

# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A JOB OR CAREER FAIR

## 1 – Understand that job fairs are interviews

It's critical to understand that a job or career fair is nothing more than a series of screening interviews done in a short timeframe. Recruiters are there to identify strong candidates for their organizations so they can conduct follow-up interviews. Every interaction with a recruiter or company representative should be considered as a short interview.

## 2 – Dress accordingly (first impressions are critical)

We can't emphasize this enough - wear the appropriate attire. We recommend business attire, but realize that some members will be coming from their work environment and can't change. This is acceptable but not preferred unless it's a military specific job/career fair. Don't waste everyone's time by coming to the event in jeans, shorts, t-shirts, sandals or wearing a baseball hat. You won't be taken seriously if you're not wearing a uniform or at least dressed in business casual.

## 3 – Do your homework (research companies that you know will attend)

Research the companies that you know will be attending and align your skills and strengths to their needs.

## 4 – Arrive early

Recruiters are human too and become tired and fatigued after standing on their feet and talking non-stop for several hours. The earlier you arrive, the better chance you'll have of making a positive impression.

## 5 – Have your elevator speech ready

Be ready to provide a 30-60 second pitch that's tailored to the position/company and includes your full name.

## 6 – Bring multiple copies of your resume, a notepad, and pen

Be ready to hand-out your resume, discuss highlights and collect notes about the company, position or recruiter.

## 7 – Talk with as many recruiters and companies as possible

Corporate recruiters talk to other recruiters and share names, resumes and notes. If a company finds a great candidate but doesn't have an immediate opening to match their skills, they will often talk with others in their company to see if anyone has an opening or share this information with a recruiter from another organization that's not a competitor.

## 8 – Ask good questions

Failure to ask good questions means lack of preparation, low interest or desperation. Avoid this mistake by preparing beforehand. If you weren't able to research the company prior to the fair, study their materials before talking with them, or listen to their discussions with other candidates to better understand their organization.

## 9 – Maintain your energy level, make eye contact, have good posture and use good etiquette

Firm handshake, stand up straight, look them in the eye, be respectful and show interest. If necessary, take a short break, eat a snack or get a drink of water. Afterwards, remember to look in the mirror and check your teeth and breath.

## 10 – Be professional and remain focused on your objective

You're attending to get a job, not to collect free pens and coffee cups. Gather only those materials which are important to the job search (brochures and business cards). If they hand you an item, accept it (don't refuse) and say thank you.