



Solution

Job Search Master Class[®]

Job Fair & Career Fair Checklist

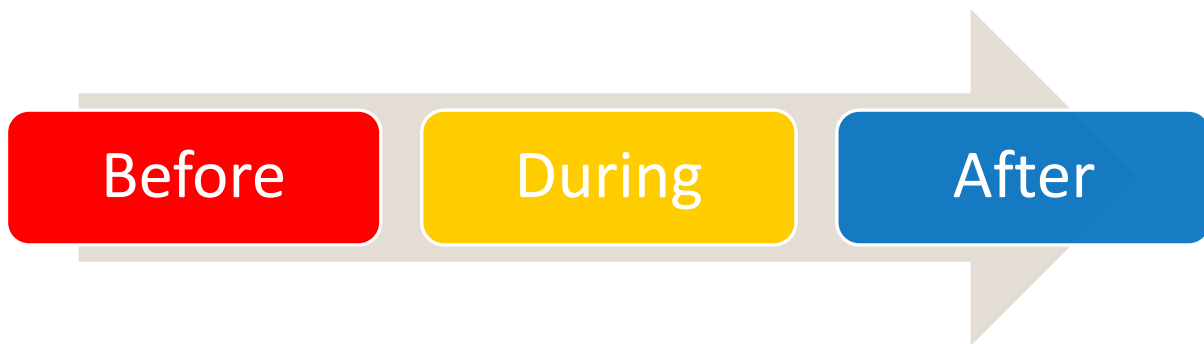
Drive for Results!

Do you want to secure interviews and offers right from job/career fairs? Are you wondering how you can stand out to potential employers at a job/career fair? Here is your step-by-step checklist to revamp the way you participate in these events in the future. Use this tool for virtual job/career fairs, too.

Many employers are sizing up candidates quickly based on first impressions. **You are being watched!** So you always need to be at your very best. Everything you write, say, and look matters.

To be successful, we recommend a bold and structured approach. I'll coach you through it.

YOUR MISSION: Maximize your results by doing work **before**, **during**, and **after** the Job or Career Fair.



PHASE I - What to Do Before a Career Fair

Logistics:

- Register and put the event in your calendar, including plenty of drive time to arrive right when it opens. For virtual events, join first thing.
- For virtual career fairs, complete your candidate profile, including posting your résumé. If invited to write a summary, type it into Microsoft Word first to correct all grammar and spelling.

Prepare your top targets:

- Secure a list of the companies or “exhibitors” attending the job fair. The hiring companies are added continuously until the day of the event, so keep checking weekly and then again the day before.
- List each of the attending companies
 - Research each of the attending companies by going to their website. For virtual career fairs, you can read about each company on the job/career fair website.
 - For virtual job/career fairs, note the hours that representatives are available to chat or meet.

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- Group your top target companies, so you move to their booths or tables at the beginning of the job fair. Create a list with all companies and mark them with A, B, or C, with “A” being the highest priorities.
 - *Coaching:* Keep in mind many job seekers tend to visit companies that they know, but the perfect opportunity might be with a company you have never heard of.
- ❑ Visit each company’s website, and find 1-2 jobs on their career page that you are interested in. Read and save the job descriptions so you can bring them to the job/career fair, in person or virtually. Remember, companies may post job opportunities into the virtual career/job fair, but there may be many others for you! Find them.
- ❑ Try not to pre-judge organizations based on their name and preconceived notion you might have about them—you might be surprised at what a company might have to offer you.
- ❑ Fill in your **Job/Career Fair Tracker** with position numbers and titles for each job you identify.

- ❑ **Script your elevator pitches.** But, careful, there are two elevator pitches!
 - ❑ Nobody will say, “*tell me your elevator pitch.*” There are two different questions. “*Tell me about yourself,*” and “*What are you looking for?*” Write out concise answers to each and be ready to give company representatives a short statement of your background for each one. Then listen hard to which question they ask!

- ❑ **Plan What to Wear**
 - ❑ First impressions are crucial, so put on an interview-ready outfit. Every interaction with a prospective employer is essentially a job interview. So, dress professionally - as if you’re going to an interview and want the job. Once you land the job, you can wear whatever is appropriate for their dress code. I have never met a recruiter or hiring manager who said, “*Wow, he or she dressed too professionally.*”
 - ❑ Virtual job/career fairs often have the ability to have a video chat with a recruiter or hiring manager. Minimally, dress well from the waist up and take advantage of that feature, if available.
 - ❑ Important considerations:
 - Hair is neatly trimmed.
 - Women, modest make-up, and limit fashion accessories. Simple is better.
 - This is not the time to stand out with a unique look. You want them to think, “Yes, I can picture them working in our company and working with our other employees.”

- ❑ **Plan what to Bring or Have by Your Side**
 - ❑ Your Job Search Master Class® Job/Career Fair Tracker. Write down everything you learn, questions you think of, ideas that come to mind, and insights anybody shares with you!
 - ❑ Pad and pen. Take notes of every conversation, make a list of everyone you meet, record additional contacts, or recommended resources. Anything you hear can be golden information after the vent. If the event is virtual, keep the pad by your side and write, write, write!
 - ❑ Your résumé. For face-to-face fairs, bring multiple copies, so you don’t run out. For virtual, have your résumé master file saved and be able to e-mail it when asked.
 - ❑ Business Cards – For face-to-face fairs, you can make personal business cards at home with your contact information, including name, phone, personal e-mail, and your LinkedIn URL.
 - ❑ Portfolio – a leather (or leather-like) portfolio that can neatly hold your résumés, extra business cards, the Job/Career Fair Tracker spreadsheet, and a pad for the notes you will take.

“Plan your work and work your plan”. – Napoleon Hill, American Self-Help Author

Phase II - What to do During the Career Fair

About the Company Recruiters or Representatives

- Company representatives may be recruiters or hiring managers. If you don't know, ask them!
- Don't assume they know everything about every open position their company has. What they do know is the best way to apply then secure an interview. That is your primary goal: getting clarity on their process and enlisting the representative's help.
- Be positive: Your appearance and attitude will help the recruiter determine if you are a fit for their company. They may be taking notes, too.
- Do not monopolize their time. Be respectful. Have specific questions written out prior.
- Write down everything they say. Listen to group conversations, too, since you will learn a lot there.
- Ask for their e-mail and ask if you can follow up with them.

About Your Expectations

- It's not likely you will receive a job offer at the event.
- You are given the chance to meet representatives of organizations, have a short conversation, demonstrate your talents, and learn more about what they have to offer.

Arrive early

- The best time to be there is right when the doors open, physically or virtually. The company representatives will be fresh and eager to connect. They want to find candidates!
- Plan to spend the full amount of time scheduled at the job fair. If it starts at 1:00 pm and ends at 5:00 pm, plan your "attack" in 1-hour blocks so you won't feel rushed, and yet will cover the entire event.
- Be sure to go to every company booth. It's not the time to be selective; it's your time to learn.
- For virtual events, remember to check when the company representative will be "live" to chat with you or to do a video call! Don't assume someone will be live at their booth all day.
- If there are educational sessions, block time for those, too. Dedicate the whole day to learning.

Walk around, physically and virtually

- When you first arrive, walk around the job fair to get a feel for the layout and where each employer is located. Decide whom you want to speak with and in what order. Approach the company table and pick up some literature, job listings, and other material. Pick up the representative's business card if it is on the table.
- Others already in the virtual room may be in the midst of a conversation and you are welcome to chime in. Stand by and listen to the recruiter if they are talking with someone else. Same in a virtual room in a virtual fair, too.
- You can also opt to chat privately with an employer, where you may ask about open positions, details about the organization and your qualifications.
- Employers may even want to video chat with you face to face.
- NOTE: Steer clear of attending career fairs with your friends or colleagues since it's easy to get sidetracked.

What NOT to Say

Do NOT walk up to the table and say any of the following:

- "What does your company do?" (you should have researched that)
- "What open jobs does your company have?"
- "Will you help me get a job here?"
- "If I give you my résumé or tell you my background so you can tell me which jobs I should apply to?"

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What to Say

The company representatives are there to recruit, educate, or attract talent. They are not there to conduct your job search for you.

When you approach the recruiter, step up to the table (physical or virtual) and introduce yourself. A firm handshake and direct eye contact are essential. Show that you are alert, enthusiastic, and confident. State your specific job goal and share the specific jobs you found at their company. Be sure the jobs you identify are a fit, meaning, you have at least 60% of the skills and experience they specify on the job description.

Here is a short list of questions that you can use over and over:

- May I share my career goal with you?
- I'm interested in <function> (such as operations, logistics, program management) at <their company name>. May I share the specific jobs I found that I would like to apply to?
- I plan to apply to positions online. May I contact you after that step and ask you to forward my credentials to the recruiter?
- Once I apply online, how do I find the recruiter who is assigned to my specific position?
- Are you conducting interviews here at the career fair?

Tips:

1. Talk less. Be **interested** vs. trying to be interesting. This is your chance to connect, but you will be following up with them after the career fair to ask for their support.
2. Before you leave, collect a business card from each company representative. If virtual, ask them for their e-mail address and spelling of their full name.
3. Once you are away from the table or chat room, take notes about the conversation: whom you met, what you learned, additional research to be done, networking opportunities, etc. This will all come in handy for your follow up and future conversations with the company.

Mini-Interviews – Rare-but-possible

- A mini-interview may take place at the table or on a video call and may last only 5 minutes.
- In advance, prepare your answers to the two common “elevator speech” questions: “Tell me about yourself,” and “What are you looking for?”
- Be prepared to explain any item on your résumé in full detail.
- Write notes and make sure that you follow through on the recruiter's requests, such as e-mailing a résumé or completing an online application.

What if They Don't Have Jobs for You Right Now?

Let's say you see a company that you want to work for, but they are not hiring for your field at this time. What can you do? First, view the company representative as a contact who can help you in the future. Ask them, “Can I contact you when I find a position I am targeting?”

Your main objective is to get the name, title, and e-mail of the primary contact within the company who hires in your field.

Expert Tip: Follow the Rules

- If an employer asks you to bring a resume, do that.
- If the employer offers an extra information session, attend it. Employers take note of who shows up at programs or workshops they offer.
- If they tell you that you need to submit a writing sample, do that.
- If they ask you to apply online, do that.
- If you don't pay attention to or follow the instructions in the application process, the employer assumes that you're not really interested—or that you won't be able to follow instructions if you worked for them.



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Before Leaving

At the end of the job/career fair, pay a second visit to the companies you want to work for. Thank him or her for their time.

“After spending time here today, I wanted to share that I am most impressed by your company and want to work there.” The last impression is as important as the first. They may have spoken to many people at the fair, and it will be great if they remember your name over the other candidates.

III. How to Follow Up After the Career Fair

- Take the following steps within 24 hours after the career/job fair. Use your computer only, not your phone.
 - Send each company representative a thank-you e-mail. “Thank you for meeting with me at the <name> event on <date>. I would like to follow up with you once I have done more research. I will e-mail you to ask you for a 15-minute phone or web conversation.”
 - Connect with each company representative you met via LinkedIn.
 - Open their full profile, click “connect” then add a personal note.
 - Write a lengthy message referencing your meeting:
“< name, it was great meeting you at the <name> event on <date>. I will follow up with you after further exploration of opportunities to work at <their company>. Thank you for connecting with me here. Regards,

<Your full name>
 - Fill out your Job/Career Fair Excel tracker with every move you make.
 - In your calendar, put appointments to yourself to follow up one week later. Then again, for two more follow-ups spread one week apart. Don’t give up! Persistence will pay off.

Remember, job offers will not be made at the job/career fair. However, follow through with the above steps, and you could be on your way to an interview.

Dana Manciangli has been a civilian corporate executive for more than 30 years and has leveraged her employee hiring and management experience into that of author, blogger, keynote speaker, career coach, and global career expert. She is the author of *Cut the Crap™, Get a Job!* and founder of Job Search Master Class®, Job Search Master Class® for Veterans, Job Search Master Class® for Military Spouses, and Job Search Master Class® for College Graduates.

She has had a remarkable career in global sales and marketing roles in Fortune 500 corporations. Retired from over a decade’s tenure at Microsoft as a worldwide sales general manager, Dana previously worked for Kodak as VP of worldwide marketing and climbed the corporate career ladder through Sea-Land, Avery Dennison, and IBM.

Dana has coached, interviewed, and hired thousands of job seekers. As a result, she has developed a proprietary job search and networking process. Her ideas and techniques in the online workshop, Job Search Master Class®, are proven to be as useful for transitioning Service Members, Veterans, Reserve/National Guard, and Military Spouses. Microsoft Corporation uses this training for their Veteran and Military Spouse programs.

Follow her on [LinkedIn](#) and click “[subscribe](#)” to sign up for her free advice and free webinars.

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