

How to Succeed at Job Fairs

The Missouri Career Center offers periodic job fairs for area employers and employees to connect. These events typically feature 25+ recruiting employers seeking quality employees. In some cases, interviews are conducted on the spot. During our most recent job fair, *Career Morning*, over 500 job seekers attended.

Why should job seekers attend a job fair verses sending in a paper or online application? Because job fairs provide an opportunity to personally meet, greet, and make an impression on those who make hiring decisions. People who you may never get the opportunity to meet or interview with otherwise.

Now that we've got your attention, here's how to network and succeed at job fairs and get that much closer to landing a good job:

- Know what companies will be attending and research them.
- Have enough resumes to leave one with each employer.
- Attend early when you and the employers are fresh. The early bird gets the worm.
- Dress appropriately for the type of job you're applying for. If you aren't sure, dress a notch above the normal dress code for the job. DON'T wear wrinkled, torn, or too tight clothing, shorts, sweat clothes, revealing tops, or flip-flops.
- Be neat and freshly showered. Use moderation in dress, makeup, hair, and fragrances.
- Leave your cell phone in your vehicle, along with bulky backpacks or purses.
- Take a nice binder or folder to hold resumes, paper for notes, and a black ink pen for filling out applications.
- Be patient as you wait in line. Employers will notice your every move. Leave family and friends at home unless they are also job searching.
- Approach every employer. Even if you aren't interested in the company, it's an opportunity to network. They may know of something that's available, or know someone to refer you to. Shake hands and smile. Make eye contact and be pleasant.
- Don't make it look like you are just there for the food or freebies. Be genuinely interested.

- Introduce yourself briefly. Ask about current openings. If they have applications, find a quiet place away from traffic to fill it out. Ask how to return it. Fill out the applications entirely and neatly. DON'T put, 'see resume.' Highlight your skills and qualifications in sections that ask for special skills or abilities, write 'n/a' in areas that don't apply, and put 'open' or 'negotiable' in salary sections.
- Keep everything simple and professional. Thank each employer for their time, get their business card and ask if you can call later if you have questions. Send a thank you card reminding them of your visit and outlining your qualifications.
- Keep a job search record of who you talked to, what positions you applied for, and be sure to follow up with a thank you card or phone call.
- Finally, be encouraged - know that your preparation and consistent efforts will pay off!

Information compiled for this article was supplied by Wilda Taylor and Julie Kilmer-Stoller of the Missouri Career Center. To learn more about Career Center services and future job fairs, call (417)887-4343.