

## Job Fair Jitters

Fall always brings a flurry of job fairs. We've experienced the virtual fair during the pandemic. The economy is finally reopening and recharging. Opportunities abound. The best way to venture into the field is through your preparation. Here are some tips in navigating the maze and how to best market yourself to potential employers.

- A job fair is a great place to network to the attending employers and with fellow job fair attendees. Practice your 30-second introduction – remember the importance of first impressions.
- Attend workshops on such topics as resumes, mock interviews and social media use to prep for the job fair. Check with the Texas Veterans Commission for the schedule of classes leading to the Red White and You. Centurian Military Alliance also has a workshop scheduled for San Antonio in October.
- Some job fairs also provide a professional photographer for that LinkedIn profile. Take advantage. LinkedIn is a valuable tool for job seekers and prospective employers.
- Do your homework prior to the event. Find out which employers will be attending by checking the job fair's website. Review the list and research the employers that interest you. Check the website or google to company. Look up the company on sites like glassdoor.com. You can now narrow down the list and organize your activities at the job fair. The goal is to maximize your time.
- A crucial step is to update your resume. Contact Goodwill Veterans Resource Center or the TVC representative at your nearest Workforce Center. There are folks there to help. You can also contact me for help. You don't need a resume printed on fancy paper. Keep it focused and organized on the type of job that you want. And – max of two pages. Have it available on your smart phone on the day of the event. An easy email at that point.
- One thing to note about presenting resumes at job fairs. A number of employers no longer accept resumes due to the regulations now in place regarding resumes and applications. The recruiter will tell you to apply online. This allows them to track applicants and meet federal tracking requirements. The thing that I recommend is to check out Vistaprint or other source for a simple business card. You can then present the card and get one of their cards. You then have the opportunity to follow up after you have applied on-line.
- Based upon your research, build some questions to ask the recruiter. Focus your questions on the skills that they are looking for, what the company culture was like, and what kind of person are they seeking. Don't get into questions regarding salary or benefits. Also – and a big also- don't ask questions that can be found on the website.
- A final preparation is what to wear. The best advice is to wear business attire. That means a suit for men and a suit or dress with jacket for women. Shined dark leather shoes are the best. Women: Fancy heels are great on the dance floor. Your feet will say thank you at the end of the day if you save those for later and wear a moderate heel. Concrete floors for any length of time will test all. Be prepared for plenty of walking and standing.
- Remember that you need to be conservative for most employers. Be professional. Be organized. Keep papers, resumes, etc. in a portfolio or briefcase. And on one final note. Don't smell of cigarette smoke or heavy perfume.

Now's your opportunity to shine. Best of luck.

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