

Shining at a Job Fair

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Job fairs have become a very cost effective resource for many companies to meet potential and assess applicants for future employment. For this reason, employers are willing to pay money to attend these events. Many universities hold these events for their students and alumni. Additionally, cities, newspapers and third party agencies hold these events for a general audience or for more targeted groups such as military veterans, or engineers. Employers also are now holding their own job fair events at their location. No matter what kind of event you, the applicant, are attending or where the location is, the following advice will help you be successful at any type of job fair event.

Uniqueness of the Job Fair

- Competitive for employers—companies need to compete with each other to attract the quality and quantity of applicants
- Competitive for the applicant—long lines of applicants can be waiting at the door or at the tables of the most attractive employers
- The ‘mini-interview’ is the tool being used by employers to get a brief evaluation of each applicant that approaches the employer table
- Noise and lack of privacy—applicants will be answering questions while standing, sometimes next to other applicants in an environment that is noisy

Planning for the Job Fair

- Company research—learn in advance what companies are attending and do research on those that are of most interest. Strive to impress to know more about the company than the other applicants.
- Bring your ‘tool box’ to the event: 25-40 resumes, 2 pens and a nice looking portfolio with paper
- Develop a list of five questions to ask employers
- Appearance: wear your best business suit, shine your shoes, comb your hair and wear conservative jewelry
- Arrive 15-30 minutes before the beginning of the event
- Pick up job fair program which gives names and location of employers and then plan your travel in the room

Have Answers for these Mini-Interview Questions

- Why are you interested in our company?
- Why are you interested in a position in Sales (substitute your field)?
- Why should we hire you?
- Give me one weakness.

Potential Questions for the Employer

- Why did you choose to join this company?
- Why do you feel this company is the best employer at the job fair?
- What is your company's biggest challenge?
- What is the fastest growing segment of your company's business?
- What are the key success factors in the position of Sales in your company?

Approaching the Employer at the Job Fair

- Introduction should include confidence, smile, and firm handshake
- Then give you 30 second introduction (who you are and what you are looking for)
- Pause for employer question, but be ready to ask 1-2 of your well prepared questions
- Pick up/request business card from each representative that you meet
- Departure should include confidence, smile and firm handshake
- Pick up company literature (and take employer give-aways only if invited). Your purpose for attending this event is not getting a few free trinkets, but to get consideration for a job interview.

Sample 30-Second Introduction

Good morning. My name is Danielle Robinson. I am a senior at Chicago State University, majoring in Accounting. I will be graduating in May of 2008. My Grade Point Average is 3.32, and I am currently involved in the leadership of our student National Association of Black Accountants chapter. I am seeking a position in Auditing with a top international accounting firm. (Pause for employer question—otherwise, ask your first question): I am very interested in the variety of client assignments that a first year auditor can expect in your organization.

(Now write your introduction that you will be using at the next job fair).

Strategy during the Job Fair

- Visit company according to plan—the most attractive companies will have the longest lines.
- While waiting in lines, use the time to your benefit by either reading company literature that you picked up or talking to other job applicants. Ask other applicants what companies have impressed the most thus far—you may get ideas to approach companies that you had not planned for.
- Get comfortable with the process by going to the tables of some second tier companies first. Once confident, then go to your target companies.
- This is a tiring event. Take a break to catch your breath.
- Be one of the first to come to the job fair and one of the last to leave. Some of the best and longest conversations can result.

After the Job Fair

- Make detailed notes of all conversations.
 - Send thank-you notes immediately to each person that you met at a company you wish to further pursue.
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