

Job Fair Do's & Don'ts

"You really have to think of yourself as a walking, talking, breathing resume," says Bob Cramer, president of Career Concepts USA, a Cary, Ill.-based company that hosts more than 300 job fairs each year. "Nothing replaces meeting someone face-to-face, and it's in that first two to ten minutes that they decide whether you are worth their time to take the next step."

DO have a specific strategy for maximizing your time at the event.

DO pre-register for the event, and **DO** attempt to get the list of attending companies before the career fair.

DON'T eliminate companies because they are recruiting for positions outside your field; take the time to network with the recruiter and get the name of a hiring manager for your particular career field.

DO attempt to research basic information about each company you hope to interview with at the job fair. A common career fair question from recruiters is, "Why do you want to work for our company?"

DON'T just drop your resume on the recruiter's table and walk off.

DO prepare a one-minute "commercial" that focuses on the unique benefits you can offer the employer - your unique selling proposition. And be prepared for a few common interview questions.

DO be prepared to talk about your work experiences, skills, and abilities

DON'T be afraid or intimidated by the recruiter; he or she is there to do a job - to meet and screen potential candidates.

DO have a few questions prepared for each recruiter, but **DON'T** ask questions that any good job-seeker should already know, such as "What does your company do?"

DO say the recruiter's name several times during your conversation, even if you have to keep glancing at the recruiter's nametag. And get a business card (or at least contact information) from each recruiter.

DON'T forget to eliminate such bad habits as playing with your hair, chewing gum, fidgeting, rocking from side-to-side, acting distracted, rubbing your nose, etc.

DO remember all the keys to successful interviewing, including a firm handshake, a warm smile, eye contact, and a strong voice.

DON'T use filler words such as "um", "like", "you know."

DO bring enough copies of your resume to the career fair. And **DO** bring different versions of your resume if you are searching for different types of jobs.

DO take advantage of the time you have to build rapport with each recruiter, but don't monopolize their time.

DON'T ever just walk up to a booth and interrupt a current conversation; wait your turn and be polite.

DO dress professionally - conservative is always the safe choice.

DON'T ever say anything negative to the recruiter about your previous jobs, companies, or supervisors.

DO be sure to ask about the hiring process of each company, but **DON'T** ask questions about salaries, vacation time, and other benefits.

DO take the initiative and ask about the next step in the process. And **DO** be prepared to follow-up all job leads.

DO be sure to follow-up with each recruiter. Some experts say to call and leave a message on their voicemail right after the job fair, but at a minimum you should send each recruiter a thank you letter within 48 hours.