

Instructor's Guide

for

Ex-offender's Guide to Job Fair Success

DVD

Overview

The world of work is changing. The way that people find work is also changing. Traditional job search methods, such as responding to classifieds, filling out applications, or cold-calling companies, can be time consuming and expensive for employers and job seekers alike.

Job fairs represent a valuable job search alternative. By having fifty to a hundred employers gathered in one place, job seekers can quickly learn about companies and openings in a variety of industries, and employers can make face-to-face contact with hundreds of potential employees. Job fairs are especially valuable to ex-offenders, giving them an opportunity to meet with employers face-to-face and avoid being screened out by potentially negative information on an application. It also gives ex-offenders a better sense of the kinds of jobs available and the skills required to get them.

This video discusses the value of job fairs and strategies for making the most of them. It also addresses specific strategies ex-offenders can use to be effective. By watching the video and discussing the concepts it addresses, participants will be more aware of the importance of job fairs and will be more prepared for the job fairs they attend.

Presentation Suggestions

Begin by asking participants whether they have ever attended a job fair. If so, what was it like? Was it productive? What kinds of employers and industries were represented? How were employers and job seekers dressed? What kinds of questions did employers ask? Try to get a general sense of how job fairs are run and what purpose they serve. If none of your participants has ever attended a job fair, discuss the job search methods they *have* used, such as answering classified ads. Have those methods been effective? Have participants had trouble getting interviews? Have those troubles been related somehow to their past incarceration? How would they like to be able to interview with dozens of companies—companies that are actively looking to hire people—all in one place at one time? What could the participants themselves do to prepare for such an event?

When you feel participants have begun thinking about these issues, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow the participants to state their answers and discuss them. Show the video. Encourage participants to take notes or to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video.

At the conclusion of the video, ask participants to discuss any changes they made to their answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information they learned. Follow up this discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from participants or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group. Assign the **Homework Option**, if desired.

Anticipation Quiz

Directions: Answer these questions as completely as possible. You may revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. What is a job fair?
2. Why do some employers prefer job fairs as a way to find new hires?
3. What can you do to prepare for a job fair?
4. What should ex-offenders do at a job fair to convince employers to hire them?

Answer Key

1. A mutual gathering of employers and job seekers in an attempt to recruit personnel.
2. They are often more cost effective. They also give employers a chance to meet potential employees face-to-face right from the start.
3. Review your resume. Research the companies. Prepare an introductory statement.
4. Stay positive. Don't take anything personally. Bring a functional (not a chronological) resume. Dress and act professionally.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: The One-Minute Commercial

Format: Individual/Group

Time: 20–30 minutes

Materials: paper, pen

Procedure:

1. The video discusses the importance of selling oneself at job fairs and suggests that job seekers should prepare a one-minute commercial introducing themselves and suggesting why they are a good fit for the company. Such a pitch usually consists of the following:
 - A formal introduction
 - A statement saying why the ex-offender is interested in the job
 - Statements listing the skills, training, and experience the ex-offender can bring to the job
 - A closing that states what the ex-offender hopes to get out of the interview
2. Have participants prepare their own one-minute commercials, writing them out on a sheet of paper. Then you can either have participants pitch their commercials in front of the whole class or break them into pairs so that participants can make their pitches to each other.
3. When all participants have finished making their sales pitch, come back together as a whole group to discuss strategies for making these introductory statements more effective.

Activity #2

Title: Mock Job Fair Interviews

Format: Pairs

Time: 5 minutes each

Materials: Copies of resumes

Procedure:

1. Job fair interviews aren't the same as traditional interviews. Recruiters usually only have 3–5 minutes to spend with each candidate. For that reason, job fair interviews are often more structured and less conversational. It is a good idea to practice these mini-interviews before attending job fairs.
2. Divide participants into pairs and designate one as the “recruiter” and the other as the “job seeker.” Have the recruiter pick four of the questions from the list below to ask the job seeker. After the four questions have been answered, have the participants switch roles and repeat the process. Be sure to practice professional introductions as well.
 - Tell me about yourself.
 - What are your skills?
 - What are your goals?
 - What do you have to offer this company?
 - What are your strengths?
 - What are your weaknesses?
 - Do you have any past criminal convictions we should be aware of?
 - Why do you want to work for this company?

3. When all participants have had the chance to practice answering questions, come back together as a whole group and discuss strategies. Which questions gave participants the most trouble? What impressions did participant “job seekers” make on “recruiters”? Based on the five minutes recruiters had, would they hire the person they interviewed? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions

1. The video discusses the changing nature of the job search. What difficulties do job seekers face today finding employment? What advantages do job fairs offer over more-traditional job search methods?
2. Why is it important to know your skills and interests before attending a job fair? How can that help you make your sales pitch to potential employers?
3. The truth is, ex-offenders have a more difficult time finding employment than non-offenders. What can ex-offenders say or do to convince employers that they are right for the job, that they have overcome the circumstances of their past criminal behavior, and that they are prepared to successfully reenter society and the workforce?

Quick Quiz

Note: You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for participants to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise.

Directions: Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the video.

1. Job fairs are expensive and inefficient ways for employers to fill positions.
2. You should research the companies attending a job fair ahead of time.
3. You won't need copies of your resume at a job fair.
4. Employers often run criminal background checks on all potential employees.
5. Job fair interviews are informal conversations that you don't have to prepare for.
6. The World Wide Web is a good source for researching potential employers.
7. You should always call the job fair coordinator to get a list of companies that will attend.
8. For ex-offenders, a functional resume emphasizing skills is often better than a chronological one.
9. You should visit only those booths in industries you have work experience in.
10. The other people in line are your competition. You shouldn't talk to them.

Answer Key

1. False. They are actually cost-efficient ways for employers to meet with several job seekers at once.
2. True. The more you know about a company, the more you will impress that company's recruiter.
3. False. Employers expect you to submit a resume. Bring more copies than you think you will need.
4. True. That's why it is important to be honest when interviewing for positions, even at job fairs.
5. False. Job fairs provide interview opportunities that can be highly structured and formal. Be prepared to answer traditional interview questions.
6. True. You can also call the company and ask for information or visit your local library.
7. True. Having the list can get you started on your research and will also help you focus on those companies you are most interested in.
8. True. Functional resumes emphasize what you *can do* for a company, not what you *have done* in the past.
9. False. Companies and organizations may have a wide variety of positions available. Visit as many booths as you can.
10. False. While they may be competing for the same jobs as you, you should still network with them. They may know of other open positions that they aren't qualified for or aren't interested in.

Homework Option

Have participants research upcoming job fairs in their area using the Internet. Have them write down dates and times and obtain lists of participating companies. Then have them share their findings with the whole group during your next meeting. Good places to start researching include the following:

- <http://resources.monster.com/job-fairs>
- <http://www.targetedjobfairs.com>
- <http://www.job-hunt.org/fairs.shtml>
- <http://jobexpo.com>
- <http://www.careerbuilder.com/JobSeeker/CareerFairs>

Remember that the computer and Internet can be valuable tools throughout the job search. Participants who do not have access to a computer at home should be encouraged to visit their local library for information and Internet access.

See www.jist.com for additional helpful resources for ex-offenders, including assessments, workbooks, and other videos.