

Top Tips for Networking at Fairs and Conferences

1. Know Your Careers Fair!

Make sure you know what to expect when you turn up at a particular careers fair. Do some research on the companies that are going to be present too, it will come across as far more professional if you are knowledgeable about them rather than having to ask 'so what do you do then?'

2. Take Your CV/ Business Card

Make sure you take several copies of your CV and business card (if you have one). While you are unlikely to acquire an actual job offer at a careers fair, you will probably meet some people who can be very helpful in getting one. Make sure you have enough paperwork to give out to relevant people, but do not just hand out your CV randomly in the hope that someone will want to give you a job!

3. Dress Smartly

There is no dress code at careers fairs, but you are hoping to impress a potential future employer, so dress smartly. Many of the representatives of the companies and institutions will be in business suits, so try to behave and appear as though you fit in with them.

4. Arrive Early

Careers fairs can get very busy, but if you arrive early you are more likely to find the companies' tables quieter and easier to approach and that you have longer to chat to their representatives.

5. Do Not Waste Time!

Some attendees treat careers fairs as an opportunity to pick up as many free promotional items as possible, but stay focussed! Remember you are there to research career possibilities, if you know there is no way you will ever work for company x or that you really don't have the qualifications for job y, stay away from that stall or presentation. There will be plenty of materials relevant for you, so focus on those.

6. Be Prepared To Network

These events are not simply about wandering around picking up leaflets. Make sure that you talk to people, that's what they are there for! And if you talk to someone who can offer you something in the future, leave your CV or business card, and make sure you take their card. Try to appear confident and interested, but without being arrogant. Judge the situation, use it as an opportunity to sell yourself if appropriate, but more likely you will be learning about the sorts of things their company does.

7. Be Open to New Opportunities

The great thing about careers fairs is that you can find out about companies and jobs that you may never have even considered before, so don't close your mind to new opportunities. You may find yourself a new dream job!

8. Don't Be Shy!

As with all forms of networking, being willing to approach strangers to chat about your careers opportunities can be daunting, but you will almost always be met with a friendly response so get stuck in. You will find the fair far more rewarding if you take this approach.

9. Remember To Follow Up Any Leads

If you meet someone from a company or sector that you are strongly interested in, make sure you follow up this lead after the fair is over. Perhaps simply get in touch and thank them for their time and say how much you enjoyed meeting them. Or ask to be kept informed of future opportunities. If appropriate you could ask to meet with them to learn about the jobs they offer in more detail. Remember that they may have spoken to hundreds of people at the fair, so you have to stand out. The best way of doing this is to follow up the contact quickly and politely.