

MYTH: Job offers are made at career and job fairs.

REALITY: Company representatives almost never make an offer at a fair. At best, they may tell you they will call later to schedule an interview. Just in case a recruiter wants to schedule a meeting, be prepared with your calendar and available dates.

MYTH: It is OK to “just show up” at a career fair.

REALITY: It’s never OK to just show up. Be prepared. Do your company research. Prepare your elevator pitch.

MYTH: The recruiters know about all the jobs in their company or organization.

REALITY: Typically, recruiters from the HR (Human Resources) department will have an overview of the hiring needs throughout the organization. They might not, however, know the details of any opportunity. Hiring managers focus on the needs of their department or division. It is possible that they will be aware of some opportunities in other departments or divisions, but unlikely that they will have any details. This will vary depending on the size of the organization.

MYTH: All companies represented have job opportunities available.

REALITY: Companies attend career fairs for a variety of reasons. The three primary ones are: (1) advertising current openings; (2) scoping out and screening potential candidates for future hiring needs; (3) promoting visibility for the organization.

MYTH: Company representatives and recruiters will stay at their recruiting table all day.

REALITY: Based on their work schedule and/or turnout, recruiters may show up late, leave early, or rotate shifts with other representatives.

MYTH: All you must do is drop off your resume.

REALITY: You have that option, but you would be missing an opportunity to talk face-to-face with a recruiter, make yourself a better-known candidate, develop your network, and ask questions about the company, its hiring needs, and the industry.

MYTH: There is no need to follow-up after the career fair.

REALITY: A thank you letter, and a follow-up e-mail or phone call will favorably differentiate you from other candidates.

MYTH: Specialized career fairs are only for people with that academic major.

REALITY: Though many organizations have specific needs that they will focus on to identify qualified candidates, they can still help you in three ways: (1) by providing the name of the hiring manager in the department you are interested in; (2) by providing the name of a company recruiter or HR representative who specializes in recruiting for the department you are interested in; (3) becoming a networking contact. Depending on turnout, they also might be willing to talk with you about the company and the industry.