

Tips for Job Seekers on Attending Job or Career Fairs

First the bad news - a job fair can feel like a meat market, packed with people of all shapes and sizes crowding around a few employers. You might give out your resume with a phone number 30 times but never get a call back. So, is a job fair a waste of time? Not if it's done right and for the right reasons.

First of all, you should never look at a job fair as solely a chance to get hired. Sure, people sometimes get hired directly at a job fair, but that is rare.

A job fair is:

- (1) **An opportunity to make contacts for follow up**
- (2) **A chance to find out who is hiring**
- (3) **A way to gather intelligence on local companies**

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

You can often get a list of participating companies before the actual job fair. This will allow you to research companies you may want to target. That way you will be more knowledgeable and can make a better first impression! Additionally, you should **have an idea of what kind of jobs you are qualified for** instead of fishing at the employer booths.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

This IS the all-important first impression. Dress as you would when going to an interview. Carry a binder or folder so that you can keep your resume and other papers organized. Do not bring children, family members or friends with you!

ARRIVE AT THE RIGHT TIME

The early bird doesn't always get the worm! It can be very crowded the first half hour, which means employers may not have much time to spend with you. On the flip side, you should not arrive too late either, as many employers start to pack up early.

GET THE SCOOP

A job fair is a terrific time to gather information. Collect literature from booths for careful review at home. Better yet, take a moment to talk to the company representative. Find out about what the company does and how you could fit in there! Get a business card and be prepared to follow up by telephone or letter with that person after the event!

GO PREPARED

Bring **plenty** of copies of your resume. The resume must be flawless! Avoid gimmicks like copying your resume on neon-colored paper. **Warning**: Do NOT use your resume as a shield! Many job seekers make the mistake of approaching a booth with their resume held out before them - making it easy for the employer to take it, place it in the growing stack, and say they will review it later. Instead, try to establish a conversation with the employer. You might say something like, "**Hello, my name is _____.** I see your company is involved in _____." **What are your greatest staffing needs currently?** " This question

may provide you with some important information that you can use when discussing how you can fill the company's needs. A good salesperson finds out what the customer wants!

BE DIRECT AND PROFESSIONAL

You obviously want to make a positive impression. This goes beyond wearing professional attire. You should not make common mistakes like acting too casually or picking up extra giveaways like stress balls for the kids. Don't walk up to an employer's booth with a friend or family member next to you. This can give the impression that you're afraid to speak to a recruiter by yourself. Remember to make eye contact with the recruiter and shake hands confidently. Be thoughtful; don't monopolize the recruiter's time if others are waiting.

FOLLOW UP AFTER THE EVENT

Remember those business cards that you gathered earlier? Follow up with a personal email message or letter to all interesting contacts. Thank contacts for their time, briefly remind them of your strengths, and attach another copy of your resume to the message. If the recruiter told you to fill out an application online, complete that before messaging him/her.

NEED MORE HELP?

Attend an Information Session at the Job Center of Lake County!

1 N. Genessee St., First Floor, Waukegan, IL
Tuesdays 3:00 - 4:00
Thursdays 11:00 - 12:00

19351 W. Washington St., Grayslake, IL
(CLC Building 4, Room 401)
Wednesdays 3:00 - 4:00



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