



Tips for 'Working' a Job Fair

There are many types of job and career fairs, but they all have one common theme: it is a chance for a company to meet and screen a large volume of potential job candidates. Whether you are a college student new to the job-hunting process or a seasoned professional, these tips will improve your odds of not “being screened out” and instead *increase your chances* of obtaining a second interview.

***Be Prepared-** Do some research ahead of time. Visit our web site to locate a list of organizations that will be present at the event. This list will be available a week or more prior to the event date. Review the list and make a note of those that interest you and visit their web sites to gather additional information.

***Use Your Time Wisely-** The more prepared you are walking into a job fair, the better you will be able to make productive use of this opportunity. Target the companies you want to make sure you talk with before you arrive. Even the brief meeting you will have with recruiters is a chance to make a positive impression on company representatives.

***Bring Resumes-** Make sure you have plenty of copies of your resume to give out to employers. If you have multiple interests or job objectives, make sure you bring enough of each version of your resume. Your resume is an important marketing tool, so be sure that the one you are using highlights your strengths.

***Portfolios-** More and more career experts are emphasizing the importance of career portfolios. These portfolios should include copies of your resume, a list of references, and samples of your best work. While most job fair interviews are brief, there may be opportunities for discussing your portfolio with a recruiter depending on the volume of job seekers. It is best to be prepared no matter what happens.

***Present a Professional Image-** First impressions make an impact. Dress for a job fair as you would for a job interview. Remember, the recruiters are evaluating you and making mental notes about your appearance as well as presentation. You want them to focus on your qualifications not your attire. It is always better to be overdressed than underdressed. It would also be helpful to carry a portfolio to keep your resumes and other papers organized. The amount of material you can gather at a job fair can accumulate quickly. You want to have a place to put business cards, brochures and other information so that you can review them and follow up later on.

***Interviewing-** You may only have two to five minutes to market yourself and protect yourself from being screened out, thus you need to make the most of your time. Many experts suggest that you develop a “30-second commercial” that highlights the key benefits that you can offer the organization- and then use it at the beginning of the interview. Also, remember the three keys to all interviews: make eye contact, offer a firm handshake, and show enthusiasm. You should also prepare answers to interview questions just as you would any employment interview. The most common question you will face is something along the lines of “what are you here for today?” Seems like an easy question to answer, especially if you have done your homework and can tailor your answer to your interests and the company’s interests, thereby marketing yourself. Make sure you also have some questions ready to ask the interviewer. A great concluding question for you to ask is, “What do I need to do to obtain a second interview?”

***Networking-** Job fairs are all about networking. Of course, you are building a network with the recruiters. This task is most vital. However, you can also network with your fellow job seekers in terms of sharing information about job leads, companies, and their recruiting strategies and styles.

***Follow Up -** After the job fair is over make sure that you take the extra effort to follow up with the employers that interested you. You might be surprised at how few jobseekers actually take the time to follow-up, thus when you do it, you will get an edge over the many others who do not. Remember, these people may have received dozens of resumes just from one job fair. In order to stand out from the crowd send a personal thank you to the recruiters that you spoke with at the event. Use this opportunity to remind them of your skills and the contribution you could make. Let them know that you would appreciate the time to speak with them further (expressing an interest in the second interview) and explain that you will call them next week. Make sure that you do call them when you say you will. You probably should also enclose another copy of your resume with the thank you letter. In addition, some experts even suggest actually calling the recruiter the evening of the fair and leaving a voicemail message thanking the recruiter again for his/her time that day.

GOOD LUCK!!!