

How to Approach Prospective Employers at Job Fairs

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Last Updated: May 25, 2021

Whether you're a recent graduate, mid-career, or switching fields, job fairs are a great place to meet hiring managers and company recruiters. They can also be overwhelming! With thorough preparation and the right attitude, job fairs can be a rewarding experience. Approaching recruiters with a strong pitch, and an upbeat, professional demeanor will improve your chances of landing your dream work opportunity.

Part
1

Part 1 of 3: Preparing a Pitch



1 Identify your career goals. Make a list of the fields and positions that interest you. Maybe you're seeking a sales position in the insurance industry, or a management position in food service administration. ^[1] If you're new to the field, visit a job counselor or your university's career center to gain information, or to learn about the jobs that align with your experience or area of study. ^[2] ^[3]



2 Make a list of your most outstanding accomplishments and experiences. Did you direct an award-winning student film? Were you president of your school's investing club? If you're already in the workforce, perhaps you've led a team to record sales, or landed an important client for your prior employer. Using your resume as a guide, create a bullet-pointed list of your strengths and experiences. Narrow this list down to the 3 or 4 points that will make you stand out to prospective employers. ^[4] ^[5]

- Include your passions, as well as your work and educational background in this list. For example, a love for travel is a valuable asset in fields that require extensive amounts of time on the road.^[6]
- Prepare multiple versions of your resume. You might have one resume that targets larger corporations, while another that is geared towards start-ups. If you're a finance major, have one resume for bank jobs, and another that is geared towards in-house corporate positions.^[7] ^[8]



3 Find out which companies will be present. Most job fairs will provide you with a list, in advance, of all prospective employers that will be in attendance. Identify the 5 to ten employers you want to meet with, and research these companies online. Tailor your pitch to reflect what they do and their hiring status.^[9] ^[10]

- If you inquire ahead of time, some companies will tell you the hiring manager's name who will be attending the job fair. Bring a cover letter addressed to this person.^[11]



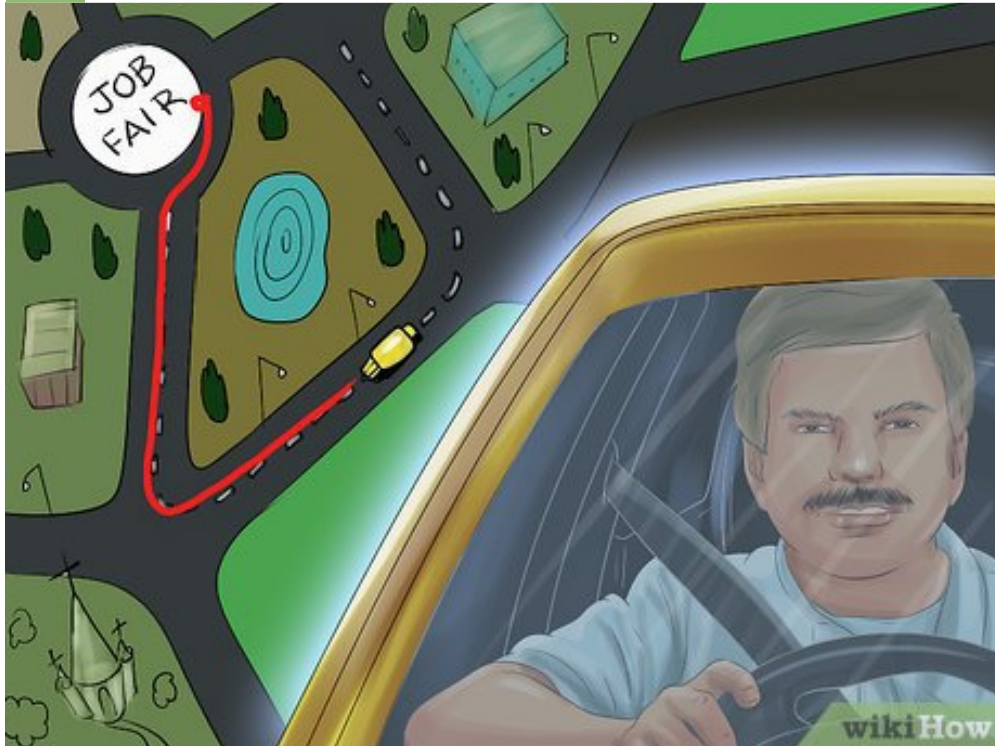
4 Write your pitch. Your pitch should feel like you are telling a story about yourself. [12] Begin by introducing yourself, your current employment status, and the type of position you're seeking. Take your bullet-pointed list and consider how each one of these experiences aligns with your career goals. In a sentence or two, explain how these past experiences make you the right candidate for this employer.[13]

- If you're a student or recent graduate, mention your major and what kind of jobs you're interested in pursuing. For example, "Hi, I'm Rebecca, I'm a computer science major exploring opportunities in mobile application development."
- If you're switching careers, consider how your prior positions and skills are applicable to your new field. For example, if you're an English teacher transitioning to a job in marketing, explain how communicating with students has prepared you for a job in the communications field.[14]



5 Practice your pitch. Recite your pitch in front of a mirror, or, record yourself on video until you feel confident. Then, practice it for colleagues, family and/or friends. Ask for feedback on the content, and your body language.^[15] Notice if you're speaking too quickly, or if you are acting stiff or unnatural. A well-rehearsed pitch should last about thirty seconds.^[16]
^[17]

Part 2 of 3: Approaching Employers



- 1 Plan your route.** When you arrive at the job fair, get a map or directory of the room. Find where your most desired employers are seated, and determine a path that allows you to move quickly from booth to booth.^[18] If you're feeling nervous, start with a company that is not your top choice and use it as warm up.^[19]
 - Arrive early to beat the crowds. Meeting company representatives at the start of the day increases the likelihood that they'll remember you. You'll also get more time to chat with them. Job fairs tend to be busiest around midday, especially those held at universities; avoid the lunch rush if you can.^[20]



- 2 Wait your turn.** If there's a line to speak with a prospective job employer, don't interrupt or join into a conversation that he or she may be having with another job candidate.^[21]



3 Make a good first impression. Introduce yourself with confidence and enthusiasm. A job fair is not the place to be aloof or shy about your interest in a company. Firms want to hire people that are excited to work there! Smile, and offer a firm handshake. After you've introduced yourself, hand them your resume and cover letter.^[22]

- If you have a tendency to get sweaty palms, sprinkle some deodorant onto your hands to keep them dry.^[23]
- Never chew gum.
- Try to avoid bad habits like rubbing/wrinkling your nose, rocking back and forth, fidgeting, or biting your nails.^[24]
- Dress for success. Don't wear wrinkled or stained clothing. Make sure your appearance is organized, neat and clean.^[25]



4 Deliver your pitch. When giving your pitch, maintain eye contact with your prospective employer, and try your best to appear effortless and calm. Avoid shuffling papers. Practicing your pitch in advance will help alleviate anxiety you may feel about talking to recruiters.^[26]

- While you want to maximize your time at the job fair, it's okay to take breaks if you're feeling overwhelmed or tired between booths. Go for a walk around the block, or take a seat for a couple of minutes. You want to be your most energized, calm self when chatting with potential employers, especially your top choices.^[27]



5 Be prepared to answer questions about yourself. Now that you've delivered your pitch, it's likely that recruiters will have questions for you. You might be asked, "What your current job status?" or "Are you willing to relocate?" Prospective employers might also be curious about special skills you possess. ^[28]



6 Ask detailed questions about the company and open positions. This is your opportunity to show that you've done your homework. Don't waste time by asking for information that you can easily obtain on their website. Some questions you could ask include:

- What is the company's culture like -- is it laid back or more formal?
- I saw that you have satellite offices in other cities -- are you hiring for those locations as well?
- Are there ongoing advancement opportunities within the company?
- What can I expect during initial job training? [\[29\]](#) [\[30\]](#) [\[31\]](#) [\[32\]](#)



7 Prepare to spend about five minutes with each recruiter. After you've made a good impression, it is equally important to exit tactfully. Don't monopolize too much of a hiring manager's time, as they have many more candidates to meet. [\[33\]](#)



1 Take a business card and informational materials. After your chat, thank the recruiter for their time. If you have questions that he or she was not able to answer, get the contact information of someone at the company who can. Ask the recruiter the best method of following up on the opportunities that you discussed -- some people prefer email, while others prefer a phone call. [34]



2 Send a thank-you email within 24 hours. Following up promptly shows that you are serious about potential job opportunities. It also shows maturity and professionalism, and that you will be a valuable asset to the organization. [35] Recruiters meet hundreds of qualified candidates at job fairs -- send a note right away, while you are still fresh in their minds. [36]



3 Include an action point in your email. Did you discuss a specific job opening or future opportunities? If so, find out how to apply -- some companies will require you to submit an application online, even if a recruiter has your resume.[37]



4 Follow up again within a week. Hiring managers and employers are busy, but staying in touch will reaffirm your commitment to getting hired. If there are not any current open positions, ask if he or she would be interested in having a coffee. [38] Building new relationships are an important part of career growth, and can lead to opportunities in the future. [39]



Expert Q&A

Question

What should I know about a company before a job fair?



Devin Jones
Career Coach
Expert Answer

Find out exactly what jobs they're hiring for. Once you know in advance who's going to be there, I would look actively at what jobs and internships they're currently hiring for, so that you can make their job easier. Rather than walking up to the booth asking why they're here, you can say "Hi Mickey. I know you're hiring for this content developer position, and here's why I want to work for you."

Helpful ☐ Not Helpful ☐

Question

How do I succeed at a job fair?



Devin Jones
Career Coach
Expert Answer

Follow up is key. If they give you their business card or ask you to send them an email, just do it right away. Remind the recruiter what you talked about, because they will talk to hundreds of people by the end of that day. You want to make it easy for them to remember you.

Helpful ☐ Not Helpful ☐



Tips

- Arrive hydrated, and eat a solid breakfast.
- It's easy to get distracted by other job-seekers at the fair. Focus on your goal of landing a job, and try not to spend too much time socializing
- Avoid asking about salary. Save those conversations for if and when you're offered an interview.

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About This Article



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Co-authors: **11**

Updated: **May 25, 2021**

Views: **20,143**

Categories: [Job Search](#)

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