

## JOB FAIR STRATEGIES

**Have realistic expectations.** Few people will walk away from a day of interviews with a job. The world doesn't work that way. Smart people will be satisfied with a few promising leads, a professional or two who shows a willingness to help and some useful information from one of the workshops. If you leave with that much, you have spent your time well. When you talk to a dozen recruiters in a day, expect a few to be duds. Don't let them get into your head or in your way.

**Be prepared.** Have sample copies of your resume (25-30 copies), take a pen, and note pad. While job fair organizers might be distributing copies of participants' resumes, it pays to have your own copy in hand—just in case. Be ready to interview on the spot.

**Do your homework.** If you plan to interview with a particular company, learn what you can about it. Know where it is, its audience, and its reach and position in the market. Check it out on the Web. Be ready to be asked some informed questions. Some recruiters like to ask, "what can you tell me about my company?" (My goodness! Shouldn't *they* already know something about it? They do, of course, what they want to know is whether you've done any homework. Show them.)

**Dress to impress.** You don't have to have an expensive suit to look professional, but you should show the recruiter that you're aware of what people are wearing in offices these days. Women should wear a business suit, a dress, or a skirt of a conservative length. Most of your peers will be wearing closed-toe shoes and nylons. For men, office attire. Most of your peers will be wearing suits or jackets. Concerned that the dress code in corporate America will squash your identity? Let's hope that your identity has more to it than a style of dress. But if you feel strongly that an earring (or several), or a mode of dress is an important part of who you are, then stick with it. Understand, though, that this decision might cost you a job with certain places—places where you might not really want to work, anyway. Tight, revealing, or out-and-out sloppy clothing is not ever going to make the right kind of statement.

**Be outgoing.** Talk to recruiters and other job-seekers whenever you have the chance. You can do a lot of good work at meals, breaks, and workshops. If you arrive with friends, split up. You can talk later, but don't use time you could spend networking by hanging out with each other.

**Wear your name tag.** Wherever you're likely to encounter others from the job fair. You may feel conspicuous wearing a name tag. That's good. You *want* to be conspicuous.

**Be assertive.** If you want to talk to a particular recruiter but are not scheduled to, find the right person at a spare early moment and set up a meeting.

**Look for the person behind the recruiter.** If you're an artist ask the recruiter how artists get hired.

**Follow up.** The people who get the most out of a job fair are the ones who followup with a letter or phone call within 24-48 hours. Job seekers who think that the work stops when the job fair is over are the ones who have the most trouble getting their careers started. Oscar Miller, who recruited for the Philadelphia Inquirer said that after the first day of a job fair he would note the best people he talked to. He would make it a special point to see them again on the second day, just to reinforce the connection. That immediate followup is a good strategy for job-seekers, too.