



Job Fair Preparation

Things to Keep in Mind

- You get only one chance to make a great first impression!
- Rarely, if ever, are employers going to extend an offer at a career fair. Do not expect it!
- This is not only an opportunity for you to present yourself to potential employers, but an opportunity for you to “interview” them as well!
- Networking is key to finding the right opportunity, take advantage of all the networking opportunities available at the job fair.

Things to do before the Fair

Prepare. Find out what companies will be attending the fair and identify which of those companies you would like to work for. Create a list of your top 5 companies that you would like to work for that will be attending the fair and plan on speaking to their representatives at the fair. If information is available on whom the representative is from the company, look to see if they have a profile on LinkedIn to learn more about the people you will be talking to.

Research. Once you’ve identified your top 5 companies, take a look at their websites and learn more about what they do and what type of positions they have open. Think about how your strengths and experience match up to what they have available. If you can’t figure out how you’re strengths and experience can help that organization, chances are they won’t be able to either. Spend quality time on this part of the process, it will show the potential employer that you did your homework and have a good understanding of how you can benefit their company.

Elevator Speech. This is a critical part of the process! You have a few minutes to make a positive impact and one that the representative will remember. This is the who, what, where, how, and why about you that you provide to the representative. Making this as clear and concise as possible will help the representative to understand where you might fit into their organization. Rehearse your elevator speech prior to the job fair and be able to say it without having to think about it.



Resume. Another critical part of the process and one that requires time and well thought out statements about your significant accomplishments, strengths, and other pertinent information. Have a clear and concise professional summary or objective and think about whether it needs to be tweaked for each organization that you'll be talking to. Seek a professional to assist you if needed, this will be the only information the representative has after the fair is over.

Questions. Think about what additional information you would like to have about the company, the open positions, or about the person you will be talking to. Prioritize those questions and if given the opportunity, be prepared to ask the representatives one or two questions. Even if the representative appears to have more time, limit your questions to no more than two.

Professional Appearance. This may be a "no brainer" for many, but for some it just doesn't sink in. Wear a business suit, have well-groomed hair, no perfume or cologne, wear understated jewelry if any, and yes, fresh breath! Bad breath is a killer and will get you noticed for all the wrong reasons!

Things to do during the Fair

Develop your strategy. When you arrive, view the lay out of the fair, noting the location of your top 5 employers with whom you have a desire to meet. Plan your strategy for visiting with your top priority employers, making the best use of your time. If you need time to warm up, visit with employers that may not be your top choice. This will help you to identify what you may need to tweak before visiting your top employers.

Be patient. There may be some employers that will have a line of candidates waiting to visit with them. You may decide to visit with another employer and come back to this employer later or use this time to review the company literature (as well as your list of questions!).

Listen. While waiting in line, you will have a great opportunity to listen to employers. You can hear what questions other candidates are asking, and the employer responses to these questions, both positive and negative.



Professionalism. Introduce yourself and use a firm handshake and genuine smile to begin the conversation. Start your elevator speech and end with a statement about how you would enjoy the opportunity to learn more about what they have to offer.

Answer questions directly and concisely. The conversation should be two-sided, with both parties asking questions and providing information. Keep your questions limited to two, don't assume they have more time to answer your questions. They may want a break if there are no other candidates waiting in line. Respect their time.

Ask intelligent, well thought out questions from list you prepared. You may think of additional questions as you circulate through the fair. Add these to your list and reprioritize that list if necessary. Always remember, top two questions, no more unless they actively continue to engage in a conversation with you.

Make notes. You will be able to use these after the fair to assess your interest in certain organizations or compare organizations. List key points from each employer that you can include in a follow up thank you note.

Be positive. Even if an employer doesn't sound like a future alternative for you, be gracious and thank them for their time.

Collect business cards and company literature. You will be able to use these to do further research as well as to send an application or thank you note after the fair.

Network. You might have a specific career interest area or geographic preference. Some organizations may be able to refer you to a specific department, division or location. Keep an open mind while you talk to various individuals; the employers as well as fellow career fair attendees. They all may be able to provide you with resources, ideas and contacts.



Things to do after the Fair

Followup. Be sure to send thank you notes to all the representatives that you spoke to. Highlight for those that you're interested in pursuing how your experience and strengths can benefit their company. Indicate your interest in meeting with additional representatives from their company and enclose another copy of your resume.

Schedule One-on-One's. Schedule time to have coffee, breakfast or lunch with those individuals that you may have met at the fair. These individuals may be able to provide you with additional contacts or information that will be useful in your job search. It also is beneficial to meet with individuals who share common goals or who are going through the same process, use these individuals as a support network.

Evaluate. Spend some time after the job fair to think about what went well and what didn't. Perhaps your elevator speech didn't work as well as you would've liked, or there was something about your resume that was confusing to employers. Make the necessary changes and move forward. Always keep an open mind and learn from the experience.

Celebrate. Give yourself credit for all the preparation and hard work that you did. Take some time to do something you enjoy, it's important to your overall well-being.



Examples of Questions You Might Want to Ask Employers

- What are the characteristics of your most successful employees?
- What do you like most about this company?
- How does a person progress in your field?
- What is a typical career path in this field or organization?
 - What is the best way to enter this occupation?
 - What are the advancement opportunities?
 - What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
- What are the educational requirements for this job?
- What other types of credentials or licenses are required?
- What types of training do companies offer persons entering this field?
- What abilities or personal qualities do you believe contribute most to success in this field/job?
- What is the biggest challenge with your current workforce?
- If I have additional questions, whom may I contact?
- These are my strongest assets (skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits and values):_____. I think I would be a good fit _____ or this is what I am interested in _____.