

# Maximizing Career Fairs

**C**areer fairs put a variety of employers and job seekers in the same place at the same time. This can be a great way to gather information about employers, meet recruiters and other employer representatives, and get answers to basic questions in a more relaxed setting.

At a career fair, employers usually occupy individual tables or booth spaces in a large conference room or ballroom. The organizer of the career fair may provide a “floor plan” showing the location of the participating employers. You can take certain steps to maximize your attendance at a career fair:

## Before the fair

- Research the listed employers to narrow your focus and determine your plan of attack:
  - Identify your top 3-5 employers from an attendees list, if provided in advance.
  - Visit the employer’s website for product and service descriptions, as well as recent press releases and other news.
  - Network in advance with anyone you know who is familiar with the employer (such as current and recent employees).
- Make a set of notes for each employer you wish to visit. Include key points you want to discuss, as well as specific questions you have.
- Locate the employers you wish to visit using a map of the career fair participants, if provided.
- Prioritize your list of employers in the order that you want to visit them.
- Prepare a brief introduction that focuses on your background, your interest in the employer, and your related experiences.
- Make copies of your resume. Have more than enough copies for the number of employers you plan to visit. Note that some employers will not accept printed resumes and will ask you to apply online instead.
- Set aside the time to attend the fair. This means scheduling the career fair as your top priority while you will be attending it.

## At the fair

- Dress professionally—treat the career fair as an interview.
- Be conservative with your use of cologne, perfume and makeup; consider not using any cologne or perfume.
- Carry a portfolio with a notepad, pen, and copies of your resume. (If carrying a purse, keep it small.) Do not carry a backpack.
- Turn off your cell phone.
- Be patient—do not interrupt if the employer’s representative is already in a conversation with another job seeker. (You might hear something of interest to you, too!)

- Use your research in your discussion with the employers' representatives. Make sure the representative knows of your interest and your enthusiasm.
- Avoid collecting literature and give-away items from every participating employer. You risk having too much to carry and looking awkward instead of organized.
- Ask for the representative's business card and thank the representative for his/her time.
- Ask the representative about the best method of follow-up. If you are referred to another contact person for follow-up, write down that information. (Ask if you may mention the representative's name when following-up with the contact person.)

## After the fair

- Thank each employer's representative you visited within 24-48 hours after the career fair. Send an email or written thank-you note.
- Follow up with any other employer's contact to whom you were referred. When you do so, mention your attendance at the career fair.



- Take other steps suggested by the employer's representative, such as completing an online application and uploading your resume.

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