

TIP SHEET

MAKE THE MOST OF JOB FAIRS

Job fairs are an opportunity to learn about companies who are currently hiring in your area. You will have the chance to meet a company representative and ask questions to gather information. Job Fairs have the added advantage of being less formal than a job interview, so it takes some of the pressure off of you. However, you still need to take them seriously, so here are a few "before, during, and after" tips to help you get the most out of the experience.

Pre Job Fair

1. Find out what companies will be there. Gather some information about them to learn if you may be interested in working for them. Check their website to learn what job openings they have. What is the skill set they are looking to find? Make a list of the companies you want to explore.
2. Decide on your outcome. Are you going with a specific goal in mind, or just to see what's available? Clarifying what outcome you want will help you prepare and recognize if your goal was met.
3. Prepare the key questions you would need answers to, in order to make a decision. These questions should help you discover if the company or positions are a good fit for you. Ask about the company's goals, markets, growth, etc.
4. Make fresh copies of your resume on quality paper. Many companies these days will ask you to go to their website to apply online. But many still accept paper resumes.
5. Plan to dress as if it is a job interview. The rule is dress one step better than you would if you were holding that job.

During the Job Fair

6. Take time to engage the company representative in conversation. Don't just grab a pen or piece of free candy, drop off your resume and move on. Instead, smile, pick up some literature, and ask a question to get the conversation started. Use your prior research to show you are interested, confident, and knowledgeable. Listen carefully, show interest, take notes, be respectful, thank them and then move on.
7. Do not monopolize an employer's time. Make a good impression and ask the best way to follow up after the event. Make sure to get a business card so you have contact details.
8. At a large Job Fair it is easy to get overwhelmed with information and later forget which person said what. Stop between booths and jot down some notes to help you remember key information - especially follow-up actions.

Post Job Fair

9. Be sure to send a thank you card. Professional recruiters agree that follow-up is an important part of getting the most out of a job fair. If you received a business card, or contact information, send a thank you card as soon as you can. Most attendees will not do this step, so it can make you stand out from the crowd. It tells the company representative you are interested, you paid attention, and you are a serious candidate.
10. If they asked you to post your resume to their website, be sure to review our Tip Sheet on Converting your Resume to Text.
11. Finally, it is always good to include a self examination step to improve your skills. How did things work out? What did you do well? What might you do more effectively next time? What feedback did you get, and how might it be useful? What are the next steps?