

Seven Reasons to Attend a Job Fair

Denise Bissonnette



1. Career Exploration

People who choose carefully where and for whom they work are happier in their jobs than those who simply take any job that becomes available. It is the reward that comes with making an “informed choice”. What that means, of course, is that you need to become as fully informed as possible as to what your choices are! Attending a job fair can be a terrific way to expand your horizons about the variety of employers and service providers in your community, about what various companies and agencies have to offer, and about what opportunities might fit with your particular needs, abilities and interests. For those who are looking for career direction, a job fair can provide a perfect setting to explore your options! The kinds of information to be gathered include:

- Possible career tracks within particular industries;
- Employment opportunities within particular companies;
- Potential training, internship, mentorship or job-shadowing opportunities; and,
- Job search tools and resources available within local employment service providers.

2. An Opportunity to Network

Considered by many as the most effective job search strategy, much has been written about the importance and helpfulness of networking when looking for work. One of the key benefits of attending a career fair is the opportunity to meet, engage and connect with new people in a variety of situations. Whether it's at the registration table, while having coffee, exploring the exhibits, sitting with people in a workshop, or just cruising around the fair, a job fair can offer a unique opportunity to expand your network in a variety of ways, both personally and professionally!

3. An Occasion to Practice and Hone Your Skills

Attending a job fair is a way of “putting yourself out there” in a low-risk, non-threatening situation, one in which employers are there for the explicit purpose of meeting and engaging in conversation with job seekers. Even for those not currently looking to enter the job market, attending a job fair offers a unique opportunity for you to gain valuable experience in essential job search skills which include:

- Presenting yourself in a professional manner;
- Introducing yourself with calm and confidence;
- Effectively responding to interview questions;
- Asking good questions in a clear and concise manner;
- Initiating conversation with comfort and ease;
- Developing good listening skills;
- Gaining a comfort level in networking.
- Gathering job market information; and,
- Following up on job leads or other opportunities to engage with local employers.

4. Meeting Face to Face with Employers

Who do you think you would be more apt to go out of your way to interview – someone whose resume you received in the mail but who remains faceless, or the person who you met in person, shook hands with, and enjoyed a moment or two of lively conversation? One of the greatest challenges of the job search is getting “face time” with the people who make sure that their resume or application gets in the right hands of the right people at the right time. For many, the greatest benefit of a job fair is to save the time, effort, and discouragement that can result from sticking with more impersonal job search methods like mailing resumes or responding to Internet postings. Having the opportunity to meet you

in person, hear your voice or see your smile, could be all the difference in their decision to get your resume or application in the right hands!

5. An Opportunity to Attend Fun and Engaging Workshops

Many job fairs offer free seminars for job seekers delivered by seasoned trainers on important and timely subjects pertinent to the job search. These workshops typically equip the job seeker with effective and practical tools and new ideas, serving to both better equip you for the job search while simultaneously renewing and inspiring you with fresh thinking about your possibilities!

6. The Benefit of Being in Community

The job search can be a humbling experience and a challenging endeavor for people in all fields, and on all levels of skills and ability. It is not unusual for job seekers to feel alone in their efforts to find employment. One antidote to this feeling of isolation is having the experience of being part of a larger community of people who share similar challenges while reaching for their own dreams. There are numerous benefits to be had by spending a day engaging with your peers who have a variety of skills, interests and disabilities, and with professionals from a variety of industries and positions. Such an experience can build your confidence, renew a sense of belonging, and inspire hope as you engage with people who have achieved their vocational goals and/or are in pursuit of them!

7. Mixin' it Up by Doing Something Different

If for no other reason, think about attending a job fair just to participate in something out of your ordinary day-to-day job search. Be open to the experience, to the people, and to the possibilities that await you in what can often be a dynamic, open forum.

Four Additional Tools on “Making the Most of a Job Fair”!

Preparing to Make the Most of a Job Fair: Tips for Before, During and After: a great introductory piece that provides the job seeker a kind of “master plan” for preparing for the three stages of a job fair. Lots of good tidbits! <http://m1e.net/c?143328663-LxdKTqE82.3Lw%407390025-3uSq/2rWfj12o>

Preparing Your Personal Summary provides an overview of how to prepare 1-3 minute Personal Summary, including what employers want to learn about the person, how to change it up, and how to move beyond basic qualifications. A three page tool of prompts is also provided to assist in writing one's summary. These prompts would also be useful in interview preparation and the vocational discovery process. <http://m1e.net/c?143328663-SxOErqvw8yqM%407390026-2NxpIXiMk5g3M>

Great Questions to Ask Employers covers why it's important to prepare questions to ask of employers, the etiquette of asking questions, and a comprehensive list of sample questions. (Many of these questions could also be used for purposes of informational or employment interviews.) <http://m1e.net/c?143328663-m3o3Zz2BI7Dgs%407390027-rORoiPjgr2gOs>

Following Up after a Job Fair – Sending Thank You Notes to Employers includes five reasons to send thank you letters to employers, what to include in a letter and who to send it to, and provides four sample letters. <http://m1e.net/c?143328663-8csfL76/4WstU%407390028-RPLbKQeUdZwJ2>

Note from the author: “We welcome your comments and feedback on this article! Please consider sending us your opinions, perspectives, experiences or related resources on this topic. Unless you specify otherwise, your comments and contact information may be edited/published in a future edition of the True Livelihood Newsletter. Email your comments to TLN@diversityworld.com”

© Denise Bissonnette, March 2012 (If not used for commercial purposes, this article may be reproduced, all or in part, providing it is credited to "Denise Bissonnette, Diversity World - www.diversityworld.com.")