

How To Work a Job Fair Successfully

There are different types of job fairs. There are ones that are targeted for specific types of people (e.g. college students or industry specific professionals) and there are ones that are just a group of different types of employers.

Job fairs should just be a small part of your overall job search but they may result in a job. You never know.

There are several steps to making sure the job fairs you attend are successful.

Step 1 Pre-register:

Some job fairs allow you to pre-register. This entails submitting a resume in advance. This allows the employer a chance to prescreen applicants before the actual job fair.

Step 2 Research:

Whenever possible get a list of the employers who will be attending the job fair and do research on the companies that you are interested in. Don't waste your time with companies you are not interested in.

Step 3 Resumes:

Bring plenty of copies of your resume. You may want different versions of your resume. For larger companies you may also want to bring scannable resumes. Don't just drop off your resume and walk off.

Step 4 Your Attire:

Show the employer that you are serious about getting a job by wearing professional clothing. Know what is expected and dress accordingly. Dress slacks, a nice shirt or blouse with dress shoes are recommended. For some professions (e.g. management) a suit may be appropriate. It's better to be overdressed than underdressed. (No tennis shoes or levis).

Step 5 Strategy:

You need to create a plan of how you will work the fair. Usually you will get a map of where the employers are located. Hopefully you have done your homework and learned about the employers you are interested in. Be prepared to hit the ground running. You only have one initial shot at making a good first impression. Make it a good one.



Step 6 Interviewing:

You may only have 2 to 5 minutes to make a first impression. If you have to wait in line to speak with the representative, use the time wisely. Review your personal information and/or the company's information. Remember to smile and give a firm handshake. Don't be afraid of the recruiter. Be prepared to give them your "One Minute Commercial". Be able to sum up your skills, experience, abilities, education, and knowledge. Be prepared to answer common interview questions such as, "What are you here for today" or "Why would you like to work for our company?" Have a few prepared questions for the recruiter. Don't ask obvious ones like what the company does. A great final question you might want to ask the employer is, "What do I need to do to get a second interview with you company?". Try to say their name a few times during the interview and get their contact information before you leave. If your ideal company is not hiring for your position right now, still do an interview with the company at the job fair but make sure you get the contact information of the person who does the hiring for your position. Don't be discouraged and walk away. Pay attention to your body language (e.g. like fidgeting, rocking, or chewing gum). Be confident.

Step 7 Networking:

Career fairs are all about networking with employer and job seekers. Be open to sharing information and / or job leads with other job seekers. There are often professional organizations or employment agencies which are good sources of networking.

Step 8 Follow Up:

You would be surprised how few job seekers take the time to follow up. There are two main methods of following up: 1) Phone / Email and 2) Sending a thank you letter. Make sure you get the employers contact information like a business card. Your thank you letter should include the following:

- a) Thank them for the time they spent with you at the job fair.
- b) Restate your interest and a summary of your qualifications.
- c) Reiterate you interest in a second interview.
- d) Make a promise to follow the letter with a phone call.
- e) Enclose a copy of your resume.

Make sure you make that follow up phone call.

Step 9 Miscellaneous:

Use a job search contact sheet to keep track of the contact you have made.