

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**MAN:** This is The Public Speaker, quick and dirty tips for improving your communication skills, with your host, Lisa B. Marshall.

**LISA B. MARSHALL:** Do you know what the number one mistake that's made by attendees at job fairs? Believe it or not, it has nothing to do with communication skills. According to the recruiters I've spoken with, it's bad breath. Really.

Today, job fairs are becoming more commonplace. And with the current job market, job fairs are becoming more crowded. I thought I'd share some tips to help you stand out from the crowd and make the most of a job fair.

Regarding the malodorous mouth, be careful not to drink coffee, smoke a cigarette, or eat garlic or onions or tuna before attending a job fair. It's best to always use strong mints before interviews. That way, you'll have peace of mind and confidence that your interviewer won't be distracted by stinky breath.

Next, find out ahead of time which companies will be represented, and do your homework. Review the company websites, the positions they currently have open, and news related to them and their industry. Consider making a cheat sheet to bring with you that outlines the results of your research. What if there's a company you didn't expect? Cruise by the table, pick up literature, and then read it-- of course, out of view. That way, at least you'll know something about the company.

Recruiters are always impressed with prepared candidates. They're unimpressed with people who don't have a clue about their company. By the way, this is the second biggest complaint that I hear from job recruiters.

At job fairs, you don't have much time to make a good impression, so you'll need to be able to quickly, clearly, and concisely explain your background and how you fit in. And don't just memorize and deliver the same monologue to every potential employer. Since each company is unique, you'll want to highlight different things for each company. Your pitch should include your EX factors. That's E-X for Experience, Expertise, and Excellence.

I talked about them last week. But again, just briefly, the experience part is the high-level

summary of your most relevant work history and education. Most likely this part will be the same for every employer, but not always.

Next is a summary of the specific quantitative or qualitative results that you've achieved. Prepare five or six different expertise soundbites. Then, for each interviewer, choose one or two that fit best. End your pitch by describing two or three skills or traits that make you who you are. Again, have five or six ready to choose from.

It's best to rehearse each of the elements as separate soundbites. Then you can spontaneously mix and match as appropriate. This way, each time you present your pitch, it will sound fresh. And more importantly, it will be customized for each potential employer.

However, in order to deliver your pitch in a clear, concise, and compelling manner, you'll need the practice. Most people need to practice this quite a bit. No one wants to hear the mind-numbing monotone of people's voices as they struggle to find the right words to describe their experience.

Recruit someone to act as a mock interviewer, or record yourself. If you're a regular listener, you know that Viddler and Utterz are my two favorite tools for this. Of course, you're practicing your words, but you should also be practicing your nonverbal communication. In fact, I often recommend the creation of communication cue cards that say things like, "smile," "breathe," "lean forward."

Visual reminders help to integrate and increase the number of these important nonverbal behaviors. Please don't think you can wing it. Practicing both your words and your body language ahead of time will significantly improve your performance.

The most important, high-value nonverbal behavior is smiling. It's critical that you smile when having conversations with company representatives. Many studies have confirmed the value of smiling. Yes, there really are smile researchers. Smiling reduces tension and helps people reach agreement, and it increases attraction.

One study showed that smiling promotes trust among strangers. One of the co-authors, Rick Wilson, in an interview said, "People who have friendly expressions are rated better or perceived to be nicer." Another study found that looking at attractive faces activates regions of the brain associated with drug addiction. And if the face is smiling, the brain lights up even more.

One really interesting study found that when mothers viewed their babies' smiling faces, this also activated the same regions of the brain. The researchers suggested it was like a natural high. That certainly explains the feeling I get when I look at the photo of my twins in my wallet.

Finally, a very recent study reported that smiling faces were easier to remember. I hope I've convinced you of the importance of smiling. But I know from experience there are some of you who are thinking, well, that's interesting, but smiling just isn't me.

I usually hear this from people who are task-oriented and analytical. My response is always the same. The data strongly suggests that smiling is beneficial. So if you have a choice, why not smile?

I'm not suggesting an over-the-top motivational speaker on public TV type of smile. I'm suggesting that for interviews, and particularly at job fairs when you don't have much time for interaction, that you need to smile, and you need to smile often. Really, it makes a difference-- a big difference.

So there you have it, four quick and dirty tips to help you make the most of your job fair. This is Lisa B. Marshall. Passionate about communication, your success is my business.

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Thanks to all the people who sent me follow-up interviewing questions. If you've got a question or a tip that you would like included in my upcoming interviewing audiobook, be sure to contact me. Send me an email, or you can connect with me in all the usual places-- LinkedIn, Facebook, or Twitter.

**MAN:** If you have questions about how to communicate better at work, leave a voicemail at 206-350-7970, or email [publicspeaker@quickanddirtytips.com](mailto:publicspeaker@quickanddirtytips.com). Sign up for Lisa's newsletter, or get information about speeches and workshops, by visiting [lisabmarshall.com](http://lisabmarshall.com). You can find a

transcript of this show and links to connect with Lisa at [publicspeaker.quickanddirtytips.com](http://publicspeaker.quickanddirtytips.com).

**LISA B.**

Hey, if you're still listening, send me your interviewing horror stories. I've gotten quite a few,

**MARSHALL:**

and they're some great stories. So please, keep sending me your horror stories. I'd like to include them in the upcoming audio book.

And don't worry, if you want to remain anonymous, I can arrange that. Thanks.