

Finding a Job at a Career Fair

By Mike Broderick, Employment Specialist

It's career fair time again. It is time to dust off that resume and brave those lineups to get that perfect job. While many people write off career fairs for finding a job, recent polls show more than 70% of human resources departments rely on job fairs to recruit employees, so it might be worthwhile.

To be successful at a career fair, you have to learn how to work the floor.

Here are eight tips to help those prospective employers remember you in a positive light:

1. Do Your Homework

Use the Internet to research the companies that you want to approach so you can ask intelligent questions of the recruiters. Be prepared. Bring a pen, a note pad and a stack of resumes.

2. Arrive early

Recruiters need to stand in one spot for hours on end watching hopefuls make eye contact and show off their firm handshakes. What are your chances of impressing them if you arrive in the middle of the day, or worse, at the end of the day when they're tired? None. Impress them when they're still awake - when the doors open.

3. Dress up

First impressions are lasting ones, so treat the career fairs that you are attending like a job interview. Dress conservatively, with a winning attitude, and be ready to answer probing questions.

4. Stand out in the lineups

Some people think lineups are for other people, not for them. They butt in, thinking they have the right to make their positive impressions before anyone else. This strategy leaves a worse impression with recruiters. Rather than showing strength and determination, they see the line butter as rude with no scruples. Use lineups as opportunities to network with other hopefuls. Talk to others to exchange job-hunting ideas, provide support, and even get leads. This will also help you relax as you approach the recruiter.

5. Be ready for an interview

Be prepared to talk about your career objectives, strengths, and interests. Tell the recruiter about your relevant skills, the kind of job you are looking for, and why you want to work for them. Finally, tell them why you would be an asset. Be concise, polite and direct because you only have a minute to make that impression.

6. Get Information

Recruiters at career fairs may not be the ones who decide. Ask how to arrange a second interview, or how to contact a hiring manager. Get recruiters' business cards.

7. Don't Drop the Ball: Follow Up!

Follow up soon with a thank you note that reintroduces you, your qualifications, and restates the company's needs. Ask for a second interview. Be sure to get the recruiters' cards and contact information. To really stand out, attach another resume.

8. Build Your Network

You should attend career fairs periodically even when you are not looking for a job. Use them to learn what opportunities are out there, and to gain a perspective on where you fit in the job marketplace. Remember, developing your career is up to you.

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