

# How To Make Job Fairs Work for You

Job fairs are common recruiting tools these days. They're an excellent opportunity for recruiters to see a maximum number of candidates in the shortest period of time and for job hunters to meet directly with company representatives. However, job fairs can be overwhelming, but with proper preparation, you can take advantage of this golden opportunity!

## **Before the Job Fair**

### **• Prepare your Resume**

Write or update your resume to reflect the career area you are targeting. If you have more than one objective, it may be appropriate to have more than one resume. Have your resume critiqued by someone in the Workforce New York Career Center. If you do not have a resume come to the Center at least one week prior to the event and staff will be available to assist you.

### **• Practice How to Present Yourself**

Prepare a "thirty second sell". This may include a description of your career interest, work experience, extracurricular activities, and type of position you are seeking. It should focus on your strengths and be relevant to the organization. Practice your "sell" until you feel comfortable and natural with it. This will be your introduction to employers at the Job Fair. Practice answering standard interview questions. Review a list of typical interview questions you can expect. This will increase your confidence and ease in working the Job Fair.

### **• Plan Your Wardrobe**

First impressions count! Dress as you would for an interview. Suits may not be necessary, but you should look neat and professional. Try to match your attire to the attire of the recruiter you'll be interviewing with. No jeans, t-shirts or sneakers. Keep jewelry to a minimum. Make sure you wear comfortable shoes you will be standing for a long time.

### **• Research the Companies**

Check out the list of companies that will be attending the Job Fair and do your homework ahead of time. Go to their web sites and find out what they do and how someone with your background would fit in. Most job fairs have a draft of the attendees and available positions on line prior to the event, if not call and see if one is available.

### **• Gather Items to Bring to the Fair**

Make sure you bring: lots of resumes; a professional looking portfolio with notepad and pen; and samples of your work (if appropriate).

## **At the Fair**

### **• Arrive Early**

As the day progresses, the likelihood of having a recruiter's full attention diminishes, due to crowds, noise and fatigue.

- **Register and Pick up a List of Employers**

Take some time in the beginning to review the list of employers and floor plan. Plan a strategy for making the best use of your time. Target those organizations you're most interested in and try visiting them early on. But before you do, visit with some of your less preferred companies to practice your technique and gain confidence. Try to talk with every organization that might have valuable leads. Be sure to ask the business if there are other job opportunities not included on the list.

- **Make a Good First Impression**

Conduct yourself professionally at all times. Keep in mind that although the atmosphere may appear casual, you are being evaluated even as you stand in line or move about the fair. Respect other people's privacy as they complete their contact.

- **Interviewing with the Employer**

Introduce yourself with a firm handshake and good eye contact. Be assertive and ready to launch your 30-second sell as you hand the recruiter your resume. Your goal is to stand out from other candidates. Know what you are looking for, what you have to offer and what questions you want to ask the recruiter. Ask about the hiring process; pick up any company literature and ask for business cards. At the close, shake hands, thank the recruiter and walk away with confidence.

Even if the employer representative is reading or is not looking up, visit the table and introduce yourself!

- **Take Breaks**

After each interview take some time to put away business cards and literature, write down important information and clear your head. Then move on!

- **Be Patient and Expect to Wait**

Watch the traffic flow in the room. If a line seems too long, you might want to visit a less crowded organization first. Explore your options. Speak with any organization that might have leads or valuable information. Consider organizations you hadn't thought of before. Remember, Job Fairs are for networking!

### **After the Job Fair**

- **Send a Thank You Letter**

You'll be amazed at how effective this can be. It sounds simple but most people don't do it. Within a few days of the Fair, write professional thank you letters to representatives you spoke with. You can send another resume and use this opportunity to reiterate your skills and interest in the organization. It's another way to help you stand out from the crowd.

- **Stay Connected**

Remember that the Job Fair is an excellent networking tool. Even if you don't get a job right away from the fair, it's important to stay connected with your contacts. Every person you talk to is a potential job lead.

### **Columbia Greene Workforce New York Career Center**

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