

# The Career Fair

You recently heard somewhere that a career fair is an excellent way to meet lots of potential employers and maximize your job search time. The problem is, how do you find career fairs and what do you do once you've found them?

## To locate upcoming career fairs

- Review media, including free job publications. Don't forget to check radio and TV stations.
- Check your target companies' Career section Web sites. They'll often promote job fairs they're attending.
- Contact college career service offices in your area. They regularly conduct or know of career fairs. Non-students or alumni may be welcome.
- Search the Internet using the key words "job fair" or "career fair" and your city and state.
- Bookmark your favorite job search resources for upcoming career fairs and locations, as well as preparation tips.

## To prepare for a job fair

- Register for the career fair in advance. Be sure to get a copy of the hiring company exhibitors.
- Select the companies you're most interested in and research their Web sites, annual reports and recent media coverage. Talk to your networking contacts. Your goal is to thoroughly understand what the companies do and how you can bring value to them
- Develop your "elevator pitch" that explains what you do, what you bring to the table, and how this aligns with the company's business. Remember, you're there to demonstrate what you can do for them, not what they can do for you.
- Develop a list of questions to ask. The worst question you can ask at a career fair is, "What do you do?" A more appropriate question might be, "I saw in your most recent annual report that you are expanding your marketing operations. Will graphic designers be part of that expansion? I have a graphic design degree and have been recognized for...."

## While at the job fair

- When asked by an employer why you're there, don't answer, "A job." Instead, provide the employer with your specific goal and give the company representatives a starting point.
- Seek out your targeted companies and introduce yourself with a firm handshake and confident demeanor.
- Pitch your candidacy for a position.
- Ask questions and make a connection.
- Get business cards of people you meet at the booths.

**Note:** Even if the company is not hiring for your particular skills at the time, if it's a company of interest to you, make an effort to meet the company representatives and establish a connection you can follow up on after the job fair.

Once the career fair is over, what's next? If you collected business cards, you should immediately send a thank you note and reinforce your skills. Note something from the job fair you said or did that will help the recipient recall you. About one or two weeks after the fair, follow up by telephone, as well.