

Mark's tips to surviving in the world of job fairs

The Missing Pieces

by Mark Owens

This week I thought I'd spend some time talking about job fairs, one of the employment tools seniors use for their job search. The job search, for those that don't know, is a quest that will result in many of us asking folks if they'd like to try one of those nasty Breakfast Burritos™ from McDonald's.

Most people, myself included, usually go through a lot in the morning to be clean and odor free before going to work, class, or whatever.

Because of this, I can't understand how a young urban professional, standing in her bathroom at 7 a.m. swishing Scope™ around her gums, could think "Gosh, I think I'll have a couple of those Breakfast Burritos before going to work and asking Mr. Grimsley for a raise."

Anyhow, this week we'll be looking at the job fair, which closely resembles a cross between a cattle auction, a roller derby and Spain's annual Running of The Bulls, but far less organized.

I'm going to take a second to explain how a job fair

works. Those of you who've been to a job fair before can skip to the **How To Grovel For A Job**. For those of you who haven't been to one, read on.

The basic idea behind a job fair is to get the "buyers" (company personnel managers) and "sellers" (students) together in order to match up compatible companies and candidates for jobs. Nothing could be easier... **not**.

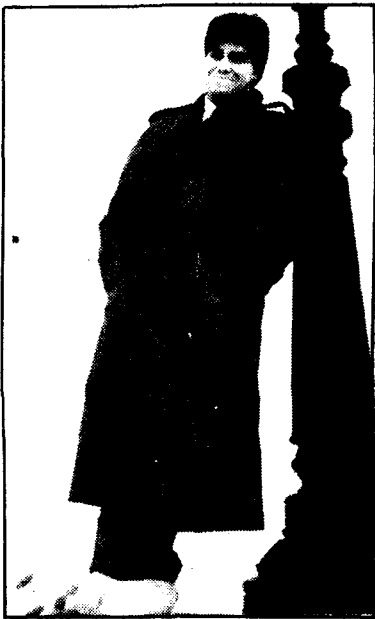
There are a couple brutal and ugly facts to point out concerning job fairs:

Brutal and Ugly Fact One: There are no jobs. Contrary to popular belief, the last actual job was filled in March of 1989 by Alfonzo Zuckermann of Queens, New York. "Big Al," as his friends call him, was hired on as a high school janitor. Since then every person in the U.S. has been given "jobs" by the federal government in order to avoid voter panic.

These jobs basically involve watching reruns of MASH and eating crackers and Cheez Whiz. The government, by the way, would rather not have everyone know this --

especially "Big Al" Zuckermann, who'd be upset knowing he's the last person in America hired to clean toilet bowls.

Brutal and Ugly Fact Two: Everyone is on file. Rather than find themselves



out of work, personnel department managers have devised a system that will let them move paper around until they can hire someone, probably in 2042.

This is known as "filing." What happens is personnel managers take the hundreds of resumes they get at these fairs and store them in big grey filing cabinets, never to see the light of day again. Managers then can claim they need weeks -- months maybe -- to evaluate them all.

No one actually evaluates anything (and *where* did you think recycled paper came from, anyway?), but the head office buys it. Your only hope to land a job rests in your resume not reaching a filing cabinet, which leads to:

How to Grovel for a Job

1) *Create a lasting impression.* I recommend dressing in non-traditional attire (such as a chicken costume), offering to date ugly sisters, setting your hair on fire -- what ever it takes to make sure the personnel director remembers you long after the job fair is over.

2) *Separate yourself from the competition.* Both you and the personnel director would be happier if there weren't so many darn applicants. If you're willing to wait a little while to get your job (and don't mind

contined spaces), I recommend bringing an automatic weapon to your next job fair. And a good lawyer.

3) *Stay out of the file.* Veteran job-seekers know the phrase "We'll keep you on file" is the kiss of death. Usually the next person to handle your resume, after the personnel director, is Charlie, the paper recycler, whos sole job in life is to make sure the good office paper doesn't get mixed up the Breakfast Burrito™ wrappers.

One way to stay out of the file is to make your resume unique from all of the others. Use fluorescent paper, wild designs and catchy phrases like "Planned a most excellent campaign to reap fundage from the aged yuppicators."

The other method is to reduce the number of resumes personnel directors see at job fairs. My method involves a distracted personnel director, a stack of OPR (other people's resumes) and a Bic lighter. Very effective.

And finally, when venturing out into that cruel job market, always use Mark's Maxim: Be bold, be creative -- you know... lie.

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