

WHAT TO DO AT A JOB FAIR

Job fairs are the "meat markets" of the entry-level job market, with employers sizing up candidates quickly, based on appearances and first impressions.

You are being evaluated, whether it is for 30 seconds or 30 minutes. You always need to be at your very best. If you are to succeed, you have to take a very aggressive yet structured approach.

What to bring

Resume (bring 2 copies per company you plan to speak with)

Your resume should be specific and targeted.

Two key areas are the objective / profile summary and the first job listed.

Make sure it is direct and to-the-point.

Letters of Recommendation (bring 3 copies per company)

Portfolio (leather or vinyl-bound portfolio to hold resumes etc.)

Briefcase (more "professional look" to store literature than a plastic bag)

Dress (image is crucial, dress "business casual" with comfortable shoes)

Tips

- Plan to spend your entire day at a job fair if there are a lot of companies.
- Spend time in advance researching the companies.
- Best time to attend is early in the morning and late in the day (to avoid lines).
- Offer to bring the recruiter lunch, soda or water...may set you apart from the crowd.

People behind the Tables

- Recruiters who attend these events are NOT hiring managers. They usually work in Personnel/Human Resources.
- Their job is to screen the resumes and "weed out" the less experienced so the hiring managers can focus on the best candidates.
- Your resume is going to make or break the screening decision to interview you.
- Your appearance and attitude will also help the recruiter determine if you will fit in with the team/company.

Walk-Around Technique

1. Walk around the job fair

When you first arrive, walk around the job fair to get a feel for the layout and where each employer is located. Decide who you want to speak with and in what order.

2. Walk around the employer

Don't stand in line right away. First, approach the company table from the side and pick up some literature, job openings, etc. Stand back and listen to the recruiter. Ask yourself two questions: "Is this something I'm interested in?" and "Am I able to show that I am qualified for the position(s) they are offering?" If your answer is "Yes," then stand in line and read over the company materials.

Standing in line is also a great networking opportunity. Talk to people in line to find out what other companies they may have already talked to so you can focus on the good ones and avoid the bad.

When you approach the recruiter, step up to the table and introduce yourself. A firm handshake and direct eye contact are important. Show that you are alert, awake, enthusiastic and confident.

State your specific job goals and how it fits in with the needs of the company. Offer to submit your resume and letters of recommendation.

Do not walk up to the table and say, "I am looking for a job." You need to be direct and focused if you want to make a good impression.

If you created a personal business card, hand that out. Do not use a business card from your current employer with a work phone and email. Collect business cards from each employer, take notes on the back, and when you get home create a mini-diary about the day's events, who you met, what you learned, etc. This will come in handy when you get a call for an interview.

Mini-Interview

- If you stand to the side of the table (4-6 feet back), you will be able to determine if the recruiter is conducting interviews.
- The mini-interview takes place at the table and lasts only 5-10 minutes.
- In advance, prepare a 60 second "infomercial" or "elevator speech" about yourself.
- You will need to elaborate on your resume, describing your background and how you are someone who is a good fit with the company's needs (*this is why you do research!*).
- Be prepared to explain an item on your resume in full detail.
- Ask for a business card after the interview.
- Ask the recruiter: *What is the next step in the hiring process?* Write notes and make sure that you follow through with the recruiter's comments, such as mailing a resume or completing an application.
- FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS IS THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS!

Personality Matching Technique

- This technique is considered the *secret* to a successful interview.
- You mirror the personality of the person to whom you are speaking.
- Result? *Instant rapport!* We tend to like people who are like ourselves.
- Match the *voice* (tempo and pitch).
- Match the *physical characteristics* (facial expressions and posture).
- Most importantly, identify your own personal boundaries of comfort.

Negotiate

If you see a company that you really want to work for, but they are not hiring for your field or area of interest...what can you do?

If the line isn't too long, approach the recruiter and ask: "Who should I contact in your company for a position in my field (ie. computer programming)?" They might take your resume and tell you that they will forward it. But, you **NEED** to get a name and phone number to follow up. Then, call that person directly or call the recruiter you just met to get further contact information. **YOUR MAIN OBJECTIVE** is to get the name and title of the primary contact within the company who hires in your field.

Before you leave

Go back to the companies you really want to work for. Wait until the recruiter is free, then walk up and thank him/her/them for their time. The lasting impression is very important for future contact. Remember, they may be reviewing 50-100 resumes, and it is best if they can remember your name and face over the other candidates!

Follow-Up

- When you get home, call the recruiter's office phone number and leave a message thanking them for meeting with you at the job fair.
- Send a "thank you" card by mail to confirm your interest:
 - Thanks for taking the time to meet with me on May 22 at the XX Job Fair.
 - Here are the qualifications and experience I can bring to the position.
 - I would appreciate the opportunity to speak to you further in an interview.
 - *I will call your office next week to arrange a time when you can further discuss how my skills can benefit your firm.*

***Remember, NO JOB OFFERS will be made at the Job Fair. But, if you follow through with all the steps, you may be on your way towards a successful interview at the company of your choice!**