



Successfully Navigating a Job Fair

Proper planning and preparation are keys to having a positive experience at a job fair. Remember the goal of attending a fair is to get invited to a company for a job interview. Many people at job fairs are not hiring managers but people who will refer candidates to hiring managers within the company.

Before You Arrive

- **Know why you are going**
Have a clear idea of what you're looking for and why you are a good candidate to work in that type of position or at that particular company.
- **Know which companies will be there**
Know who is participating in the job fair and what jobs they're recruiting for.
- **Do your homework**
Determine which companies might be matches for your skills and interests by researching them thoroughly. Read the company websites carefully and perform a web search to find out if the company has been in the news so you are up to date.
- **Apply for jobs before the fair**
More and more employers are not accepting resumes at job fairs and are instead pointing candidates to their websites to apply online. If you have already applied for a position, attendance at a job fair will afford you the opportunity to follow up with a representative from the company and may give you an advantage in the hiring process.
- **Develop a 30 second commercial**
In most cases you will meet with a recruiter for a very short time. You have about 30 seconds to get this person interested in you. If you can't, they'll move on. Practice a 30 second commercial to introduce yourself and your career goals. Be short and concise, but add a specific example so that you are memorable.
- **Get some rest**
Get a good night's sleep so you're energized for the fair. Eat a good meal before you go to prevent stomach grumbles while you chat!
- **Practice interviewing**
Be prepared to answer interview questions at the job fair.

Sample Thirty Second Commercial:

"I'm a computer science major with an art minor at Endicott College. I first learned about OmegaTron in a BusinessWeek article I read about your new multimedia software program. I'm really interested in how you're using this software because I have a strong interest in software development. I've actually developed an interactive educational program to teach children how to draw. There is a link to my website here on my resume if you're interested in seeing my work".

What to Bring

- **Multiple copies of your error-free resumes**
Resumes should be printed on resume quality paper.
 - **A positive attitude that demonstrates confidence and enthusiasm**
Employers look for candidates that seem excited about working for them and confident in their skills and abilities.
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- **Brief case or portfolio**

The brief case or portfolio (covered notepad with a folder inside) is to carry literature and giveaways, as well as a place to keep your resumes. Do not bring a backpack as it will take away from your professional look

- **Paper and pen**

It's helpful to bring paper and a pen so that you can make a few notes about the companies whose tables you visited. Also, in case the recruiter runs out of business cards, you can write down their contact information so that you can follow-up later.

- **Business attire**

You should dress professionally as if you were going on an interview. A suit is always a safe way to go. You will also want to wear shoes that are both professional and comfortable since you'll be doing a lot of walking and standing. Remove piercings and hide tattoos. It's always better to err on the side of caution when making your first impression.

Once You're There

- **Arrive early**

Career fairs attract hundreds, sometimes thousands of people. Get there early, grab the directory, and plan your strategy.

- **Get a lay of the land**

Once you've checked your coat and excess bags, take a walk throughout the entire room. Try to pick up as much literature and business cards as possible from companies that are appealing to you. Don't ignore companies you've never heard of—they may have positions of interest as well. Collect materials and find a spot to review them.

- **Start in the back**

Many people get stuck in the stampede at the front of the room. Make your way to the back where there are representatives waiting for someone to appear.

- **Approach the booth**

Show your enthusiasm and professionalism by greeting the employer with a firm handshake and smile while making eye contact. Ask appropriate questions about the company and/or job to show your interest and try to convey that you have researched the company by offering information as well.

- **Participate in a mini interview**

Some recruiters conduct short, simple interviews designed solely to screen candidates. It's a couple of minutes long, allowing them to form an instant impression of you before deciding whether or not to call you for the next step. The key to your success is being able to 'sell yourself' in two minutes by using your 30 second commercial to briefly and succinctly explain how your qualifications fit the company's needs.

- **Participate in a longer interview**

The other possibility is a longer conversation - up to ten minutes - where you're asked to give a full account of your background and interests while explaining why you'd be an ideal candidate for that company. Be prepared to answer questions that relate to your field of interest, not just your particular background and experience. Again this may be a longer process, but it is still not a full interview. You must be ready to be specific and stick to the point.

- **Follow up**

After the fair, you can send a brief email to the employers you met at the fair to thank them for the opportunity to speak and to express your interest in working for their organizations. You can also request to connect to them on LinkedIn.