

Career Fairs: How to make them work for you

Career fairs are an important method of making in-person contacts with organizations of interest to you as well as an opportunity to discover new organizations you might be interested in. Here are some tips to make career fairs work for you.

1) Learn Who's Coming Ahead of Time

Generally, you can learn the names of most, if not all the employers who plan to participate*. Narrow the list down to those you are most interested and begin to research their products/services and employment needs.

(*This information is available on the Career Center's website at <http://www.sfsu.edu/~career>. Just click 'Events Calendar')

2) Contact Employers of Special Interest Ahead of the Fair

Send an email expressing your interest, adding a resume* target to their needs, to all companies in which you have a special interest. Point out that you will be in touch with them at the fair - and are looking forward to seeing them at the event.

(*The Career Center can assist with this type of resume provided you have the necessary information)

3) Prepare a 45-second Summary of Your Qualifications

Career fairs offer only brief contact with organizations so be prepared to make the most of your time. Work up an interesting verbal summary of your background, achievements, and career interests so you won't be fumbling for words at the wrong time.

(The Career Center walk-in counselors can assist with preparing your summary)

4) Dress the Part

The first impression you create is critical so dress in conservative, professionally-tailored, well-pressed clothing. How you look will play a big part in determining employer interest.

5) Arrive Early and Plan to Stay Late

Get there when the fair opens and head right away for your favorite employer. Make sure the employer knows that it is #1 on your list. Then follow through with other employers you like. Use the balance of the day to contact organizations which are less familiar but look interesting.

6) Take the Right Things with You

Take along a supply of resumes. Although many employers are now asking students to apply online there are many who will accept a resume, too.

7) Know What You Are Going to Ask

Try to have one or two questions in mind for each employer. The questions should reflect the research you have done on the employer and your interest.

8) Learn What's Going to Happen Next

As you leave each employer, learn what happens next and what, if anything, you should do to advance your candidacy. Make sure to pick up a business card and note the main points of the conversation you had so you can remember your contact at a future date.

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