

# Job Fair Tips for Mid-Career & Older Job Seekers

Job fairs are a wonderful opportunity to gain exposure to many employers in a short amount of time. You are able to make valuable contacts and present yourself to them in the same day. Don't be overwhelmed by the large crowds and staggering number of employers. By following these tips, you can make a job fair work for you!

## ABOUT JOB FAIRS

The purpose of a job fair is to bring job seekers together with potential employers. Job fairs are usually held in large public places where many job seekers and several employers can interact. Job fairs can target certain occupations or industries, or be general.

Many times employer representatives are recruiters, staff members who have the job to find potential employees. Recruiters may not be the person with whom you will eventually interview at the company. Other times you may be speaking to the potential hiring individual and you may be asked to conduct a brief interview.

### ■ BEFORE THE FAIR

- ✦ **Obtain a list of participating companies** from the job fair sponsor and identify the employers that interest you. Go to your library or on to the web to learn more about the organizations you plan to target.
- ✦ **Review your resume and update if necessary.** Do not include any age information, such as graduation dates. Is it attractive and error free? Is it targeted to the type of employment you are currently seeking? Does it show your job objective and area of interest?
- ✦ **Practice interviewing.** Be prepared to answer questions about your work experience and computer and other job skills. What type of job are you seeking? What are your qualifications? Why do you want to work at this company?
- ✦ **Prepare questions to ask representatives.** What opportunities are available? What are the responsibilities? What skills and experiences are they seeking in candidates?
- ✦ **Set realistic expectations.** Few people will get hired on the spot. Be prepared to identify and follow up on promising leads.

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### ■ AT THE FAIR

- ✦ **Dress for a business interview.**
- ✦ **Bring 30 copies of your resume.**
- ✦ **Bring pens and paper.**
- ✦ **Keep yourself and your materials neat.** You may want to bring a folder or small bag to carry everything.

## **When you meet with the representative:**

~ *Introduce yourself.* Look confident by initiating a handshake with a smile. Maintain good eye contact.

~ *Express interest.* Explain briefly what you like about their company and what you have to offer.

~ *Ask questions.* Refer to the questions in the "before the fair" section above.

~ *Ask about the application procedure* and hiring process. What's the timeframe? Is there a convenient time for you to call to follow up?

~ *Do not ask questions about salary* and benefits if the representative does not bring this up. Wait until you are being considered as a candidate.

~ *Request a business card* or obtain a contact name, phone and fax number. Take brochures or other informational materials that are available at the booth.

~ At the end of the meeting, *offer a handshake* and express your appreciation, using the interviewer's name.

~ Once you have obtained all the information you need, *move on*.

 **Stay fresh.** Job fairs can be exhausting. If you start to get fatigued, take a break.

 **Keep a list of the employers you meet.** Make notes about the company and your conversation after you have spoken to the representative.

 **Take the time to regroup** and be ready for the next organization.

 **Be patient and ready to wait in lines.** Practice by visiting less crowded booths first.

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## **AFTER THE FAIR**

 **Pat yourself on the back** for a job well done.

 **Write a thank you letter** to any companies of interest to you. Thank them for their time and information. Cite something specific from your discussion. Include another resume or any other information requested (completed application or references).

 **Call to make sure the company received your application materials** if you do not hear from them in two weeks after the job fair. At this time, you can check on the status of the position and offer to come in for an interview.

 **Continue to research the companies** that interest you. Treat the job fair interview as an initial contact, not the last.

 **Review your notes from the job fair** and evaluate what you think went well and what you can improve for the next job fair or interview.

 **Keep accurate records of your contacts**, including dates of your letters or telephone calls and copies of all application materials that you send.