

Pennsylvania CareerLink

BERKS COUNTY

The Pennsylvania CareerLink® Berks County would like to introduce the first edition of our job seekers newsletter. The staff at PA CareerLink® Berks County would like to keep you informed of events and services as well as share some job hunting tips and pointers. We hope you find this information helpful while you continue your job search!

Sincerely,

The PA CareerLink®
Berks County Staff

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October Newsletter (2011)

How to Prepare for a Job Fair by Jeremy Bender

Job fairs are useful places to learn, network, and land a job. They are also crowded, competitive, and sometimes confusing events. Here are some steps you can take to make the most of your time and maximize your chances of finding a job when attending a job fair.

Step 1: Research

Find out in advance what companies will be attending the job fair. This information is usually on the host's website or on the promotional material distributed for the fair. When you know who is attending you can find and review the companies' websites to determine what jobs they are potentially hiring for and to be knowledgeable about the company's history, culture, and future plans. Plus if you are short on time at the fair it lets you focus on the companies that are most likely to need your services.

Step 2: Have Professional Resumes in Hand

There is nothing worse than not being able to provide a resume if asked by an employer. Make sure you have crisp, clean, and easy to read resumes handy. You might need to prepare more than one version of your resume. If you have two different areas of skills you may need a resume for each career path. For example if you have medical billing experience as well as a Commercial Drivers License and over-the-road trucking experience, a doctors office is likely not interested in your driving experience. Again be sure to carry enough copies of your resume that you can provide one to all employers at the fair. In some cases copies can be made on site but never count on that being the case. If you don't use all of the copies at the job fair they can always be used later when applying elsewhere.

Some employers will not accept hard copy resumes and will ask you to apply online instead. **This is not a brush off. February 2006 Federal regulations were passed on the way employers keep data on applicants. In most cases they cannot take your paper resume and really do need you to apply online.*

Step 3: Dress for Success

This may seem like common sense but it still needs to be mentioned. While a job fair may seem more relaxed than a formal interview the people you are meeting at the fair are the same people you would normally be interviewing with. Read our DRESS FOR A JOB FAIR article for tips.

Step 4: Be Knowledgeable

This covers many things. Impress the employers when possible with your knowledge of their company so they know you are serious. Also, make sure your resume is in your own "voice". While it is common to have a professionally prepared resume, it doesn't help if sounds like someone else wrote it and you don't

know what is on it. If you are caught by surprise about something on your resume it will leave a lasting bad impression.

Step 5: Confidence is Key

You are there to market yourself and your skills. Think about any salesperson you have ever seen. If they are confident and knowledgeable they are more successful. If someone selling you a car seems nervous and unsure of what they are saying, how comfortable are you buying that car from them? Job fairs are stressful and sometimes chaotic events. The more prepared you are the more relaxed you will be.

A job fair is a golden opportunity to meet the primary human resource staff of a company. It gives you a chance to network, promote yourself, and learn more about potential employers. If you are prepared, have a professional resume, and make a strong (positive) impression a job fair can be time very well spent.

Dress to Impress for a Job Fair by Rocio Damato

“You only have one chance to make a good first impression.”

If you are going to a job fair remember that you have only one chance to make a good first impression. At a job fair employers are looking for prospective candidates to fill positions that are available. You might even have an interview on the spot.

So, where do you start to make a good impression? Start with your appearance. Dressing appropriately for a job fair is the first factor an employer will use to seriously consider you for a position.

Let's begin with what not to wear. It is not acceptable to wear revealing clothes, sweats, pajamas, jeans, shorts, miniskirts, t-shirts, hoodies, sneakers, flip flops, or hats. Keep your accessories to a minimum. Be careful with perfumes or colognes because some people are allergic. Besides, you do not want to be remembered for the strong smell of perfume but for your qualifications.

So, what should you wear? You should dress professionally or business casual. Dress professionally, if you know that the job you are looking for will require you to wear a suit. If you choose to wear a suit then the color should be conservative such as black, navy, grey, brown or tan.

Business casual is more acceptable at a job fair. It means wearing a nice collared shirt and a tie; polo shirts are also acceptable for outdoor or warm-season events. Pressed pants such as khakis are a good option. Remember to wear socks and matching leather belt and shoes. Since a job fair will require you to stand for some time wear comfortable shoes.

Taking the time to ensure your appearance is neat and professional will leave a lasting good impression with any recruiters you may meet at a job fair. Be aware of how others might judge your appearance because it is as vital as your resume in securing a



new job.

Marketing Yourself to Employers by Mike Dopkin

Do you plan on attending an upcoming job fair and understand how important it is to make a positive, lasting impression on the employers, but are a little confused how to go about it? It isn't as difficult as you might think; incorporate these suggestions to develop a personal marketing strategy and feel confident about the impression you will make at the upcoming job fair.

During a busy job fair, a job seeker will have only a few minutes of face time with an employer therefore it is important to make the most of that time. Most, if not all, of the introductions at a job fair will start with a handshake. A handshake can project a lot; do not take it for granted. A firm handshake coupled with good eye contact shows confidence and self-reliance; whereas a weak, limp handshake and little to no eye contact might convey the opposite.

A well thought out and rehearsed "elevator speech" about yourself is a great tool to have or develop. The idea of this statement is to summarize your previous experiences, the skills you have acquired (don't forget about the transferable skills), and personal characteristics which will make you an asset to an organization. The statement should be approximately 30 seconds, about the time it takes to ride an elevator. You will need to prepare, rehearse and hone your speech until it is flawless. You never know when an opportunity might present itself and you want to be prepared, not caught off guard. Along those same lines, be prepared to answer a few questions about yourself and your most recent position. It may seem that questions pertaining to yourself or past employment would be common sense and easy to answer, however if you do not prepare you might be caught off guard.

Another point to remember while at a job fair is to stay positive and professional. Everyone knows it is currently a difficult labor market. Try not to express your frustration about the situation to a prospective employer. Showing resilience and determination rather than anger and frustration will put you in a better light in the eyes of the recruiters. On a similar note, be sure to watch your mannerisms and what you say while waiting to speak to an employer. You don't want anyone to misinterpret your actions or part of a conversation, so make sure you are projecting the right image the entire time you are at the job fair.

Be prepared to answer a few questions about what type of positions you are seeking. Again you want to project confidence. Even though it may be a few months since you have worked, if an employer asks "What type of position you are interested in?" you do not want to answer with "I just want to work, I will do anything." A list of participating employers is usually provided prior to the event. Do a little research on some of the companies you are unfamiliar with, find out what they do and any job openings they have posted. This will put you in a much stronger position to answer the various questions the recruiter may have.

As you can see, developing a self-marketing strategy is not as difficult as it sounds, and the little investment in time will result in great first impressions at job fairs and other networking events. And as a bonus, the time you dedicate



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to preparing for the job fair overlaps with the preparation necessary for future job interviews. Being prepared and confident will make your time at the job fair well-spent and could result in a new job

Networking at Job Fairs by Ashley Membreño

Attending a job fair might seem daunting considering thousands of people attend to meet with representatives from just a few companies. Rather than a job opportunity, a job fair is a means of networking with various companies to identify potential employers seeking job applicants. Think of a job fair like window shopping employers.

What is networking? Networking in its simplest form is just taking the opportunity to talk to people about your job hunt, to see if they have any suggestions, tips, or ideas to help you find leads for a job. For instance, when you are waiting in line to speak with a job recruiter, use this time to talk to the other job seekers in line. It is an opportunity for you to glean information from fellow job seekers about potential positions they have heard about or what they feel is working for them in their job search. It might be helpful to get some free business cards printed (try www.vistaprint.com) to hand out to anyone you make a connection with or who seems to be well-connected in your profession. Be sure to send a follow up thank you note to any recruiter or company representative that spoke with you, not only because it is polite, but it might just give the recruiter a reason to look at your resume for a second time.

Networking is an important aspect of the job search. It allows an individual to reach out to current social contacts to make a connection with a potential employer. Consider, research shows that 85% of jobs are never advertised. This is due to networking! At a job fair, you have the opportunity to expand your network by asking questions and forming a professional relationship with the people you meet. When introducing yourself, make sure that you are concise and to the point, remaining mindful of the other person's valuable time. Be prepared to answer the question, "Tell me about yourself" in a way that quickly explains your employment goal.

When networking, it is very important to be clear about your job goal. Remember, your network is not responsible for getting you a job. Your network is available to help you reach out and identify potential job leads. The job market is especially competitive in this current economic climate. One way to overcome being just another number in the crowd is to network to make yourself one of a few applicants who are known by someone in the company.

How do you make the most of the networking opportunities presented by a job fair? A job fair is like shopping for a job; it is a way for employers to meet serious job seekers face-to-face, even before seeing their resume. Being prepared to answer questions about yourself, dressing appropriately, investigating the companies present and talking with recruiters are keys to successfully navigating a job fair. If you are prepared, a job fair can be an excellent opportunity to network with potential employers and fellow job seekers and might just lead to getting the job of your dreams.

A job fair is a wonderful chance to build your job seeking network. Make the most of the networking opportunities at a job fair by conversing with fellow job seekers, meeting with HR recruiters, and sharing information with other employment seekers. Building your network is a great way to build your career.