

THE THREE P'S FOR SUCCEEDING AT A JOB FAIR

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JOB FAIRS – many get nervous upon hearing these two words. Perhaps you have heard horror stories of big crowds, long lines, confusion and whole herds of blue-suited young men and women pushing their way to success. Despite your apprehension, if you follow the three Ps below, you can have a successful job-fair experience – one that may land you a more formal, follow-up interview.

Preparation – the key to a successful event

- Pre-register for the fair if possible. This may allow companies to prescreen you and invite you to their booth for further discussions.
- Obtain a list of participating companies and strategize which ones are most important and attractive to you. The well-known, bigger companies usually have the longest lines. Research the companies you plan to visit and prepare several questions to ask each recruiter.
- A perfect resume is very important! It is your one marketing piece and must represent you and your potential after the fair is over and everyone has gone home.
- Practice selling yourself. You will only have a few minutes to introduce yourself, show them that you understand their company and ignite the recruiter's interest in you for a future, more formal interview. You must show them how you can help them accomplish their goals. All this takes practice – be sure to practice in front of a mirror, a friend, or use a tape recorder.

Professionalism is mandatory at the fair

- This is not the time to “stand out and be noticed” with unusual clothing or strange looking resumes on orange paper. If you try that, you will be remembered - but for all the wrong reasons.
- Be polite at all times. The person you meet in the parking lot, rest room or elevator may be a recruiter important to your future and one you'll be seeing later in the day.
- Recruiters see candidates as possible future representatives of their organizations. Therefore, you must display confidence, enthusiasm, and the ability to think and speak on your feet – and under pressure.
- Be sure to get the recruiter's business card and discuss how and when you should follow up with the recruiter. Follow-up letters offer another opportunity to outline what you know about the company, your qualifications, and why you're a “good fit.”

Patience – something mothers know well

- Remember: lines may be long, so wear comfortable - but professional shoes. Respect other candidates' privacy when approaching the recruiter's booth.
- Make notes after you've spoken with the recruiter. Do this while you are in line for the next recruiter, or sit away from the crowd to jot down your notes. Take time to regroup and put your thoughts in order for the next recruiter.
- You should not expect to receive a job offer at the job fair. Most recruiters are not authorized to make hiring decisions on the spot. This does not mean that companies are not hiring. Remember: your goal is to secure the formal, follow-on interview.
- Statistics for job fairs indicate that 49 percent of candidates receive interviews as a result of the job fair, and 65 percent of those eventually receive offers. This process can take as long as three to four months or longer.

Package your Ps and make the job fairs work for you!



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