

Why Portland Employers Go to Job Fairs (And You Should Too)

Posted on [January 2, 2014](#) by [Tiana Tozer](#)

“None of the employers took resumes,” is the biggest complaint I hear from job seekers after they have attended a job fair. Followed by, “Why did I waste my time?”

The employment landscape has changed. The resume alone is no longer the primary tool for finding employment. Now it’s about relationships and the application process.

What Portland Employers Say

NW Natural, a large employer in downtown Portland, receives anywhere from 100 to 1,000 online applications for a single job opening. Oregon Health & Science University, the largest employer in Portland, processes 30,000 online applications a quarter, and approximately 120,000 a year. “That is a conservative estimate,” says Riikka Salonen, OHSU’s manager of workforce equity and inclusion and OHSU Healthcare Human Resources.

Zane White, senior recruiter for NW Natural, agrees with Salonen that online applications ensure a fair and consistent process. In addition, it keeps the process transparent and helps employers comply with equal opportunity employment laws.

Why You Should Attend Job Fairs

So why attend job fairs if employers are only accepting applications online? A job fair is an opportunity to do 20 to 30 informational interviews in a day. It is a way to see the face of a company and find out what types of jobs different companies have available. It is also an opportunity to ask questions about positions, get information on the application process, receive feedback on your resume and learn how to make your application stand out and appeal to a particular company.

“It’s a chance to get a preview of an applicant. If I meet a really great candidate at a job fair I’m saying to myself, I have to remember ‘Pat,’” says White.



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“Mac and his team have the smarts, the passion, the dedication and a genuine desire to help Portland individuals, businesses, and community change-makers thrive. Thank you, Mac and team!”

[Jen Barth](#), Founder + Chief Brander, Big Small Brands

How to Make the Most of a Job Fair

How can you make the most of a job fair? Salonen and White both say, "Be prepared."

Research the companies who will be attending and the positions they have available. Identify which ones you are qualified for or interested in. "Job seekers need to be specific about what type of job they are looking for," says Salonen. "The more clear a candidate can be about what they are looking for, the more we can help."

The advice I provide to my clients who are attending job fairs is to go online, research the companies, apply for the positions you are interested in and qualified for and follow up at the job fair. It is also an opportunity to explore industries and careers. You can find out a lot more about a company by talking to someone who works there than you can online. You will also find out about jobs that you never even knew existed.

What do you never want to do at a job fair? "The worst impression is when somebody walks up to your booth and asks, 'Do you have any jobs?'" says Salonen.

For more tips on job fairs read, "[How to Make the Most of a Job Fair](#)," by Robin Reshwan.

How have you been successful at a job fair?

Check out the latest [job opportunities at OHSU](#) and [NW Natural](#) for more information.

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