

Job Fairs

Employers are making increasing use of career fairs to attract and screen candidates. As a candidate, career fairs are an important method of making an in-person contact with organizations already of interest and of applying to other companies you may discover at the fair. Here are some tips:

1. Learn Who's Coming Ahead of Time

Generally, one can learn the names of most, if not all, of the employers who plan to participate in a career fair ahead of time. Narrow the list down to those of most interest and begin to research their products/services and employment needs. Upon entering the career fair, obtain the program and scan the list of companies to verify the earlier list and perhaps adjust the order of companies to speak with.

2. Prepare a 45-Second Summary of Qualifications

Career fairs offer only brief contact with organizations, so be prepared to make the most of this time. Prepare an interesting verbal summary of background, achievements, and career interests so there won't be any fumbling for words at the wrong time.

3. Dress for Success

The first impression is critical, so dress in conservative, well-fitting, well-pressed clothing. How one looks will play a big part in determining employer interest.

4. Arrive Early and Seek Out #1

Get there when the door opens and go to your favorite employer first. Make sure the employer knows that he or she is #1 on your list. Then follow through with other employers. Spend the remainder of your time talking to the other employers who are in attendance.

5. Take the Right Things with You

Take along a supply of résumés and a list of references. Carry an attractive pen and binder or portfolio with a note pad. It may be a good idea to invest in business cards with your information as well.

6. Ask Appropriate Questions

Ask them about their company and show interest in what they do.

7. Do Not Expect Job Offers

Simply gather as much information as possible. Use this opportunity to learn from these representatives. This is an excellent opportunity to explore companies and help determine which work setting fits your needs.

8. Learn What's Going to Happen Next

As you leave each employer, learn what happens next and what, if anything, you should do to advance your candidacy. Be sure to THANK THEM for their time and interest!

9. Follow up, Follow up, Follow up

Follow up on any conversation with a representative that was of interest with a letter or thank-you card. Express appreciation for the time given. Mention why you want to work for the organization, and ask for an interview. Give a phone number where one can be reached, ideally, day and evening.

