

Job Search Tips 3: Top 11 Suggestions for Career Fair Attendance

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Hopefully you've read the tip sheet on Career Fair Preparation in advance of the Accounting and Finance Career Expo. Get your hit list, expo kit and outfit prepared and ready to go. Here are some recommendations for the upcoming AAUA Career Expo, which will also be useful for future career fairs you might attend:

1. **Arrive early:** Beat the crowd and avoid waiting in long lines for your preferred employers. Recruiters are fresh early in the day and typically remember the first people they connect with the most. People they meet after speaking with several hundred others and are getting tired will be harder to remember.
2. **Dress appropriately:** Wear business attire (see examples [here](#) and [here](#)) to make a good first impression. If in doubt, lean toward conservative attire. If possible, leave your winter coat, boots and backpack in your vehicle, a public locker, or at the office, as these are cumbersome and diminish your professional image.
3. **Locate target employers:** When you get to the Expo, check the exhibitor map and circle or highlight your preferred employers' locations, so you know where everyone is.
4. **Follow your hit list:** If your desired employers are busy, speak with other employers to practice your introduction, questions, and help build your confidence.
5. **Be confident:** Give a firm handshake and make eye contact. After introducing yourself (with first and last names), exchange business cards with the recruiter. Smile, be polite and engage in relevant conversation!
6. **Offer your resume:** Large companies don't usually accept resumes, and will suggest you complete an online profile (you should do this ahead of time). Smaller organizations may accept resumes on site. You can hand one in then, or offer to submit a customized version the next day (including relevant info from your conversation at the Expo).
7. **Learn about the employer:** Whether or not an employer accepts your resume, ask at least one prepared question. Let the recruiter lead the conversation, so you don't come across as "pitching" or a "know-it-all". Don't ask for information that is on their website, or about salary and benefits.
8. **Keep your expectations realistic:** 1) Your goal should be to develop your network and gain information, not walk away with a job; 2) while some companies have vacancies, most are seeking candidates for future roles; and 3) it's common for job seekers to be contacted about a role weeks or months after the Expo (recruiters remember candidates who created positive impressions at the career fair). Therefore, take steps to remember who you spoke with at the Expo.
9. **Don't monopolize a recruiter's time:** Nobody likes it when a job seeker asks question after question; recruiters want to meet as many people as they can during the Expo, and other attendees don't want to wait. If a booth is busy, limit yourself to two questions and let the recruiter decide talking time by the length of their response. If there's no line-up, feel free to chat at greater length.
10. **Make the most of lunch:** Noon-hour is busy as workers pop by during their break. Avoid busy booths and make productive use of this time. Have a bite to eat. Rest your feet. Attend an information session. Assess your progress and set a strategy for the afternoon: Who have you still not met? Which questions have or haven't worked? What questions did you overhear others ask that you'd like to try? When lunch is over, get back to it with fresh energy and renewed purpose.
11. **Network:** Lined up at a busy booth? Chat and exchange contact details with other attendees. See a booth with no attendees or a participant sitting on their own? Stop and chat. Remember, the Expo is about getting connected, and there is value from connecting with everyone, not just potential employers.

Follow the above tips and you're sure to have a successful day at the Expo. Once the day is over, remember to follow up with and maintain your newly formed relationships. For ideas, check out the tip sheets on networking meetings and using LinkedIn to stay connected. Best of luck!