Opportunities at job fairs

By The N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions

For the Journal

During your job search, it is important to take advantage of a variety of opportunities, including job fairs. A list of upcoming job fairs is available on the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions website at [www.dws.state.nm.us](http://www.dws.state.nm.us). Attending a job fair is one thing, but getting the most out of job fairs is another. What are some of the most important things you can do to make the most out of a job fair or career expo?

**Prepare your cover letter and resume:** This should be the first step in seeking employment whether you are attending a job fair or just filling out an application. Updating your resume and cover letter with current employment and contact information is essential.

Be sure that the resume and cover letter format are professional, and that the font type and size are standard; you can use Times New Roman font, size 12. Your cover letter should be a single page. The ideal resume is 1-2 pages. Spell-check all your work and do not print double-sided.

Decide how many copies of your cover letter and resume you would like to take, and bring your copies in a folder to protect your documents. It is better to bring more than not enough.

**Research the businesses ahead of time:** Find out which businesses and employers will be attending the event and may have booths. Make a plan of which employers you would like to visit the most and which ones you would like to learn more about. Think about questions you would like to ask your prospective employers.

Print off a map of the job fair (if available online or prior to the event) or arrive early at the fair to review the map and layout. There may be lines and wait times to speak to some employers, so use your time effectively.

**Dress the part:** Dress as though you are going to an interview. First impressions are everything, and you don’t want to show up at the job fair and be offered an on-the-spot interview dressed in an outfit that you would not wear to work. Do not bring several bags or a backpack that may be cumbersome to hold when speaking to someone.

**Body language is everything:** When you go up to each booth, introduce yourself and shake hands. Make good eye contact, speak slowly and clearly, and be courteous. Do not lean on the display tables or chew gum while speaking to the company’s representative.

Practice an “elevator” speech about yourself, so if asked you can confidently provide a short description of who you are, your experience, and what job you would like to have. Have questions in mind that you can ask the prospective employers about opportunities they may have available, what positions they typically hire for, and any advice they may have for you when applying with their company.

**Take information home:** Even if some employers are not taking applications or doing interviews on the spot, you can find out what their hiring process is, contact information, what the company is about, and if you would like to work there. Ask for a business card or brochure so that you have information to take home.

You may even meet businesses that you were not aware of in the community or did not know were currently hiring. Finally and most importantly, follow-up with all your opportunities. Call the companies, complete job applications, and send thank-you notes to any businesses that provided on-the-spot interviews.

This is a regular column written by the N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions. For more information, go to [www.dws.state.nm.us](http://www.dws.state.nm.us).

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