

# How to Find Job Fair Success

by [Vault Careers](#)

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Whether you have a job and are looking to make a change or are currently unemployed, job fairs can be a great way to meet with recruiters. But, they can also be quite intimidating to the uninitiated. With some job fairs attracting thousands of applicants, it's important to arm yourself with a plan of action *before* you arrive. Think of attending a job fair as analogous to a visit to Disney World®. Do you want to spend valuable time waiting in a line to get on a random ride you may or may not like, or do you want to do some advance research, get a "FASTPASS," and spend time enjoying the park? You will get the most out of a job fair when you put in the time to make it work for you.

As a veteran human resources professional who has been on point at many job fairs, I have witnessed the good, the bad and the ugly in job fair behavior. By reviewing the following tips and techniques for job fair navigation, you'll be prepared for a successful experience before, during and after a job fair.

## The Good

- **Knowledge is Power** - Smart candidates take the time to thoroughly research the job fairs they attend. They find out what companies will be on the premises and decide which companies are of interest to them. They then read as much as they can about their favorite companies. When they arrive at the job fair, they have a short list of companies they want to make a personal connection with. A recruiter who is meeting with dozens of people in one day is much more likely to remember the applicant who took the time to read the book from that company's CEO, for example, or who had carefully reviewed the company's job postings and website to see where they could offer the most value.
- **Demonstrate Aptitude** - To paraphrase President John F. Kennedy, fellow job fair applicants, "should ask not what your 'company' can do for you, ask what you can do for your 'company.'" Savvy job fair attendees focus on how their experience benefits the company and offer tangible insight on how the skills they have garnered translate to on-the-job benefits for the employer.
- **Presentation Counts** – If you are going to a job fair, you want to stand out from the crowd in a positive, professional manner. What does that mean? Even if you are applying for a position that will likely require a uniform or carpenter pants, wear a freshly pressed suit and comfortable yet professional shoes, and make sure that hair and nails are freshly groomed. Savvy recruiters look for long term potential. Can this maintenance worker

become a supervisor? Can this receptionist become an account coordinator? Dress for the position you would ultimately like to have.

- **Manners Matter** – Successful job fair applicants are generally conservative when interacting with hiring personnel. Never assume that Mr. Fred Johnson wants to be called Fred. Reference him as “Mr. Johnson” until he says otherwise
- **Link Up for Best Results** – Not all social media is created equal, but LinkedIn, which was created for the business community, is an ideal online network for job hunters. Many companies are using LinkedIn to research and find candidates. LinkedIn helps companies leverage the networks of their employees as well. Many successful job fair applicants connect with their recruiters on LinkedIn after their initial meeting.
- **Traditional Paper Resume Still Rules** – Sure, flash drives are cool and can hold a lot of information, but most recruiters are still pretty old-fashioned and would prefer an old fashioned paper resume that they can read on the spot. Successful job fair applicants should bring plenty of one-page, concise and informative resumes with them in a neat briefcase or portfolio.

## **The Bad**

- **How Much Does this Job Pay?** – Asking about salary and benefit immediately is a turn-off to recruiters. Think of a job fair as a way to market yourself to employers to get an interview. Few recruiters will want to move forward with an applicant whose initial questions revolve around salary, benefits and vacation and personal day allotment.
- **Failure to Differentiate** – An applicant who arrives at the job fair with no advance information on what companies will be on-site and who they want to impress, runs the risk of waiting in endless lines to talk to recruiters at companies that aren’t the right fit. By failing to do advance research, time is wasted for both the applicant and the recruiter.
- **Resume Has Typos** – It is important to proofread a resume for typos and misspellings which undermine an applicant’s ability to get interviews and secure a job. The resume should be an error-free showcase of your experience, skills and capabilities.
- **Twittering Away to Irrelevance** – Job hunters who are social media aficionados run the risk of information overload. While a professional, updated LinkedIn profile is always a plus to human resource professionals, a Facebook page “gone wild” with postings about raucous nights at the casino or a Twitter account detailing compromising personal information, can be a liability.

## **The Ugly**

- **Gum Chewing** – While it seems incredulous than anyone would chew gum and talk to a recruiter simultaneously, it happens more than I’d like to admit. Sometimes, the gum chewing applicant is a cigarette smoker who is trying to cover their tracks. Whatever the

reason, there is no place for gum chewing on the job search circuit! Likewise, munching on chips or engaging in any other manner of food consumption in front of a recruiter is strictly off-limits.

- **Hygiene Matters** – Meeting with recruiters is not the time to forget to brush your teeth, take a shower, or groom your nails. Being remembered due to body odor or bad breath is not a ticket to employment satisfaction.
- **Employment Stalker** – At every job fair, there are applicants who fail to recognize the social cues that their interview is over. They linger at the booth, or return to the recruiter again and again during the fair. Or they send daily emails to the recruiter asking for progress reports. While appropriate follow up is important, harassment will not land you your dream job.

Job fairs sometimes offer workshops on any variety of topics related to employment. Take the time to attend these free events to bone up on skills and information. Be sure to judiciously follow up with the recruiters you've made a good connection with at the job fair. Assemble the business cards you amassed from human resource professionals and fellow attendees and link up to them on LinkedIn. Recruiters appreciate receiving a follow up thank you email which signals your interest in contributing to the organization. Just as recruiters have to keep track of multiple applicants, applicants need to develop their own system for logging information on all potential job leads.

**About the author:** [Brent O'Bryan](#), SPHR, is Vice President, Learning and Development at [AlliedBarton Security Services](#), the industry's premier provider of highly trained security personnel to many industries including commercial real estate, higher education, healthcare, residential communities, chemical/petrochemical, government, manufacturing and distribution, financial institutions, and shopping centers.