

Q&A Column
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Email Subject Line: Job Fair Coming? Prepare Yourself!

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Headline: Preparing Effectively for a Job Fair

Summary:

Question: I noticed an advertisement in my local newspaper this week for a Job Fair. It looks like a bunch of employers are getting together in one place to look for job seekers. I would really like to impress these people and maybe even come out of this with a job offer or two. Are there ways to make sure I stand out from all the other applicants who'll be there?

Lorraine F., Sudbury, Ontario

Landing Page copy

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Dear Mark,

Question: I noticed an advertisement in my local newspaper this week for a Job Fair. It looks like a bunch of employers are getting together in one place to look for job seekers. I would really like to impress these people and maybe even come out of this with a job offer or two. Are there ways to make sure I stand out from all the other applicants who'll be there?

Lorraine F., Sudbury, Ontario

Dear Lorraine,

Job Fairs can be a great way to meet employers and score yourself a new gig. Or they can be an exercise in frustration – with long line ups, a series of nerve wracking mini-interviews, and nothing to show for it in the end. It all depends on how you approach them, and what you have to offer.

The first thing to do is make sure that a particular job fair has employers who are in your field. Some fairs are for specific areas only; such as nursing or fashion. Others are geared toward a certain audience, for instance students and recent grads. Most others are general in nature. They attract a broad array of employers representing a range of industries and professions. As for levels of employment, typically you'll see entry-level positions up to junior management. You're not likely to ever see a job fair for CEO's and Vice Presidents!

So how do you best prepare? You can break it down into three stages: Research, Rehearsal, and Resolve. Here's how it shakes out.

Research:

In this first phase, scope out the job fair's website. Where and when is it being held. What time do the doors open? Which employers are going to be there? What types of jobs are they offering? Which credentials and types of experience are they looking for?

Pick out the employers you think you'd match up best with and head over to each one's website. There you can look for the kinds of products and services they offer. Also check out the "About Us" info: when did the company start up, who are the executives, what are they saying about themselves in press releases, and what does the media have to say about them?

Rehearsal:

Since you're heading to the fair for the express purpose of meeting live with employers, it's essential that you treat this phase as interview preparation. Make sure you have 25 spotless, error free, dynamic resumes printed out on good paper. Is your 30 second personal introduction down pat? Think up some relevant questions to ask the employers that show you are keen. And pick out your best business attire because first impressions count. Click here for more on "Getting Ready For a Really Important Interview."

<http://www.workopolis.com/servlet/Content/resource/20060112/cqa20060112?gateway=work>.

Resolve:

Employers love enthusiastic applicants. So show up early and be among the first in line to wait outside the locked doors. Then head directly to the most important employers on your list. Bring with you material to read: because you'll definitely be waiting in line throughout the day, and it also hints to employers that you can spend your idle time productively. (Hint: leave the latest copy of Playboy or Playgirl at home!) Meet with as many employers on your target list as possible. And pick up a business card from every person you meet.

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Normally you don't get job offers on the spot. If employers are interested in you, they'll contact you to invite you in for a more formal interview. Which means you should follow up professionally within a day or two of the job fair to let them know how committed you are to seeing them again. For details on "Thank You Notes and Post-Interview Etiquette"

<http://www.workopolis.com/servlet/Content/resource/20060905/cqa20060905?gateway=work>, click here.

While job fairs don't happen frequently enough (since there tends to be a ready supply of applicants in many fields anyway), when one comes along in your area, with positions at your level, you should jump at it. But make sure that you go prepared – because you can bet that your competitors will.