

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF A JOB FAIR

A Job Seeker's Guide

Job fairs provide a quick and convenient opportunity to apply to several companies and in some cases to get immediate interviews. Companies participate in job fairs for one main reason – to screen candidates for existing or future job openings.

You should remember that employers are investing time and resources to participate in the job fair. Employers appreciate job seekers who are prepared and have a professional attitude. Job seekers appreciate company representatives who are easy to approach and have clear answers to their questions. If both sides prepare adequately, job fairs can be beneficial for everyone!

REASONS FOR ATTENDING A JOB FAIR

- ✿ Increase your chances of receiving an interview with an employer.
- ✿ Expand your network of contacts. Investigate positions, occupations and career fields you could pursue with your skills and background.
- ✿ Learn more about employers and available positions.
- ✿ Receive sound job search advice from seasoned company recruiters.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT A JOB FAIR

- ✿ Employers expect you to be prepared (dressed professionally, ask thoughtful questions, have a polished resume).
- ✿ Employers expect to interact with people seeking information on career opportunities and employment.
- ✿ Your goal should be to land an interview - not necessarily a job offer. Most recruiters are not authorized to hire candidates on the day of the job fair.
- ✿ You should expect to have a relatively short amount of time to sell yourself and make a positive impact on the employer. Employers' goals are to be exposed to as many job candidates as possible.



DON'T FORGET

Conduct yourself professionally at all times. You are 'on stage' even as you stand in line or move about the job fair area.

Attending a job fair for the first time can be a little overwhelming. However, if you prepare you will get as much out of the event as you put into it. Here are a few tips to consider before, during and after the job fair.



BEFORE THE JOB FAIR

Prepare a resume that is well written and error free. Adapt your resume to the specific jobs you are applying for. If you're uncertain about the quality and content of your resume, visit an employment or guidance counsellor.

Take pens and paper.

Plan to dress appropriately. First impressions are very important. Unprofessional attire is one of the leading reasons candidates are not considered.

Make sure you have multiple copies of both your resume and list of references on hand.

Make a list of employers you would like to meet with at the job fair.

If there is potential for on-the-spot interviewing or hiring at the job fair, take reference letters and cover letters, and assemble a professional portfolio.

Create a one-minute introduction about yourself. Your introduction should explain: who you are, your qualifications and accomplishments, special skills and values that set you apart from other applicants, one or two examples of how you could benefit the company.

Practice your introduction out loud until you feel comfortable, confident and enthusiastic, yet natural. Your delivery of the commercial is perhaps more important than the content of your commercial.

Research companies/sectors in which you are most interested. Learn who the companies are and what they do (check the company website if they have one).

Create a list of questions you want to ask employers. Be prepared to ask relevant questions to these employers. This will make you an interesting and memorable applicant.

Prepare to answer questions because employers will be asking them. Review standard interview questions in this guide and formulate your responses.

Plan your strategy. Plan to visit booths first that interest you the most (when your energy is high and you're at your best).

Set realistic expectations. You might not be hired on-the-spot at the job fair. Be prepared to follow-up on promising leads.



DURING THE JOB FAIR

As you arrive, be polite to people in the parking lot, hallway, or restroom - pretty much anyone could be a recruiter.

Turn off your cell phone and do not carry food or drinks.

Check-in at the registration table. Get a copy of the job fair layout and/or the employer participation list. Determine where employers are located and in what order you plan to visit them.

Be confident and display enthusiasm. Smile, walk with good posture, and

make consistent and direct eye contact. To further demonstrate your self-confidence visit employers' tables on your own.

Approach your targeted companies. As you approach the table, respect other people's privacy as they complete their interaction with the employer. If there is a long line to speak to a representative, keep moving and return later.

Introduce yourself when it's your turn to meet the employer. Take a deep breath, smile, shake hands firmly and begin your introduction. Make direct eye contact with the employer throughout your conversation, and watch your tempo and tone. Avoid

speaking too quickly and/or too loudly or softly.

Ask meaningful questions without monopolizing the employer's time. Do not ask about salary at this time. If you are still in school, ask about internships, co-op placements, summer jobs and scholarship opportunities.

Prepare to follow-up, thank the employer for his/her time, leave a copy of your resume, ask the employer for a business card and protocol for follow-up and jot down a few notes about your conversation. (You may want to include a few memorable discussion points when you follow-up.)



AFTER THE JOB FAIR

Give yourself the competitive edge and don't make the mistake of thinking that as soon as you have spoken to the last employer and left the facility that you are finished. Follow-up is essential.

Review your notes from the job fair. Evaluate what you think went well and what you can improve for the next job fair or interview.

Continue to research the companies that interest you. Treat the Job Fair as an initial contact, not the last.

Keep accurate records of your contacts, including the dates of your letters or telephone calls, and copies of all application materials that you send.

Be persistent and observe the follow-up procedure suggested by the employer. Once you have complied with these procedures, and a reasonable amount of time has passed since you heard from the employer, it is okay to send an email or call to inquire about the status of your application.



THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN TALKING TO AN EMPLOYER

Greet each employer with a smile and firm handshake. Make eye contact! Be polite!

Introduce yourself. Deliver your one minute introduction.

Try to remember the employer's name. Glance at the name tag.

Listen carefully to what the employers say. The room may be noisy and busy, but don't be distracted. Focus, focus, focus!

Ask questions directly, politely, and concisely. Remember the goal is to be invited back for an 'in-house' interview.

Ask about the application procedure and hiring process. What's the timeframe? Is there a convenient time to call to follow-up?

Do NOT ask questions about salary and benefits (wait until later for these type of questions).

Request a business card or obtain a contact name, phone number, fax, and email.

Don't let promotional 'freebies' on the table distract you and do not grab at them.

If you're given an application form, take time to fill it out neatly and completely. Remember the way you fill out the application is in itself an example of your work.

Thank each employer for their time.

CHECKLIST

- I have clear and precise directions to the job fair site.
- I have researched the companies and organizations attending.
- I have copies of my resume and cover letter.
- I have prepared a one-minute personal 'commercial'.
- I am wearing clean and appropriate clothing.
- I have prepared my answers to possible interview questions.
- I have a list of questions I might want to ask employers.
- I have turned off my cell phone upon arriving to the job fair.
- I have a pen and paper in case I want to take notes.
- I have an open mind and positive attitude.



BUILD YOUR OWN PERSONAL SKILLS INVENTORY

Do you have what it takes to be hired for the kind of job you want? Would you hire you? Think about how your skills, abilities, experiences, personal values and attitudes translate into skills you can market to possible employers.

Knowing your key selling points will come in handy whether you're writing your resume or a cover letter. To get you started, here are examples of what you might want to tell an employer:



HOW YOU THINK AND COMMUNICATE	
<i>If you:</i>	<i>You might want to tell an employer:</i>
Keep your promises and do what you say you will do.	I am reliable and take commitment seriously.
Practice every day at your favorite sport to be on a school team.	I am persistent, determined, motivated and goal-oriented
Always keep your room neat and never lose anything.	I am orderly, I have strong organizational skills.
Care about people and are patient.	I am caring, sensitive and people-oriented.
Were the first one on your block to skateboard, rollerblade, spike your hair.	I am flexible and adapt easily to new situations. I am comfortable with change.
Love to shop, and find the best sales wherever you go.	I am resourceful and have great budgeting skills.

HOW YOU WORK WITH OTHERS	
<i>If you:</i>	<i>You might want to tell an employer:</i>
Like leading group/school projects and playing team sports.	I work well as a team member and can take a leadership role.
Are cool in tough situations when other people around you aren't.	I am a good negotiator. I handle stress well and enjoy dealing with difficult situations.
Usually save the day when those around you are giving up.	I look for solutions, and I am persistent in getting the job done.



TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about yourself

- Demonstrate your ability to communicate information clearly and concisely.
- Demonstrate your ability to prioritize and your understanding of the employer's needs by selecting the information about you that is of most interest to them.

Briefly touch on the following:

- o Your experience related to the job
- o Your attributes, including your ability to get along with others and appropriate personal information to show stability and a well-rounded character.

Tell me about your experience with this type of work:

- If you have done this work, state where and give examples of your achievements.
- If you have done related work, state your transferable skills. Show your interest in the position and your willingness to learn.
- If you have not done this work, mention other work-related attributes and skills.
- Quickly show your interest in on-the-job training.

What kind of machine/software can you operate?

- Be specific as possible about your expertise.
- If you haven't had experience with the equipment required, describe similar machines/software you've worked with.

What are your greatest strengths?

- Mention that besides the work skills, training and experience that you would offer, you also offer job-related qualities such as reliability, enthusiasm, dependability, flexibility and efficiency.
- If time permits, back up these qualities with examples.

What are your weaknesses?

- Describe a positive attribute, and then continue with a statement of reassurance. For example, "I feel that it is very important to meet deadlines; satisfy the customer; ... I have to really make myself be patient, diplomatic, firm, when I see that this is not happening."
- Honestly describe an obvious weakness, and then describe factors that make up for it.
- Remember, when you raise a doubt, explain it immediately. If you cannot think of any weaknesses, tell the employer.

What kind of salary are you expecting?

- Mention a salary range.
- Stating an exact figure may harm your chances.
- This is where your research can pay off.
- If you know the going rate for this type of work, you can use that in your answer.



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