amount to ask for). Contact Christopher Fletcher (me) if the corporation has a problem with this amount, and send your correspondence with the corporation to me via email.<sup>1</sup> We will probably be asking for more this year per company. Still, send any problematic correspondences to me. *C. Fletcher: "I won't intervene unless things get dicey. Your relationships with your contacts are your own, to a certain extent."* In the case that the corporation does not bring up money after agreeing to 'sponsor' EJC, insert:

For sponsoring this event, the Engineers' Joint Council kindly requests a donation of \$X, made payable to:

The Engineers' Joint Council

and mailed to:

The Engineers' Joint Council c/o ASUC Office of Student Affairs  
University of California  
400 Eshleman Hall, MC 4500  
Berkeley, CA 94720-4500

into your next correspondence.

#### 4.1 A donation's travels from A → Z

You might be wondering why we ask that our checks be sent to the ASUC (Associated Students of the University of California) as opposed to directly to EJC. This is because the ASUC is a 501c3 non-profit organization, and by having them receive our checks, the checks aren't taxed. **As the ASUC is a non-profit, be sure to tell your sponsors that their donation is tax-deductible.** They may, after hearing this, want more information as to the ASUC's 501c3 status. If this is the case, email Christopher Fletcher, or just bring it up at the next meeting, and we will get you the necessary supplementary documents. Upon making a donation, a sponsor might also request a tax-receipt for their records. To get your sponsor a receipt, email me the sponsor's **name, address, and amount paid.** This information will be forwarded to the ASUC

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Fletcher's email: christopherfletcher@berkeley.edu **OR** chris.w.fletcher@gmail.com.

and the receipt will be sent out thereafter (all you have to do is get me that information, the rest is taken care of for you).

#### 4.2 When to Expect Donations ... and what to do if they don't Arrive

Although the specifics regarding donations will come up in your correspondences before the to-be-sponsored event takes place, the donation itself will probably not be sent to the ASUC until after the event has come to pass. This is fine; don't press your contacts to send money before the event takes place. If they do, that is perfectly fine. If they don't, however, (let it be said again: this is A OK) you will probably have to remind them to send the agreed upon donation. Companies typically will forget, and furthermore, will not prioritize sending their donation. If your first reminder does not yield the donation, remind them again several weeks later. Continue to do so until the donation is received. Be polite and courteous; the reason for the delay is most oftentimes innocent. If after several reminders, however, the contact refuses to even dignify your requests with a response, tell Christopher Fletcher, or another EJC officer.

### 5 Keeping in Contact

Congratulations<sup>2</sup> (squared)! You have established contact with a professional organization, maintained that contact up to the date of an event, and gotten that contact to contribute money to better EJC. What now? It's not over! It's never over! As EJC sponsors multiple events, keeping in contact with past sponsors is crucial. After sponsoring an event, a sponsor will most likely ask you to keep them informed of future events. Obviously, do this. Beyond this, however, keep in touch with your sponsor. You are an engineer: discuss what interests you with regards to the work that their company does. Be proactive. Most importantly, **HAND-WRITE a thank-you note for their participation and donation in the event that they sponsored.** I understand that you all have busy schedules, and may not be able to keep up with thank-you notes. This is fine, but please inform me ahead of time so that I can write them a note myself. The worst way to thank a company is by an auto-generated form thank-you, or by no thank-you at all. Personally, I would recommend writing the note yourself. By doing this, you better establish your *personal* contact that you have made with the sponsor. Internships are *far* easier to get when you have a long-term personal relationship with a corporate recruiter!

### 6 Dealing with Rejection

A potential sponsor may turn you down when you ask that they sponsor an event. This could be for many reasons, not hearing about the event in time being the most common. If this happens, don't feel bad or get angry. Thank

the corporation anyway, and tell them that you will keep in touch regarding future events. Never remove a corporation from your contact list just because they say no. What doesn't bear fruit one day may very well do so the next day. Granted, if you don't get any response from a corporation after trying to establish contact with them, their contact information might be out-of-date. If this happens (give a corporation 1-2 weeks to respond to your first email), email Christopher Fletcher their contact information and we can look for alternate contacts for that corporation.