

Business Networking



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Outline

The importance, and different types, of networking

- Personal objectives and introductions
- Test networking session
- Your elevator 'pitch'

How to work a room – preparation and strategy

- Three things to know before you attend any event
- Non-verbal communication and art of rapport
- Breaking the ice – overcoming psychological blocks -

Communication dynamics in networking – the power of the listening networker

- Why it is better to listen than talk
- Effective questioning and active listening
- Creating a natural and engaging conversation, 1-2-1 and in a larger group

Assumptions when networking

- How to use the 'instant judgement' of others to your advantage
- What assumptions are you making?
- How to keep an open mind

Business networking etiquette

- Meeting and greeting at a business networking event
- Socialising: joining and leaving groups easily
- Making a good first impression in 30 seconds

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- Asking for cards, contact details and referrals
- Gaining a follow-up commitment
- Some tips and tricks

Personal business networking online

- Overview of different types of networking sites

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- Maintaining a good database
- Developing a contact strategy with different types and levels of contact
- How to analyse your contact base

The importance, and different types, of networking

- Personal objectives and introductions
- Test networking session
- Your elevator 'pitch'

Introduction

Business networking is a business activity by which groups of like-minded business people recognize, create, or act upon business opportunities.

A business network is a type of business social network whose reason for existing is business networking or contact activity. There are several prominent business networking organizations that create models of business networking activity that, when followed, allow the business person to build new business relationships and generate business opportunities at the same time. A professional network service is an implementation of information technology in support of business networking.

Many business people contend business networking is a more cost-effective method of generating new business than advertising or public relations efforts. This is because business networking is a low-cost activity that involves more personal commitment than company money. Country-specific examples of informal networking are Guanxi in China, Blat in Russia, Good ole' boy network in America, and Old boy network in the UK.

In the case of a formal business network, its members may agree to meet weekly or monthly with the purpose of exchanging business leads and referrals with fellow members. To complement this business activity, members often meet outside this circle, on their own time, and build their own one-to-one business relationship with the fellow member.

Business networking can be conducted in a local business community, or on a larger scale via the Internet. Business networking websites have grown over recent years due to the Internet's ability to connect business people from all over the world. Internet businesses often set up business leads for sale to bigger corporations and businesses looking for data sources for business.

Training objectives

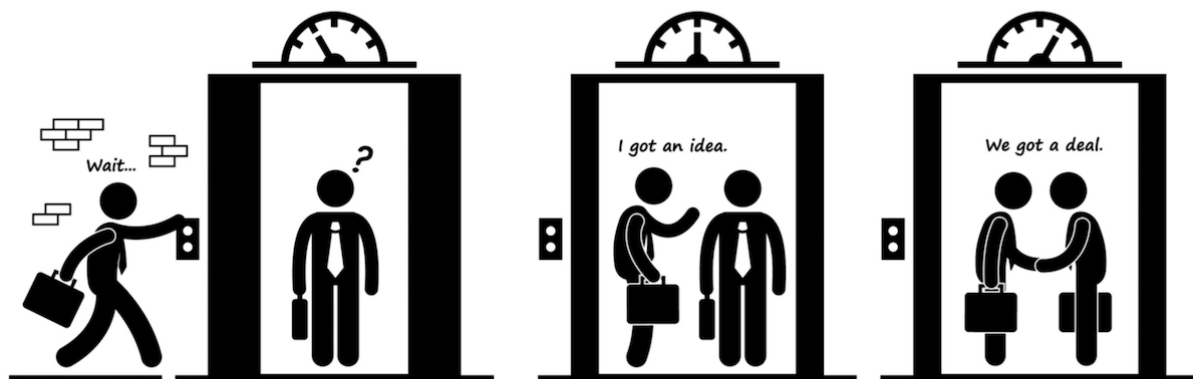
This course will help those attending:

- Appreciate the importance of networking, and different forms of networking
- Understand the dynamics of communication that are specific to networking
- Become more confident and assured when 'working' a room
- Improve their influencing skills, especially with people who are experts and in positions of authority
- 'Sell' themselves and promote their company
- Identify and manage their profiles using online social networking sites
- Use effective follow-up to maintain active contacts and connections
- Select the correct networking groups, clubs and events
- Create their own personal network

What are your personal objectives for the training?

What is the next event you are attending or where you plan use your new skills?

Create an elevator pitch



Networking 30 second summary – elevator pitch

Ask: “How much do you know about my business?”

Write a short capability statement (elevator pitch), sometimes known as an impact statement.

“Let me give you an overview of ...

We specialise in

We work with organisations and _____ (job title) to help them achieve, save, do...

Three things or areas that make us different are:

My role is:

Now list questions to invite them to talk about their organisation and role in it.

“The Secret of Successful Networking..... Give something of value so you’ll be remembered and referred!”*

How to work a room – preparation and strategy

- Three things to know before you attend any event
- Non-verbal communication and art of rapport
- Breaking the ice – overcoming psychological blocks

How to work a room

Join a small group or 'crowd' (to meet more people in less time)

- Breaking in: "Hi, mind if I join the conversation? What are you talking about?"
- Inviting others: "Would you like to join us? ", then open a space in the circle

Identify the key individuals you want to meet

- Target and research before an event
- Locate them and introduce yourself
- Review names and repeat for retention

Leaving the Conversation

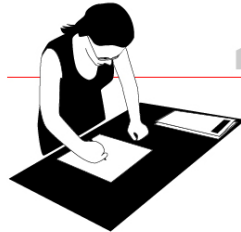
- "Excuse me" (walk away with purpose)
- "Do you have a card? I'd like to talk more about _____ when we have more time."
- "I'm going to mingle a little more to meet (target audience). Do you know anyone like that here?"
- Reconnect with specific individuals AFTER the group breaks up to collect contact info for follow up

Notes

How to work a room

Few of us were ever taught the skills to develop relationships with “strangers” and thus, do not employ the one talent that sets exceptional business leaders apart: their ability to develop business relationships. Moreover, this skill is vital for college graduates. Remove the roadblocks to effective people networking.

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO WORK A ROOM®?



1 PREPARE

Practice a 7-9-second engaging self-introduction; a pleasantry.

Check websites, journals, newspapers and news curators.

Collect 3-5 conversation items (NEWS/STORIES/SPORTS/ENTERTAINMENT) “just in case.”

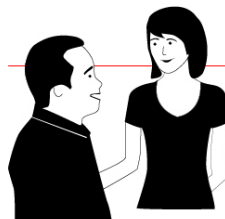
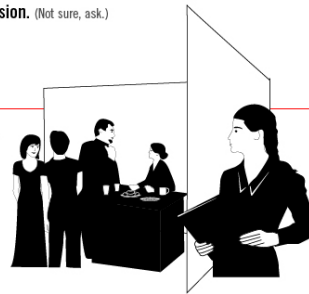
Dress for the occasion. (Not sure, ask.)

2 ENTER

Take a deep breath and step inside the room.

Glance around and observe:

- Locate the food, bar, seating and hosts.
- Look for people you may know.
- Observe where groups are gathered.
- Greet the hosts or greeting committee.
- Ask to be introduced to specific people or groups.



3 MEET AND MINGLE

Speak to the people standing alone.

It's easier and they'll be appreciative.

Have a collection of common bond icebreakers in mind.

Stick to event, venue, theme or purpose of the event, the food, the weather; what you have in common.

Act like a host. Welcome, introduce and chat with others.

Introduce people to each other. “Have you met? I'd like you to meet. You ought to know each other.”

Small talk leads to BIG TALK! “Is this your first regional conference, tweetup, MS fundraiser?” “Who do you know, the bride or the groom?” “Are you a member of the association?” “What brought you here?”

4 BREAKING AND ENTERING

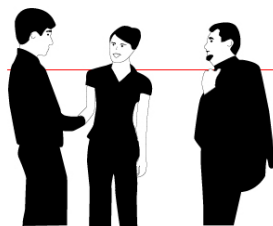
Pick an animated group of 3-5 people.

Stand on the periphery.

When acknowledged, step into the group.

DO NOT change the subject.

Lose your agenda. You're the invited guest.



5 EXIT GRACEFULLY

Extend your hand for an “It was nice to meet you” handshake.

Ask for a business card/offer yours.

*Move a quarter of the room away toward another group or person standing alone.

REMEMBER TO: SMILE and maintain eye contact. Always RE-introduce yourself with a first and last name. Rinse and repeat. Follow up.

Change your thinking and thus, your behaviour

Thoughts precede behaviour. We need to change the negative self-talk that inhibits us from reaching out to others. Do these thoughts sound familiar?

- No one wants to talk with me.
- I don't know enough to engage these people in an intelligent conversation.
- I've always had trouble meeting people; it's just the way I am.
- These people are important. I shouldn't waste their time.

Negative thought stops us in our tracks. The truth is that most people hold similar thoughts in group situations and therefore take no action to initiate conversations. Yet they wait in the hope that someone will approach them in a friendly manner! Change thoughts from negative to positive.

Remember:

- People like to talk about themselves.
- People are flattered when you show an interest in them.
- People reciprocate one's sincere interest.
- You won't waste people's time. If they don't want to talk, they'll just move on. Don't take it personally and, likewise, move on.
- You can change your behaviour; you weren't just born one way.
- Your value is intrinsic not based on status (i.e., student, CEO, lawyer, etc.)
- You have more to offer others than you think, just believe it.

Redefine the term "stranger"

As humans, we all have things in common. Regardless of how sophisticated and "important" we become, we all share threads of commonalities. When you go to a new health club, a new church, a new synagogue, a new student organization, you have a common interest with those people. When you go to a party, you probably know the host or hostess.

- Identify commonalities with people at an event.
- Use commonalities as the basis for conversation. (Ice breakers)
- During your conversation, listen intently to discover commonalities.

Practice an Introduction

The prospect of starting a conversation leaves most people tongue-tied. Why? Because they're at a loss as to how to "draw out" another person. Begin "drawing" by "revealing," introduce yourself and tell the person something about yourself that identifies your common interest.

Prepare a self-introduction that is clear and interesting and well delivered. What you say about yourself will depend on the nature of the event you are attending. Remember: your introduction shouldn't take longer than 8-10 seconds. Here are examples:

- (Alumni Networking Event)-"Hi, I'm Karen Smith. I graduated from Brandeis in 1999 with a degree in English and American Literature and am eager to learn more about your firm and the current trends in the advertising industry in Boston."

- (Chamber of Commerce Meeting)-“Hello, I’m Karen Smith. I manage a large independent book store in Newton, MA. I’m visiting your meeting to learn about Boston’s business community.”

Practicing self-introductions will feel awkward, perhaps artificial. Soon, it becomes natural and provides a means to draw out others.

Move from Guest Behaviour to Host Behaviour

Most people in group settings behave as guests or hosts: HOSTS meet people, start conversations, introduce others and make sure their guests are comfortable. GUESTS let others take their coats, introduce them to people, and “wait” upon them! GUESTS can wait forever if nobody contributes to their comfort. HOSTS have something to do, guests do not! Success at any event depends on YOUR BEHAVIOUR.

CHANGE GUEST BEHAVIOUR TO HOST BEHAVIOUR by assuming the responsibility to:

- Make yourself comfortable (don’t rely on others to do it for you).
- Approach others for self-introductions.
- Bring others together (once you’ve met someone and have talked awhile, introduce your new acquaintance to someone else).
- Pour someone a beverage, retrieve hors d’oeuvres, (serve as host).

Risk Rejection

It happens. Some people may not respond to your introductions. If this happens, don’t take it personally just move on. Be outgoing and friendly. Have a sincere interest in others and plan for networking success at events by:

-Identifying what you want to accomplish at a networking event before the event. For example: learn more about a career, develop job leads, sell a business idea, etc.

1. Treating EVERYONE as you would like to be treated (besides being the correct thing to do, you never know who might be helpful to you).
2. Having a sense of humour.
3. Physically moving about (you can’t work a room in a sitting position).

**This information was adapted from Susan RoAne’s book, How to Work a Room.

Connecting “on the fly” is a SNAP : Smile – Nod – Ask - Probe

Working a room summary

Join a small group or ‘crowd’ (to meet more people in less time)

1. Breaking in: “Hi, mind if I join the conversation? What are you talking about?”
2. Inviting others: “Would you like to join us? “, then open a space in the circle

Leaving the Conversation

- “Excuse me”(walk away with purpose)
- “Do you have a card? I’d like to talk more about _____ when we have more time.”
- “I’m going to mingle a little more to meet (target audience). Do you know anyone like that here?”

Reconnect with specific individuals AFTER the group breaks up to collect contact info for follow up

Connect on Common Ground

- F – Family (you from this area? do you have kids?)
- O - Occupation (what do you do?)
- R - Role - (what do you like best about..., how did you get into your business)
- F - Future (where do you see yourself in 2 years?)
- E - Experiences (what did you do before?)
- R – Recreation (what do you do for fun)
- M – Motivation (what are you most passionate about?)

Information to track

- Where and when you met
- Unique characteristics
- Opportunities to add value
- Interests / passions
- Commitment to follow up

Networking skills – face to face

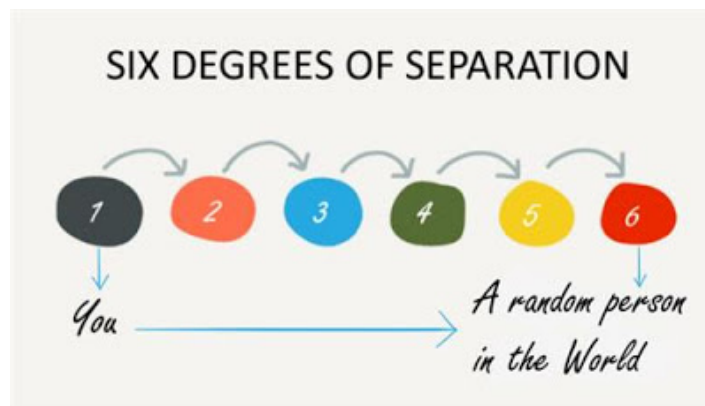
Networking has become a crucial factor in today's business world. It is considered one of, if not the most effective methods of developing your business and is a key component of your personal and business brand. You need to be able to build strong business relationships, develop a level of personal credibility and increase your network of contacts in order to enhance your visibility and create opportunities for yourself and your new BCS Business.

Why Should You Network

There are many reasons to network! People do this consciously and subconsciously everyday and in every aspect of their lives. In this instance we are focusing on business for which there is a general rule of thumb as to why you should network. The two main reasons being

To increase your contact base by finding new business

To find people who can be of benefit to you by either helping you to find new business or introducing you to new business.



There are many ways for businesses to market and sell their services, most by the more obvious methods of marketing, such as email shots, direct mail, advertising in the press as well as radio and television, social media etc, and whilst effective it is becoming more and more expensive and competitive in terms of being able to differentiate yourself from the competition.

With Networking it has continuously proven to be a very cost-effective way of gaining new business, and all basically achieved through word of mouth.

A simple yet good example of this working in everyday life is, how many times have you asked a friend who you trust to recommend you to a dentist, doctor, builder, electrician, plumber and been grateful for that recommendation. These recommendations are normally made from individuals who have had a good experience from those they are recommending

Targeted networking generally gives you the opportunity to build trust-based relationships with many of the types of people you are looking to do business with.

There is little doubt business even at a smaller level is becoming more globalised and complex but there is no doubt people still want to deal with people they know, like and trust and this is where networking can be such a powerful form of marketing your business

“Everyone you know or meet can be either a revenue or a referral source, either now or in the future.”

Networking Notes

Rapport

Creating a good rapport is the first and most important step in developing a successful business relationship, particularly for anyone involved in providing professional services. Being able to create one-to-one relationships means the process of getting to a signed agreement will be that much easier, as you will be working from a warm as opposed to a cold lead and this will most definitely improve your chances of obtaining the business.

Credibility

Networking can almost provide instant credibility, mainly because you are not in a typical sales situation. You will have already attained a fairly high degree of credibility whether it is networking in a function you are a part of, or people you know of who want to recommend you. The reason for this, in some way or another you will already be a known quantity as opposed to having to make a somewhat colder approach

Trust

Trust is gained from both rapport and credibility and that is much easier to attain through networking rather than a traditional colder sales situation approach. At the risk of repetition, people will normally trust someone they know of, or who has been recommended to them, over somebody they have had no experience of.

Longer-term Business Relationships

Business relationships developed through networking which are based on trust, mutual respect and a good rapport tend to create longer term and fruitful business relationships, that is, over a relationship that is developed from cold so to speak

Mutually Helpful Attitude

The true value of networking lies in the personal relationships you have created. The key to successful networking is to show interest in your contact and their business rather than your own, look at ways of how you can help your contact develop their business. It works on the principal of, the more interest you show in them, the more likely they will want to reciprocate in understanding more about your business and how they might help you.

Best Place to Network

In order to get the best out of Networking you have to be proactive, it is not something you can sit back and wait to happen. Your initial thinking maybe to join or get involved with as many networking organisations as you can, this would be wrong. Your time will be far better spent by researching as much as you are able, to determine whether or not an organisation that you are considering becoming a member of, either has the type of people that you are able to directly do business with, or the type of people that would be in a position to recommend your services.

Join and participate in local groups, business associations and clubs (Always focus locally as this is where you will become the most influential in your business community.

Although networking is a longer-term process in developing your business, we suggest you focus more on the organisations that are likely to provide you with quicker wins in the early

days of developing your business, in other words the more specifically business-oriented networking functions.

Conversing and following up with your contacts

Being Prepared - As mentioned above, research is of paramount importance, it is likely when undertaking your research you would have found out about some of the members of the function you are considering becoming a part of. Doing some research on the people you want to meet such as their business sector challenges and issues and even personal interests can stand you in good stead. Regarding the meeting itself, always take your business card, that way if the person you are speaking with wants to progress discussions, you will have it to give.

First Impressions Count - Most people form an impression of you within a matter of seconds, therefore make sure your way of dressing suits the occasion. An interesting fact is, only about 7% of communication is actually based on what you say. Your body language and tone of voice account for the rest. Try and make this a point to remember when you are networking.

Being Confident - Confidence comes from being prepared. Have a clear idea of what you want to say and the results you want to achieve.

A Conversation - Remember it is a conversation, a chat, a discovery about the other person; it is about sharing and learning.

It's not me, me, me: Don't just talk about yourself. People only listen to you when they are ready to, so always be enthusiastic about listening to them. It is OK for a conversation to finish without you contributing information about yourself.

Don't force it - Talk about what you do only if invited, don't force your information on others.

Listen - Listen carefully and frame another question out of the response. Also, by listening, you will soon notice that some people like to talk about business, while others like to know about you and prefer to adopt a more social approach.

Memorise Questions - It's useful to have at least five or six good generic questions that you can draw upon in times of need.

Being Genuine - Aim to be sincere each time you ask a question. Sales techniques can only take you so far, you need to be genuinely interested in the other person, otherwise they will possibly see you as fake and dismiss you.

Body Language - Your face, voice, eyes and body language should express real interest not so their first thought is "this is a sales technique".

Don't Be Intrusive - Some people may find it intrusive if you ask too many questions and may prefer you to talk about yourself.

Communication dynamics in networking – the power of the listening networker

- Why it is better to listen than talk
- Effective questioning and active listening
- Creating a natural and engaging conversation, 1-2-1 and in a larger group

Six ways to make people like you

1. Become genuinely interested in other people.
2. Smile.
3. Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
4. Be a good listener. ...
5. Talk in terms of the other person's interests.
6. Make the other person feel important - and do it sincerely.

Communication dynamics

Ten steps to establishing rapport

Establishing rapport – having people like us and remember us fondly – is an invaluable skill. Whether you are in a business, a friendship, a relationship, selling, or just want to be more well-liked, rapport building skills can help you achieve your goals. Remember that the key to all rapport building is sincerity and bringing a true love of others to your new relationships. With that in mind, let's get started:

1 Listen

Listening is the 'King' of all rapport building skills. EVERYONE loves to be listened to! Think about it. How do you feel when someone ignores you or talks over you? Do you feel connected to these people? NO! Who are the people you are closest to? I strongly suspect that they are the people who listen to you intently and are concerned about your issues and wellbeing. Right? Listening says, 'I'm listening because you, and therefore what you have to say, are important'. People's greatest desire is to be truly listened to. Help them accomplish this most important goal, and they will like and admire you for it. Practice 'conversational generosity' – don't speak more than 30% of the time (10-20% is optimal).

2 Link interests

Opposites DON'T attract! People like each because of their similarities. So, whenever possible, notice similar interests and be sure to talk about and expand on them. This may take some searching and questioning to discover their interests but that's okay – people will be glad that you are so interested in them that you ask several questions about them. Even if you don't have any similar activities, have them discuss an area you find interesting or want to explore. For example, my old boss Mark loves golf. I have never played, but have a sincere interest in learning the game, so I asked him to explain some things about the game to me. He was thrilled that I was interested and complimented that I wanted him to be my teacher and valued his advice. Think of ways you can use this tool.

3 Ask for advice

As Thoreau said, 'The greatest compliment ever paid me was when someone asked me what I thought, and attended to the answer'. Asking for advice is perhaps the most sincere compliment you can pay a person. You also have to humble yourself ever so slightly to ask for advice, and this vulnerability will create a sense of openness and trust between you. People are always happy to give advice and will quickly associate that sense of happiness with you. Aren't your friends the ones you go to for advice? How can this person give you advice and not be your friend? See how strong this link is? People also admire someone who can ask for and accept advice. So few people can do this well, that it has become an admirable trait. Try it and see.

4 Compliments and praise

No, this is NOT 'kissing up' or being phoney – that never works! What we are looking to do here is notice the praise-worthy things that people do and then mention them appropriately. Notice the difference in the next two responses. Your new friend tells you they just won an award for helping children and you say either 'that's great!' or 'Wow, that's quite an accomplishment! You must have made a tremendous contribution to the lives of those children – you should be very proud.' Which response would you rather hear? Are they both true? Yes! Will one response have more impact and create a stronger connection? Definitely, yes! Noticing and commenting on the good people do and their special qualities is a great way to live and a great way to connect with others.

5 Demonstrate liking and appreciation

Most people instinctively like people who like them (and vice versa). Many people like each other, but rarely tell each other. I make it a point to tell my friends that I like them and appreciate them – they already know this, but it's still great to hear. With people I've just met, if I like them, I say things like:

- 'It's been great getting to know you; I love to meet warm, open people.'
- 'I really liked the way you talked about [xxx].'
- 'Thank you for making me feel so welcome in your home. I had a great time today – let's pick another time to get together soon.'

These are just a few examples. Can you come up with better ones? Sincere appreciation like this supports friendship and cements relationships.

6 Adopt their values / beliefs

As you are listening to the other person speak, notice their values / beliefs, and discuss areas where your values / beliefs sincerely overlap with theirs. Remember when I said it is best to speak 30% or less of the time? Take at least half of this time and use it to agree with, support, or expand on whatever the other person was talking about. You will never make a friend by disagreeing with them. Let points you don't agree with slip by, and chime in when you hear something you agree with. By doing this you will make a friend and, at the same time, subtly promote the areas you believe in and starve the areas you don't.

7 Enthusiasm

Communication is the transfer of energy / emotion. Everyone seems to love someone with enthusiasm because we all admire it and wish we had more! Enthusiastic people seem to brighten up a room with their positive energy, and we want that to rub off on us, we want to be a part of it. When someone is enthusiastic about our thoughts and ideas we immediately feel understood, appreciated and just plain great! No one will ever be offended by you getting excited about their ideas!

8 Matching and mirroring

Matching and mirroring simply means that we match the behaviours of the other person to help create alignment with them. Thus, if they cross their legs you should do the same shortly after. If they tend to talk more slowly, slow your rhythm down so that it's closer to theirs. If they use certain lingo, you can use it later in the conversation. If they are reserved, you should be more reserved. And so on. Remember, we like people who are like us. This is a natural process that most people do unconsciously anyway – now you know about it you can do it consciously. It's a very powerful tool because vocal tone / speed and body language account for 93% of communication. This tool will make people very comfortable around you and is a very subtle technique.

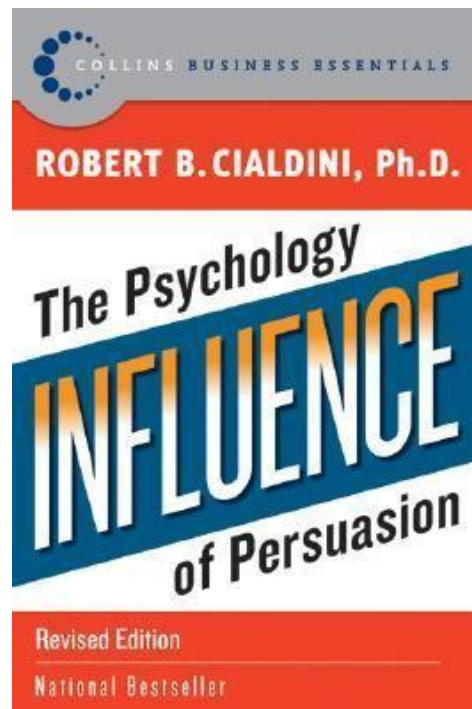
9 Smile and warmth

The first contact with another person is your face! Make sure that you present as warm, friendly and happy. A smile and a sincere desire for friendship will resonate in your voice and be demonstrated in your every action. First impressions are powerful; present the way you want to be remembered – SMILE! Smiling shows that you are happy to see the other person and like them. Smiling and warmth make others feel good around you. This is a lost skill, so use it and you will shine.

10 Attending skills

This simply means that you attend to the needs of the people you are with. It follows the lines of simple good manners, eg, holding the door for someone, offering them a drink or a chair, buying them lunch, shaking their hand right away when you see them, etc. Almost any

small courtesy or act of kindness falls into this category. These simple acts say without words that the other person is liked, respected and appreciated. (And an action is worth what? That's right! A thousand words!)



Questioning skills

Questioning skills are used to obtain in-depth information about the situation, problems and needs of the other person, resulting in information obtained from the other person.

Element	Description
Close-ended questioning	Direct questions that can be answered with one or two words
Open-ended questioning	Questions that: require more than a simple yes or no answer usually begin with who, what, when, where, why, or how?
High-impact questioning	Open-ended questions that ask people to search for new meanings in existing information
Probing questions	Use silence and 'power' phrases: 'What else...' 'Tell me more about...' 'Explain more about...' 'Can you give me an example of...' 'Describe ... in more detail'

HIGH-IMPACT QUESTIONS = HIGH VALUE INFORMATION

High-impact questions require people to think, organise information, and search for new meanings to existing information before responding. They ask people to evaluate or analyse, speculate, express feelings and react.

The result is the type of information you might hear if you were to attend a other person's problem-solving or planning session. Good high-impact questions make people say:

- 'Well... interesting... I hadn't thought about that.'
- 'Hmm... I haven't put those ideas together that way before.'

Criteria

High-impact questions should be:

- brief and clear
- open-ended
- phrased to require a thoughtful answer
- relevant to the other person's situation and position

Benefits

Using high-impact questions in calls has several benefits to you. High-impact questions are likely to:

- involve the other person by requiring him or her to think
- increase the amount of time that people talk
- provide new insights into problems
- produce high-quality information
- expose underlying issues
- result in people being seen as perceptive professionals who can function as consultants
- cause the other person to believe that the call was valuable

Comparison with open-ended questions

Open-ended questions invite people to respond with more than a yes or no answer. They may elicit factual information that would otherwise have to be found in files, reports, or organisational charts.

People who enjoy talking about their organisations or themselves may respond willingly to open-ended questions for a while, since it allows them to talk. However, such conversation usually doesn't require people to engage in high-level thinking, nor is it likely to produce any new insights of value for them.

Tips on high-impact questions

Prepare high-impact questions to use with a other person as part of your 'tool kit'. Once in front of a other person, you may use these prepared questions or devise others spontaneously in response to points the other person has raised.

Encourage the other person

High-impact questions are tough to answer. If you do not encourage while questioning, the other person may feel interrogated. By encouraging frequently, you can take the edge off your high-impact questions and make the interaction more conversational.

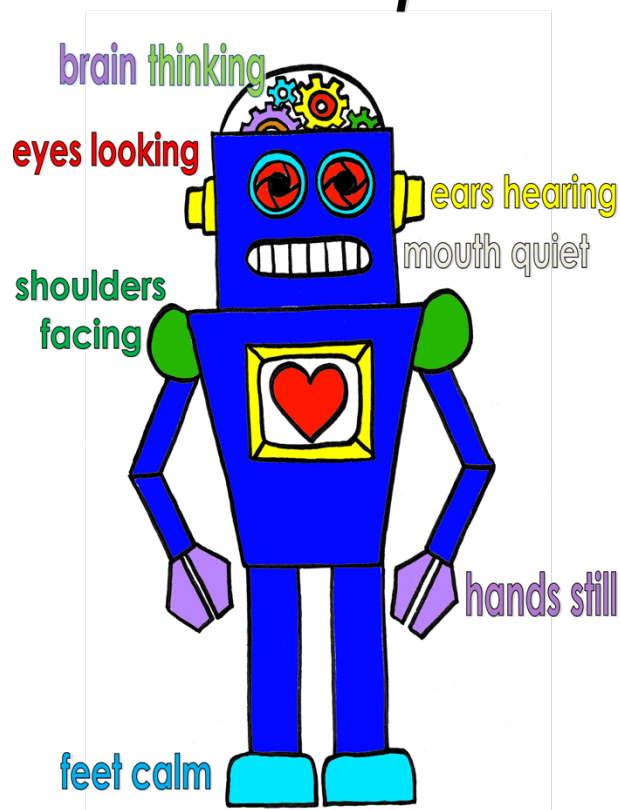
Encouraging

Repeat back, paraphrase or echo as a question (with voice tone up at the end), eg:

- What else...
- And...
- Tell me more
- Please give me an example
- Explain in more detail
- Describe

Listening

Be a Whole Body Listener



Active listening

- Body language
- Verbal acknowledgements
- Repeating key phrases
- Summarising and restating
- Taking notes
- Probing questions

Active listening – exercise

To discover if you are a good listener answer each question honestly and objectively based upon what you do – not what you would like to do, or believe you ought to do. Place a tick next to your answer.

When taking part in a discussion, do you:	usually	sometimes	seldom
Face the speaker and make sure you can hear?			
Ensure that you have fully listened to the speaker before you respond?			
Make a judgement of the person and what she/he is going to say based on their appearance?			
Recognise your own biases or judgements and make allowances for them?			
Use your eyes as well as your ears to listen?			
Not allow the speaker to finish if you feel that what they are saying is wrong.			
Identify any feelings and emotions underlying what is being said?			
Make sure that you have the last word?			
Concentrate on what the speaker is saying?			
Make a conscious effort to show the talker that you are listening?			
Use empathy statements or agreement pace statements			
Summarise, repeat or acknowledge what has been said before commenting or talking			
Ask question to probe or develop the topic in question.			
Summarise conversation before changing topic or moving on.			

Eight critical networking skills:

1. **Understand and leverage personal style:** Networking is not just for the extrovert! Introverts can be just as effective at developing interpersonal networks; they just do it in a different way.
2. **Strategically target your activities:** Not all networking events or organizations are equal; you need to determine which events will give you the best return on your investment.
3. **Systematically plan networking:** Meaningful connections don't just happen—planning activities, evaluating experiences, and anticipating next moves is what leads to great connections.
4. **Develop relationships over time:** You don't meet someone today and become their trusted advisor tomorrow. You need to learn how to build relationships and with whom
5. **Engage others effectively:** Sure, laughing and socializing with others is fun, but it is not how you create effective business networks. You need to learn how to engage meaningfully, remember people's names, and make sure they remember yours.
6. **Showcase your expertise:** You can learn to talk about your accomplishments and skills without coming across as a braggart, and it is essential to do so if you are going to have an effective network.
7. **Assess opportunities:** Easy to join, hard to leave—it is essential that you evaluate your networking experiences relative to your changing goals and decide when to get more involved and when to exit gracefully.
8. **Deliver value:** At its core, networking is an exchange of value, whether it is time, information, or your talents. You need to be able to recognize what you have to give, as well as what you want to get.

These eight skills reflect a comprehensive body of knowledge that gives people the skills they need to immediately begin to build organizational and personal success. Organizations can achieve better performance, have more effective employees, and bring products to market faster if they devote time and effort to building effective networking skills.



Assumptions when networking

- How to use the 'instant judgement' of others to your advantage
- What assumptions are you making?
- How to keep an open mind



Types of unconscious bias

1. Affinity bias: Showing a preference for peoples who are like us and making more of an effort to put these peoples at ease.
2. Confirmation bias: Making assumptions about a people's ability and intelligence - subconsciously seeking evidence to confirm our pre-existing opinions, while rejecting evidence that contradicts our assumption.
3. Contrasting bias: Allowing the experience of one person to affect how other peoples are seen – people are compared and contrasted against each other, rather than measured on their individual personality.
4. Halo and horns effect bias: Rating a people as 'good' or 'bad' across the board, often influenced by an unconscious first impression based on a particular characteristic. For example, a physically attractive people with a winning smile could be thought of as good; a people with visible 'angry' tattoos may be considered bad. (And vice versa, of course)
5. Stereotyping bias: Assuming that the traits of certain people will make them better or worse. For example, assuming that women will be more concerned with family and less committed to the job or that older peoples will struggle with technology.
6. Education bias: "He went to a GOOD school. He must be smart."
7. Experience bias: "She has ten years in the industry. She must be qualified."
8. Enthusiasm bias: "He's really excited about the what he does. He will hit the ground running."

9. Anchoring bias: In this bias example, an interviewer is plagued by the anchoring bias when she relies too heavily on the very first piece of information either offered by a people or about themselves or something that happens.
10. Non-verbal bias. Nonverbal bias is an evaluation based on a people's body language or nonverbal cues. For example, a hiring manager's perception of a people may be distorted based on his or her handshake.

Ways to avoid

- Be aware of it
- Slow down your thinking – question any initial or early pre-judgements
- Involve and discuss opinions with others
- Do not ask or discuss any aspects of the persons family, social, personal life or background other than building rapport
- Ignore anything that is not a relevant

Business networking etiquette

- Meeting and greeting at a business networking event
- Socialising: joining and leaving groups easily
- Making a good first impression in 30 seconds

First and Last Impressions – Summary

Opening a conversation

1. Make a great first impression and a really positive vocal image and get the person's name and details FIRST- ALWAYS!
2. Echoing – repeat and prompt for more information when the other person states their reason for contact you
3. Match mood and emotion of caller – be sensitive to their situation and always demonstrate courtesy and politeness.
4. Manners matter, be courteous and polite at all times.
5. Smile, shake hands, make eye-contact (focus on them) and make some small talk – person first, purpose second.

Concluding a conversation

1. Summarise key points and ask questions to check understanding.
2. Just like at the start, stand up, smile, shake hands, make eye-contact (focus on them) and make some small talk – person first, purpose second.
3. Summarise clearly at the end of phone call, giving your name, thank them for their time, inquiry or understanding.
4. Thank them for their time and leave on a positive note.
5. Follow-up with a call, message or email if appropriate.

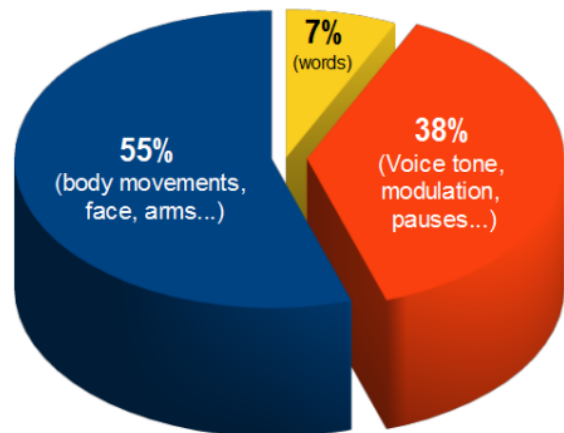
What not to do

- Be late
- Use your phone
- Interrupt
- Chew gum
- Make jokes
- Fidget or wiggle

Best practice communication skills

1. Communicate correctly so you impress, inform and delight people
2. Project confidence, accuracy and the right tone
3. Use the right skills when talking face to face - politeness, positive, small talk etc.
4. Develop phrases and techniques; tips and tricks and short-cuts that work
5. Use people's names often

Always manage expectations when working with your 'other persons' and internal colleagues.



Tone of voice

- Pause and breathe between each statement – speak in fragments not sentences
- Move around, vocally! – Pitch means height and depth variation
- A person's mood can be detected by listening to their pitch
- You can hear a smile on the telephone and see someone's thoughts when face to face
- The emotional state of a person has the most effect on the pitch of the voice – confident and assertive people use lower pitch

Pace of voice

- This is the speed at which someone speaks, speed of talking may also demonstrate an emotional state - an excited or elated mood is reflected in a quicker rate of delivery
- A more serious or dejected frame of mind will be expressed in a slower delivery
- The person's pace can indicate the mood they are in when you speak to them, or if indeed it changes during the conversation,

Confident body language

- Presentable
- Sitting or standing up straight
- Shoulders back, head up and hands visible
- Strong, determined walk
- Clear personal introduction – make eye contact and smile whenever you see a other person or colleague
- Strong handshake (if appropriate to the environment)
- Well-organised work setting

Making connections and personal networking for new business

- Asking for cards, contact details and referrals
- Gaining a follow-up commitment
- Some tips and tricks

Twenty keys to successful networking for doing business

1. Prepare and plan for the event
2. Look good and arrive early
3. Feel comfortable walking in
4. 'Read' the room before starting off
5. Get business cards, give business cards
6. Sound intelligent, interested and interesting
7. Excuse yourself courteously when it's time to move on
8. Approach and leave groups well
9. Create a great impression
10. Deal with rude people and manage rejection
11. Be a friendly warm and interesting person
12. Create a wide range of conversation topics
13. Ask all the right questions
14. Listen carefully to ensure he spots potential business opportunities
15. Deal with business cards in a highly effective way
16. Prepare for the follow up call
17. Move the relationship to its next stage
18. Respond to objections
19. Be persistent but not pushy
20. Achieve a meeting to do more business or commitment to take your call

Introduction to personal networking

A good personal marketing philosophy and approach is based on:

1. Personal service, credibility and trust
2. Organised persistence
3. Partnership mind set
4. Relationships and engagement
5. Involvement and interest
6. Online connections
7. Referrals and recommendations

Marketing is essential about two things: **Reach and timing.**

This is essentially a way of developing business on a personal level that does not require large amounts of money spent on advertising, leaflets or online PPC ads such as Google.

Instead it focuses on networking and referral building on a consistent and planned basis.

Let's consider this example, based around your business or networking goals.

1. First you make a list or collate a database of all your contacts. (Using Facebook or LinkedIn is really good for this.) Let's imagine you get this list to around 500:
 - a. 50 people you know quite well, typically Christmas card senders
 - b. 150 people you know to talk to in the street
 - c. 300 that you might have met a few times or only online.
2. You contact them all at the rate of 5 a day by phone wherever possible, email if not, taking you 10 weeks altogether. Your top 50 you might well meet with socially to explain your business.
3. You do not try and SELL to them, but instead ask ***“Do you know anyone who might be interested in or looking for....”*** They almost certainly won't straight away, so you send them some information or give them a card, as well as finding out what they do and taking their details and business card of course.
4. Once you have completed a first contact for all 500, you start again, this time focusing on something new but again only asking if they know anyone.
5. During this time, try and find them a referral and contact them personally with the details or tell them you have recommended. (If you want to get more referrals – give more first!).
6. Repeat...for ever. Interestingly, things really start to happen after the third contact, but most people never make it that far!



Think of it this way...

If you know 50 people and speak to them regularly and each of them have a similar 50 contacts, that is a network of 2,500 people at least. Consider also that when someone requires a service or change of supplier they may look online, in directories or (more likely) ask around. People are more likely to take the advice of someone they **know, like and trust** than a name off a website.



Types of network clubs or groups

There are at least six types of business organizations to consider joining in order to develop your business through networking. Depending on your time constraints, select at least two or three groups for participation. However--and this is critical, no matter what groups you end up participating in--remember that it's not called "net-sit" or "net-eat," it's called "net-work," and if you want to build your business through word-of-mouth, you must "work" the networking groups you belong to.

1 Casual Contact Networks

The first of the six types of networking groups are casual contact networks. These are business groups that allow many people from various overlapping professions. There are no restrictions on the number of people represented in any profession. These groups usually meet monthly and often hold mixers where everyone mingles informally. Casual contact networks may hold other meetings where there are presentations by guest speakers on important business topics or discussions on issues concerning legislation, community affairs or local business programs.

The best examples of these groups are the thousands of Chambers of Commerce and similar groups active worldwide. If you want to develop a word-of-mouth-based business, these networks can connect you with hundreds of other business people.

Many of the online business and social networking sites would also qualify in this category such as LinkedIn, Ecademy, Ryze and Facebook, some of which may also hold monthly mixers. Online networks also allow you a global reach at the click of a button.

2 Strong Contact Networks

Strong contact networks are groups that meet weekly for the primary purpose of exchanging referrals. They often restrict membership to only one person per profession or specialty and tend to be more structured in their meeting formats than casual contact networks. Their meetings include open networking; short presentations by everyone; a longer, more detailed presentation by one or two members; and time devoted solely to passing business referrals.

Strong contact networks are groups that meet weekly for the primary purpose of exchanging referrals

3 Community Service Clubs

Community service clubs give you an opportunity to put something back into the community where you do business while making valuable contacts and receiving good PR to boot.

Community service clubs can be fairly good sources of word-of-mouth business. Such groups exist primarily to serve the community; however, they can also provide an excellent opportunity for businesspeople to meet regularly and develop relationships.

Although there is almost no overt networking, long-term friendships, which are critical to the success of a solid word-of-mouth-based business, are established. Good examples of these include Rotary, Lions and Roundtable Clubs. In many ways, community service clubs were the original networks. The oldest, Rotary, was established in 1905 by Chicago lawyer Paul Harris with the idea that one person from each profession would belong and members would, among other things, help

4 Professional associations

Professional associations, or what futurist and author John Naisbitt calls "Knowledge Networks," have existed for many years. Association members tend to be from one specific type of industry, such as banking, architecture, personnel, accounting or health. The primary purpose of a professional association is to exchange information and ideas.

Your goal in tapping into such networks is to join groups that contain your potential clients or target markets. A simple procedure for targeting key groups is to ask your best clients or people which groups they belong to. This will give you an immediate list of at least three, and probably as many as 10 to 12, groups from which to choose.

If you're serious about developing word-of mouth business, there is no quick fix; you must meet people in a planned and structured way

Your best people retain membership in the associations that offer the greatest value or for which there is some key strategic or competitive advantage. Similarly, the prospects you wish to target may, in many ways, operate like your best people and have many of the same needs.

5 Social/Business Organizations

Each year, more groups spring up that serve as both business and social organizations. Groups such as various singles/business clubs openly combine social activities with business or networking, giving you an opportunity to combine work with a little pleasure. If you're interested in combining work with social activities.

Times to Network?

Despite all that we've covered thus far, some people tell me they simply don't have time to go to business meetings regularly. We understand that objection well. If you feel this way, let me suggest that you stop reading this article, pick up your telephone and start making cold calls instead. If you're serious about developing word-of-mouth business, there is no quick fix; you must meet people in a planned and structured way.

Where to Network?

Which groups should you join? Don't let chance decide where you're going to spend your time and effort. Remember, the key is to diversify your activities. Don't put all your eggs in one basket; one type of business organization won't serve all your needs. Consciously select a well- rounded mix of organizations, with no two of the same type. If you have associates, partners or employees, consider their participation when deciding which groups each of you will target.

Useful websites, in addition to usual social media.

- [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com)
- [LinkedIn.com](https://www.linkedin.com)
- [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com)

Building relationships – follow-up and follow-through

- Maintaining a good database
- Developing a contact strategy with different types and levels of contact
- How to analyse your contact base

The follow -up – organised persistence



No matter how well you have networked, it can all be for nothing if you do not effectively follow-up after an event. Incredibly, even for the most seasoned of networkers, this is one of the most common errors made. By not following up after an event you are wasting a huge amount of your time, effort and money. For that reason you should block out a small amount of time in the day after an event to follow up with your contacts.

Of course, there will be people that you meet at an event that are less useful to you at that particular time. However, your aim is to build a network, so rather than disregard any contacts, you should filter them and establish a level of importance for each contact. Maybe along the lines of **A**, **B** and **C**

A list contacts

These are contacts that can immediately help you achieve your business goals. They are likely to be well connected to people or organisations that are in your target market or able to support you in some way.

You should aim to contact your A's immediately after an event. Try and set up another meeting soon where you can further develop and strengthen the relationship. Usually you would have already mentioned your desire to have a further meeting when you first met them. However, if you did not, then call them, or send them an email or contact them via other means to arrange that next meeting.

Try and keep in touch with your A's at least once a month after first meeting them. This will help develop and strengthen your relationship and will mean that you remain in their

thoughts so to speak. If you need reasons to contact them, consider sending articles they might be interested in or refer them to contacts you have that might prove useful. LinkedIn is useful in this regard as they give you a way of contacting someone that is both gentle and accessible.

B List contacts

These are people that were interesting and personable, but are unlikely to be able to support you with your networking goals right now.

It is likely you will end up with a lot of B's. They can prove to be very useful possibly in the longer term and worth while including on your database. You should aim to remain in contact with these people, although perhaps this should be on a reduced scale to those on your A list. You can do this by sending them a follow up email within 48 hours after the event and then keeping in touch every few months via LinkedIn or the occasional email.

C list contacts

These are contacts that are not of any business value to you as a networking contact and are very unlikely to help you meet your business goals, certainly now or in the near future

It's important not to totally neglect these contacts, but you should not waste too much energy in developing the relationship either. It's useful to connect with them on LinkedIn and to send a more generic email after a networking event that perhaps promotes your services.

It is worth noting that everyone changes roles and has different contacts. You never know when a C contact will be in a position where they can assist you in your networking endeavours. Therefore, you should always remain in contact and try to prove useful to them if you can.

Whichever category your contacts fall into, they should all be added to your contacts list and you should connect with them by email or on the different social media tools available. You never know when a contact may become useful or who they could be connected to. This process might seem a little contrived, but people make evaluations on how useful you are to them all the time. This process simply puts more structure around the approach.

How to become a Master Networker

1. Follow up on referrals - the No. 1 trait of successful networkers. If you present an opportunity, whether it's a simple piece of information, a special contact or a qualified business referral, to someone who consistently fails to follow up successfully, it's no secret that you'll eventually stop wasting your time with this person.
2. Positive attitude - A consistently negative attitude makes people dislike being around you and drives away referrals. Positive business professionals are like magnets. Others want to be around them and will send their friends, family and associates to them.
3. Be good at conversation - It's been said that the best three personal characteristics are confidence, empathy and enthusiasm. Being able to start, develop, maintain and exit conversations with complete strangers is a skill that will earn you money!!
4. Trustworthy - When you refer one person to another, you're putting your reputation on the line. You have to be able to trust your referral partner and be trusted in return.

Neither you nor anyone else will refer a contact or valuable information to someone who can't be trusted to handle it well.

5. Good listening skills - Our success as networkers depends on how well we can listen and learn. The faster you and your networking partner learn what you need to know about each other, the faster you'll establish a valuable relationship. Communicate well and listen well.
6. Network always - Master networkers are never off duty. Networking is so natural to them that they can be found networking in the grocery store line, at the doctor's office, at a party, as well as at the chamber mixers and networking meetings.
7. Thank people - Expressing gratitude to business associates and clients is just another building block in the cultivation of relationships that will lead to increased referrals. People like to refer others to business professionals that go above and beyond. Thanking others at every opportunity will help you stand out from the crowd.
8. Enjoy helping and sharing information - Helping others can be done in a variety of ways, from literally showing up to help with an office move to clipping a helpful and interesting article and mailing it to an associate or client. Master networkers keep their eyes and ears open for opportunities to advance other people's interests whenever they can.
9. Sincere - Insincerity is like a cake without icing! You can offer the help, the thanks, the listening ear, but if you aren't sincerely interested in the other person, they'll know it! Those who have developed successful networking skills convey their sincerity at every turn. One of the best ways to develop this trait is to give the individual with whom you're developing a referral relationship your undivided attention.
10. Works their network - It's not net-sit or net-eat, it's net-work, and master networkers don't let any opportunity to work their networks pass them by.

“The key is to build mutually beneficial business relationships; only then will you succeed as a master networker”

Summary of business networking best-practice

Skill-building tasks for networking

- Develop a list of good conversation-starter questions
- Create and memorise an engaging 'elevator pitch'
- Decide on a method of tracking and keeping in contact with contacts



1. Describe yourself - elevator speech

Use these principles also in text-based descriptions for the web and printed materials, etc.

This is commonly called an 'elevator speech' or 'elevator pitch' - as if you were to meet a potentially important contact for the first time in an elevator at a conference and he/she asks you: "What do you do?" You have no more than 20 seconds - perhaps just 10-15 seconds - between floors to explain, and to make such an impressive impact that the person asks for your contact details.

If you talk (or write) too much, the listener (or reader) will become bored, or think you are rude or too self-centred.

Be concise. You will demonstrate consideration and expertise by conveying your most relevant points in as short a time as possible.

Here are the main points for creating your elevator speech:

1. Your name	"My name is..." Look the other person in the eye. Smile. Shoulders back. Speak with confidence. Sincerity and passion are crucial in making a strong early impression.
2. Your business name	"I work for..." or "My business is ..." Loud clear proud again. Do not ask "Have you heard of us..?" or wait for recognition.
3. Where you are based and covering	"I am based..." and "I cover..." Adapt the town, city, geography for the situation. There is little value in mentioning a tiny village if you are at a global gathering, or your global coverage if you are at a local town gathering. Make this relevant to the situation.
4. Your personal specialism and/or offering, and your aims	<p>Be different and special and better in some way from your competitors. Be meaningful for the event or situation or group, and as far as you can guess, be meaningful for the contact. Express what you offer in terms of positive outcomes for those you help or supply, rather than focusing on technical details from your own viewpoint. Load your statements here with special benefits or qualities.</p> <p>Be positive, proud and ambitious in your thinking and expression of what you do. Include in this statement what your aims are, to show you have ambition and that you know what you are seeking from network contacts.</p>

Depending on the situation, aim to complete your explanation in less than 20 seconds. Less is more: lots of powerful points in very few words make a much bigger impact than a lengthy statement. It is a sign of a good mind if you can convey a lot of relevant impressive information in a very short time. Conversely, a long rambling statement shows a lack of preparation, professionalism and experience.

N.B. In some situations your speech may flow smoother by inverting points 3 and 4, or combining them. If your organizational structure is complex do not attempt to explain it. The

other person is not interested in this level of detail now - they just need to know where you operate, and an indication of scale.

While you are speaking look the other person in the eyes, and be aware of his/her body language to gauge for interest and reaction to you personally, and to help your assessment of the other person's character and mood.

After your 'elevator speech' end in a firm, positive, constructive way.

Ending with a question enables more to happen than letting the discussion tail off nowhere or into polite small-talk.

Depending on the situation and visible reaction (again see body language for clues of interest) you can end in various ways, for example:

- "What's your interest here/at this event?"
- "What are you most wanting to get out of this event/your visit here?", or obviously if you've not already asked:
- "What do you do?"

If you already know the other person's interests and motives, for example ask:

- "How would you like to improve/change/grow... (various options, for example - your own network, your own business activities, this sort of event, etc)?"

After giving your elevator speech avoid the temptation to force your business card onto the other person (unless this is the tone and expectation of the event), and certainly do not launch a full-blooded sales pitch.

- Instead try to develop the discussion around what the other person wants to do, achieve, change, grow, etc.
- And be on your guard for interruptions and sudden opportunities:
- Many highly competent business people have a habit of interrupting and cutting short discussions when they see an opportunity.
- This means you may not always finish your elevator speech, in which case allow the discussion to progress, rather than try to complete what you planned to say.
- Be prepared at any time to respond effectively to an interruption like, "Okay, I get the picture - now what exactly do you need?.."

2. Be different and ambitious

Developing or refine your offering so that it is strongly differentiated from what is already available in the market-place, whatever your market-place is. If there is no special difference between you and other providers, then people have no reason whatsoever to choose to work with you. Look again at how you describe your business offering (or yourself as a person) - what's different or special about it (or you) compared with all the others?

If there is no difference, you must find a way to create one.

Sometimes this is merely a matter of redefining or placing different emphasis on what you already are and already do.

This difference must be something that plenty of people will find appealing; ideally irresistible. If you are struggling to find a difference or market advantage, look at your competitors and talk to your people, and discover what's missing and what can be dramatically improved out there. There is always at least one thing, usually more - perhaps you can bundle two or three powerful market advantages together.

This difference needs to shine out in your elevator speech, and be echoed in your subsequent discussions whenever initial interest develops towards supplying something, or putting a collaborative project together.

Aim high and big when thinking about and expressing yourself and your aims. Be realistic of course, but aim to be the best and to lead in some way, in whatever specialisms and market-place you operate. Your aims should also suggest what you are seeking from business networking - otherwise, there's no reason for you to be networking.

Business networking is not simply finding people in one-to-one meetings and connections; it's building a strong network, helpful for your aims. Accordingly project yourself as a great networker, as well as being a great supplier or specialist.

Business networkers want to work with other networkers who aim high, who have great ambitions; people who see what can be, not merely what is; and who strive for change and improvement. These attitudes make things happen. When you meet like-minded networkers with these attitudes, your network will grow because they'll see you can make things happen too.

3. Help others - give before you receive

- Always prioritise helping and giving to others ahead of taking and receiving for yourself.
- You must give in order to receive.

Be helpful to others and you will be helped in return.

Networks of people are highly complex - often it is not possible to see exactly how and why they are working for you, so you must trust that goodness is rewarded, even if the process is hidden and the effect takes a while.

Use the principle of 'what goes around comes around'. You could think of this as Karma in business. A possible explanation of how Karma (or whatever you call it) produces positive outcomes is found in the rule of 'cause and effect', or the scientific law (loosely speaking) that 'every action has an equal reaction'.

Good deeds and helpfulness tend to produce positive effects. They are usually remembered and often repaid. The giver builds reputation and trust. Referrals tend to result.

Imagine yourself having lots of personal connections like this. You become known as a helpful person. Word about you spreads, and your reputation grows. People who give are seen to have strength to give. Followers gravitate to strong giving people.

Helping others extends far beyond your personal specialism or line of work. Networking is about working within a system (of people) enabling relevant high quality introductions and co-operations, which get great results for the participants. These enabling capabilities transcend personal specialisms.

Cybernetics provides one interesting and useful way to understand how best to approach this. In adapting cybernetics for business networking, the technique is two-pronged:

1. interpret (especially what people need and what will help them)
2. respond (in a way which those involved will find helpful)

At a simpler level, always try to ask helpful questions. These typically begin with 'what' and 'how', and address an area of interest to the other person, not you.

Open questions (who, what, how, when, etc - also "Tell me about...") give the other person opportunity to speak and express their views and feelings:

Ask people:

- "How can I help you?"
- "What can I do for you?"

Closed questions (requiring a yes or no answer, or another single response, for example "Is this your first time here?") do not offer the other person much opportunity to talk, although at certain times a good relevant closed question can be vital for clarifying things:

- "Do you mean X or Y?"
- "Do you want to do X or would you prefer that I do it?"

Be creative and constructive in how you regard others and how you might help them. Being defensive and making assumptions tends to limit options and growth.

For example try to see your competitors as potential allies. There is a fine dividing line between the two behaviours, and positioning too many people/companies in the competitor camp can make life unnecessarily difficult. When you talk to your competitors you will often surprise yourselves at the opportunities to work together, in areas (service, territory, sector, application, etc) where you do not compete, and even possibly in areas where you do compete. This is particularly so for small businesses who can form strategic alliances with like-minded competitors to take a joint-offering to a market and compete for bigger contracts.

4. Keep your integrity - build trust and reputation

- Always keep your integrity.
- Sometimes a situation arises which tempts us to do the wrong thing, causing harm or upset that could have been avoided.
- Making such a mistake can damage personal integrity.

We are all human; mistakes happen. If you do make a mistake or wrong decision - whether it significantly undermines your integrity or not - always admit it and apologise. Failing to apologise for wrong-doing often damages a person's integrity and reputation far more than the original misjudgement itself.

We only need to think of how we view people in high and public authority, notably politicians, when they fail to take responsibility and admit their mistakes. Some integrity is lost. Do it a few times and all integrity is lost.

People of low integrity sooner or later find that the only friends they have left are other people of low integrity. Significantly, integrity is vital for trust to develop. Trust is simply not possible without integrity. Building trust is essential for growing a strong business network and a lack of trust prevents successful business networking. Remember...

- Certain connections are absolutely impossible to make until a very high level of trust is established.
- Empathy and effective listening greatly assist the process of building trust.

These qualities require you to be genuinely interested in others; to listen properly, and to reflect back meaningfully and helpfully.

Following up (covered below) is also a vital feature of building trust and reputation.

You will probably know a few very solid people who always keep their commitments, and who never make a commitment which they cannot keep. Aim to be like this.

Reliability and dependability are highly valued qualities in relationships, especially relationships involving referrals and recommendations, because someone's reputation is at stake.

The words 'reliable' and 'dependable' do not mean that you are always available to everyone. These words mean simply that when you say you will do something you will do it.

5. Seek relevant groups and connections

Identify and target groups and connections which are relevant to your aims and capabilities. Relevance can be according to several different things, for example:

- Geography
- Size

- Sector
- Social grouping (e.g., ethnic, gender, age, seniority, etc)
- Political or religious grouping
- Trade or society grouping
- Academic or technical grouping
- Other common interest (e.g., social enterprise, environmental, Fair Trade, etc)

The more relevant your targeting of groups and contacts, then more useful your meetings and referrals will be. Other professional people can be important networking contacts. Don't limit your targeting just to obvious business people.

Certain non-business professional people can be hugely influential in networks, and greatly trusted because of their neutrality and professional standing - educators and scientists, for example. Journalists, surgeons, and magistrates, also. There are many others. It is not easy to make connections with these people through conventional business networking, but remember that a network is not only made of business-people, and be awake to these non-commercial connections when the chance comes.

If you find that your networking is producing very low opportunities for follow up and referral, try to improve your targeting. Find different groups and methods, in other words.

A true business network is a connected system of people within which referrals and opportunities can be passed through several connections, or circulated to all those connected. Networking thus can extend far beyond simply having lots of random one-to-one meetings. A given number of people who are connected for a reason will generally be more productive than the same number of random connections.

So don't go aimlessly after every networking opportunity which comes your way; instead try to find networks which already function well or have the potential to do so; and consider and decide which sort of groups and contacts will be most helpful for your aims and capabilities - ideally remembering that you need to be able to help them, as well as they should be able to help you.

Within most networks people tend to have a few close and trusted connections. Choose these, your most trusted and closest associates, very carefully. Reputations are built according to your chosen contacts, in addition to how you yourself behave.

The old expression is generally true: "You can tell a man by the company he keeps..." (Or woman of course.)

So, focus your efforts on groups and connections of integrity, as well as relevance.

6. Plan your networking - know what you want - manage it

All projects need managing. Business networking is a project, and so it needs managing. You can use various tools to manage your networking.

You must manage your networking, or it will manage you. Some people plan with shapes and connections on a big sheet of paper. Others prefer a spreadsheet. Use whatever you find comfortable. Be able to plan and monitor your networking activities.

It is important to know exactly what you want, because you will be asked - very directly by powerful potential contacts - and you will need to give a clear answer. An activity which has no clear planned outcomes is liable to be pulled in all sorts of unwanted directions. As with any project, you will only move towards your aim when you keep focused on that aim.

If you don't know what to plan, then probably some research is necessary:

In terms of evaluating and choosing a potential networking group - especially a big online community - investigate the tactics that successful members are using. Ask a leading member for pointers. This will help you assess the group's relevance to your needs and strengths.

You will save yourself from attending time-wasting events, and registering with time-wasting websites, if you do some research before committing valuable time to deeper involvement.

A plan is vital because business networking can be a very time-consuming activity.

Have some targets and measurables, and monitor results.

A structured approach can be especially important for very sociable networkers.

Business networking can be a very enjoyable activity, and for some people can seem a lot more productive than it actually is, so stay mindful of business results and cost-effectiveness.

Here is a simple example for planning and monitoring networking, which extends the elevator speech template above.

Just use the headings as a guide if you prefer to work more intuitively, or if you favour a certain type of planning method.

Networking planner example

	group 1	group 2	group 3
what is my aim?			
ideal connections (people) - describing words			
group name and type			
group profile/sector/interests (relevance to me)			
tactical group notes/tips - what works well?			
my elevator speech (for this group)			
what I can do for these people			
what do I want from these people?			
diary dates/scheduled tasks			
targets/expectations			
actuals			
time spent			
compare with my other marketing activities			

Obviously alter the box sizes to allow for whatever content you want to insert. The framework can be extended to manage specific follow-ups. The example above doesn't necessarily suggest you begin with three groups, or limit your business networking activities to three groups.

A sensible start might be to pick one business networking website, and one face-to-face business networking group or event, and see how you do before increasing the activity.

As you will see from the sustained focused effort point, business networking works best when it is attacked in a concentrated way. If you take on too many groups and websites at the same time you will be spread too thinly, and find it difficult to make an impact in any of them.

7. Follow up your commitments and promises

There are two main reasons for the importance of following up:

- Networking only produces good results when it is followed up.
- Following up with contacts builds trust, reputation, and relationships.

Put negatively, to emphasise the points:

- Networkers who meet people and never follow up are wasting their time.
- Networkers who never follow up will eventually become known as time-wasters.

Follow up is a matter of relevance and commitment: If a contact or referral is not relevant, then say so, which avoids any expectation of follow up.

If there is relevance, follow it up, in whatever way is appropriate for the situation.

If you find that you are not wanting to follow up meetings and referrals because of lack of relevance then you can re-examine your group targeting strategy. You might be chasing the wrong groups and connections, and could need to redefine these issues.

8. Be a positive influence

- Be positive. Use positive language. Smile. See the good in people.
- Be known as a really positive person. It rubs off on others and people will warm to you for being so.
- Keep your emotional criticisms of others and personal hang-ups to yourself.
- Speak ill of no-one.
- Be passionate and enthusiastic, but not emotional or subjective.
- Avoid personalising situations. Remain objective.
- Seek feedback and criticism about yourself and your ideas from others. It is the most valuable market research you can obtain - and it's totally free.
- Be tolerant. Be patient. Be calm and serene - especially when others become agitated.
- Followers gather around people who remain positive and calm under pressure, and who resist the herding tendencies of weaker souls.

At many networking events and situations you will have the opportunity to give a presentation to the assembled group. This is a wonderful chance for you to demonstrate your expertise in your specialist area, your positive confident character, and also to pass on some useful information.

When giving presentations in these circumstances, avoid giving a hard-selling pitch, unless you are sure that such a style is appropriate. Usually it is not. Aim to inform and educate rather than to sell. In many networking situations a strong selling presentation is regarded as insulting by those present. This is especially so if you are a guest of a group that you would not normally meet regularly.

You will sell yourself best by giving helpful information in a professional and entertaining credible manner.

Be confident, positive and enthusiastic, but do not let this develop into pressure on the audience, or a sense of your trying too hard.

Try to find and present within your specialism the most helpful information for the group concerned. Your aim at the end of the presentation is for the audience to have learnt something useful about your area as it applies to them, and to have been impressed with your professionalism and command of your subject.

9. Apply sustained focused effort – organised persistence

Business networking is a form of marketing. All forms of marketing benefit from strongly focused activity, which is necessary first:

- to create awareness, and then
- build relationships to the point when a sale can be made.

A given amount of effort will produce much greater results when applied consistently in a strongly focused way, than the same amount of effort spread over several wider activities, especially if spread over time too.

This especially applies to business networking websites, where occasional light involvement has little impact, but focused continuous efforts can achieve a visible profile and build very many connections.

The same principle applies to local networking clubs, where occasional participation rarely penetrates the usual inner core of members, but regular enthusiastic involvement inevitably gains attention.

You should also be continuously open to unplanned networking opportunities, which can arise at any time. Business people are mostly normal human beings just like you. They have social lives, they travel, go to shops, sports events, restaurants, pubs, concerts, etc., and do lots of other things that you do too, quite outside of work. Paths can cross in the most unexpected places. You will find and develop connections in these unplanned situations if you:

- make eye-contact with people and smile
- take the initiative
- start conversations
- generally adopt an open friendly approach to everyone
- and always carry a pen and some business cards

Thereafter in all cases - planned and unplanned - much depends on what you offer to your connections - again see help others.

Business networking clubs and websites are full of people with many connections but little of value to offer, and they achieve poor results. Good results come instead from being friendly and open, from taking the initiative, from working hard at sustaining genuinely helpful contributions wherever you meet people.

In face-to-face networking clubs there is often a 'clique culture', in which members are defensive or sometimes seemingly arrogant. This often indicates a requirement to become known and trusted, which takes time and effort. (That said, if there is genuine arrogance, you would be sensible to find a different group.)

Business networking, like any other business activity, requires concentrated effort to produce results. If you treat networking like an occasional or purely social club it will not produce good business results. Business networking requires sustained effort to make things happen. Sustained focused effort does not mean delivering a full-blown sales pitch to every person you meet, and plastering your brochures all around the hotel lobby. Sustained focused effort also means working hard to become a regular active helpful presence in the group.

Build relationships first, your reputation next, and referrals and introductions will follow.

10. Life balance

A healthy balance in your life - of work, pleasure, business, social, etc - promotes and gives off a feeling of well-being, which is helpful for networking in many ways:

- you will be at ease and relaxed, and this transfers to others
- you will be able to engage and respond in lots of ways with lots of people
- your life balance will project confidence, which fosters confidence in others
- you will demonstrate that you are in control of yourself and your business
- people will buy or refer you as a person - not just your business specialism

This particularly applies to referrals and introductions, in which your character reflects directly on the person referring or introducing you.

Being a balanced person enables low stress and a feeling of assurance, which are very useful characteristics in business networking situations, and particularly so if you have aspirations to become a leading member of any of the networks you aim to work with.

Measuring or defining life balance is not easy, but we know it when we see it in others, and we respond to it. Having good life balance contributes directly to the level of faith people have in you. And crucially, life balance gives you the strength to absorb problems, to care for others, and maintain vital qualities like integrity, dependability, compassion and humanity.

Conversely when our life slips out of balance for any reason, we have less to give. We have lower reserves of enthusiasm, energy, tolerance, understanding and consideration for others - all essential for growing and maintaining a successful business network.

This prompts an incidental 'lifestyle' tip - for business networking events where alcohol might be available: drink in moderation and keep a reasonably clear head. This is not to say that you should reject all local customs where drinking is involved. In many social business events, including many foreign situations, drinking and eating are a very significant part of relationship-building. Use your judgment. Alcohol to a degree certainly helps many social processes, but taken to extremes tends to be counter-productive.

Networking situations, events and methods

There are many types of networking situations and methods. Far more than you might imagine.

Most people tend to think only of the best known business networking clubs and websites, but business networking can be done virtually anywhere that you find business-people relevant to your aims and capabilities.

This is important when you remember that other professional people outside of the business community can also be very helpful in networking (for example, scientists, lecturers, educators, councillors, etc.)

Here are some of the main examples of situations and methods suitable for business networking, including specially organized business networking events, meetings, activities and systems.

N.B. Many of these are not organized networking activities. Many of these networking situations are simply opportunities to meet people relevant to your aims, when your initiative and creativity can turn vague potential into worthwhile networking.

For all networking opportunities, your success is dependent on the relevance of the situation and the quality and energy of your involvement.

Brief pointers and tips are shown alongside each networking opportunity.

Conferences	Conferences are full of people with common interests. Coffee breaks are an ideal time to make introductions.
Exhibitions	Exhibitions are obviously full of business people with a common interest. Most exhibitions rightly do not like visitors to canvass the exhibitors, but there are plenty of other situations to meet people and network.
Seminars	Seminars attract business people of all sorts. Again there are usually coffee breaks which are ideal for making introductions and getting to know people.
Training courses	Open training courses are excellent for meeting other business people. Many will encourage informal networking among delegates because this adds value to the quality of the event; certain types of training bring people together in work teams, making it extremely easy to get to know all attendees very well.
Chambers of Trade or Commerce	All towns have at least one 'chamber of commerce', specifically to bring local business-people together. Many run networking events and/or other meetings and activities which are ideal for networking.
Breakfast networking clubs	Several companies run regular breakfast networking clubs as their primary business. Other companies will run one-off events to connect with the local business community. These purpose-designed events obviously provide a good opportunity to engage with other business people.

Business networking websites	Since the development of interactive website technology in the late 1990s there are increasing numbers of online business networking organizations. Each has its own culture and systems. Some are vast, covering all types of business imaginable, for example linkedin.com. Others are industry or trade specific, and some are geographically focused. All can be found quickly and easily by searching the web.
Website forums	Website forums exist for every subject you can think of. Each offers a networking opportunity for the subject matter concerned.
Website user groups	User groups are a further variation of groups found online. User groups are typically within the websites of major internet corporations such as Google and Yahoo. Many user groups are highly specialised, and by implication, internet networking is second-nature to most of these people.
Professional body websites	Every profession and trade is represented and connected by at least one official body, which tends to act on behalf of its members, and also offers various opportunities for outsiders to get involved and make helpful connections.
Interactive special interest websites	Networking has been made much easier with the advent of interactive membership websites. When you have identified your target groups, there will be a specialist membership website somewhere which represents and brings them together.
Community social websites	Facebook is the obvious example. There are many others. Culture and demographic profile are different in each. Some of these websites and memberships are vast. Bigger than countries. This is because of the social aspect, which might initially be appealing, but making a business impact can be very challenging due to the scale of these operations.
Online/mobile communications applications	Twitter is the obvious example. New internet platforms like these can grow from nothing to be hugely popular social connection systems in just a few months. Business people can use them to good effect if approached in a very dedicated and technically informed way. Otherwise they can become big time-wasters, so beware.
Local networking events	Anyone can set up a networking event, so you can find isolated or more permanent networking operations cropping up at a town near you.
Speed networking events	Speed networking is a highly structured type of networking event, in which an organizer (there are several, of varying type and quality) coordinates quick introductions among a group of typically between 20-40 people. The concept is similar, and probably modelled on speed-dating formats.
Societies and associations	Every specialist subject has its own society or association. These organizations offer various ways to meet their members.
Institutes for industries	Every industry has its own institute or similar. Various events and methods generally exist by which outsiders can engage with the institute's membership.

Lectures and talks	Lectures and talks occur widely, held or promoted by various organizations for all sorts of purposes. Obviously a lecture/talk will attract a common grouping of people interested in the subject concerned.
Universities and colleges	Universities and colleges are like little towns in their own right. Some are like quite big towns. They are also now run like big businesses. These communities contain a vast number of very interesting people, many of whom are very relevant to business. For the past twenty years or so, these big educational establishments have been increasingly keen to engage with business people of all sorts. It's a matter of talking to them and discovering what opportunities exist for getting involved.
Hospitality events	Corporate hospitality events - a rarer thing in modern times - are typically organized by big corporations to get to know their suppliers and people better. If you find yourself involved in one of these it will present some of the best conditions for business networking that you will ever experience. Fill your boots, as they say.
Shareholders meetings	If you have company shares, especially in a big corporation, you will tend to meet a lot of business people at shareholder gatherings. Many shareholders do not invest just for financial reasons - many invest because they have an enthusiasm for the company's technology or culture, which in some cases can offer a relevant target group for your business networking aims.
Annual General Meetings	AGMs are by their nature a regular occasion offered by corporations and membership organizations to engage with its members. Some are very formal and tightly run with little networking opportunities, but others are more sociable affairs, in which case if the group is relevant to your aims, and you can become a member it's worth consideration.
Conventions	Conventions are organized for all sorts of special interest groups. If the group is relevant to your aims in any way, then their convention could offer excellent networking opportunities.
Pressure groups	Pressure group meetings are strongly connected and usually attended by very active and energized people. If the subject is relevant to your aims there will be opportunities to meet some interesting people at this sort of event. These situations often also have scope for volunteering and becoming involved at a strategic level.
Public meetings	Public meetings are held for all sorts of reasons, for example local planning consultations; presentation of local development plans. These events attract business people, especially if the subject relates to commerce, as many will do. At meetings like these, most attendees sit and listen for quite a while, and consequently are ready for conversation during breaks and at the close of the meeting.
Product launches	Product launches invariably offer at least one situation when attendees stand and mingle together drinking tea/coffee. Some

	have receptions afterwards. If you are able to attend one of these events where the subject is relevant to your aims, then you will find opportunities to network. The same applies to book launches and similar publicity events.
Opening ceremonies	Opening ceremonies, especially for notable new buildings, attract many local business people and dignitaries. If the community concerned is relevant to your aims this sort of event can provide useful networking opportunities. The same applies to unveiling ceremonies, especially where there is a reception afterwards.
Festivals and shows	Festivals are organized for many interests, and naturally attract a large group of people with related involvement, including business-people. Agricultural and county shows are a further example. If the subject is relevant, there'll be networking potential.
Foreign trade visits	Local chambers of commerce, regional development agencies, and similar business bodies routinely organize trade missions and gatherings to promote international trade for their region and/or members. Such activities offer excellent networking scope.
Sports clubs	Lots of business people enjoy sport, and enjoy mixing sport with business. Golf is the stereotypical example for sports club networking, although all sports, and other special interest clubs, tend to have many business people in their membership. If the group is relevant to your aims and you enjoy the activity concerned, consider becoming a member yourself.
Other clubs	Clubs exists for every hobby and interest you can imagine. Instead of sitting at home watching the telly, join a local club that interests you, and meet some new interesting people.
Pubs	Not all pubs are good for networking, but some are great, because they are the regular haunts of local business-people. For a very long time indeed, lots of business has been done in pubs.
Trains, boats, planes, etc.	Business-people tend to travel around a bit. When you are travelling too, keep your eyes and ears open and be ready to start conversation. Delays are particularly useful for making introductions. So are long plane and train journeys when you could be sat next to another business person for several hours. Make the most of these opportunities.

Networking checklist

1. What goes around comes around, humankind can't yet explain this scientifically, but it does seem to work. Give to receive. Counter-intuitive to many people, nevertheless it's the fundamental ethos of business networking. Help others.
2. Use a helpful approach especially on business networking websites. Think: "What can I contribute to this community which people will find truly helpful?" And then work hard to extend that help - whatever it is - to as many relevant people as possible.
3. Always keep your integrity. Nothing destroys networking like lack of trust. Trust is based on knowing that the other person has integrity.
4. Ask people: "How can I help you?" and "What can I do for you?"
5. Understand and use facilitative questioning. See Buying Facilitation. The techniques use careful questions to help people clarify their choices and decisions easier. It's a powerful ethos - applicable widely beyond selling.
6. Develop a concise and impressive description of who you are and what you do. Aim high. Think Big.
7. Develop a description of yourself and what you do as a written statement, and as a verbal statement (an 'elevator speech' or 'elevator pitch' - so called because it makes a successful impact in the time you share an elevator with someone who asks: "What do you do?").
8. Develop slightly different descriptions of yourself for different situations - so that you are as relevant as possible. As you work with these descriptions or 'elevator speeches', you will find that a series of mix-and-match phrases take shape. Continue to refine and adapt these statements. Get feedback from people, and notice what works best, for different situations.
9. Be different to everyone else - especially your competitors.
10. Try to see all your competitors as potential allies. There is often not much difference - just a frame of mind. This can be very significant if you are spending a lot of time looking over your shoulder at what your competitors are doing, and not concentrating on building your own business.
11. Direct all your efforts to growing your own positive activities, and resist losing valuable energy and time and resources combating or worrying about the apparent successes or advantages of others.
12. Be positive. Use positive language. Smile. See the good in people. Be known as a really positive person. It rubs off on others and people will warm to you for being so.
13. Keep your emotional criticisms and personal hang-ups about others to yourself. If you hear someone being negative about another person, you will often wonder, "I wonder if he/she says that sort of thing about me too?.."
14. Some say it's bad Karma to speak ill of another. True or not, why risk it? Saying negative things at the expense of another person brings

- everyone down. This is the opposite of what business networking requires to succeed.
15. Be passionate and enthusiastic, but not emotional and subjective. Avoid personalising situations. Remain objective.
 16. Seek feedback and criticism about yourself and your ideas from others. It is the most valuable market research you can obtain - and it's totally free.
 17. Be tolerant, patient, and calm. Particularly when others are agitated. Followers gather around calm people.
 18. Always carry a pen. Always carry a diary. Always carry your business cards. (Or modern electronic equivalents of all three..)
 19. Drink less alcohol than everyone else around you, and if you cannot trust yourself to do this, do not drink alcohol at all.
 20. Keep fit, or get fit, and then keep fit. Success and followers tend to gravitate towards people who take care of their bodies, as well as their thoughts and actions.
 21. As soon as you can, create or have built a clean and clear website for yourself or your business. It is the ultimate universal calling card, brochure, and CV, all rolled into one, and perpetually available.
 22. Only promise or offer what you can fully deliver and follow up. Always aim to under-promise, and then over-deliver.
 23. Take great care with quick electronic messages (texts, messages, emails, etc) - you will be amazed at how many misunderstandings and breakdowns in relationships occur because a message is wrongly interpreted. Check and read twice everything you send.
 24. Always follow up everything that you say you will do, however small the suggestion.
 25. If you accept a referral or introduction to someone always follow it through.
 26. Say "Thank you" to people whenever the opportunity arises - especially to people who get taken for granted a lot.
 27. Be interested in all people. Invest your time, attention and genuine understanding in them.
 28. Understand what empathy really means, and practice it. Look people in the eyes. Listen with your eyes. This is about communicating at a deeper empathic level than business folk normally employ. Very many business discussions are superficial - like a game or a set of dance steps; instead make a determined effort to concentrate and care about the other person. Listen properly.
 29. Find reasons to give positive feedback to people - give and mean it.
 30. Stand up for what's right and protect less strong people from wrong, especially where you see bullying, cruelty, discrimination, meanness, etc. You will hear it everywhere when you step back and out of the crowd.
 31. Networking is about building a wide and relevant network of meaningful contacts - not just having lots of one-to-one meetings. Big strongly connected networks inevitably capture more opportunities than networks with lots of holes and weak connections.

32. Choose your most trusted and closest associates very carefully - reputations are built according to the company you keep, beyond how you yourself behave.
33. Target groups and connections that are relevant - which fit your purposes, and you fit theirs.
34. Don't waste your time on groups and connections that lack integrity or relevance.
35. Recommendations reflect powerfully on the recommender, therefore: Recommend only those people you are confident will reflect well on you, and always ensure you reflect brilliantly and memorably on anyone who recommends you.
36. Seek and take opportunities to make a positive difference towards a positive aim (of anyone's) wherever you can - even if some of these opportunities are unpaid and unrewarded in conventional terms. You will learn a lot, create new opportunities for yourself, and develop a reputation for producing good results out of nothing. This is a powerful personal characteristic which people find completely irresistible.
37. Be clear and realistic about what you want when you are asked. Have a plan.
38. Research the customs and expectations of foreign cultures before networking with foreign business-people. What is considered normal in your own part of the world could be quite inappropriate in another.

Your notes

Networking online: LinkedIn for sales prospecting

Based on an article by Anna Bratton, Salesforce Account Manager in the UK. These will typically have a number of decision makers who will affect a sale.

With over 360 million members worldwide, LinkedIn is one of the major social networks (alongside Facebook, Twitter and Google+). Often, however, LinkedIn is pigeon-holed as simply the place to go to look for your next job. But to simply look at it this way is to do the network a significant disservice.

Tip 1: Never miss a chance to connect

Contacts are the currency of LinkedIn. If your contacts are predominantly family, friends and old school pals, you've got some work to do. Connections breed connections. Your first level contacts open up a route to a wide range of second and third level connections. This is how you scale your network. Strike while the iron's hot – whenever you meet anyone (online or off) always follow up quickly with a connection request while you are still fresh in their mind.

Tip 2: Discover a better way to map your prospects

One of the main things I use LinkedIn for is mapping out the decision makers within my target prospects. I deal with some very large multinational companies, so there can be numerous people involved in making and influencing a purchase. But even for smaller B2B sales, you'll often need to influence a number of individuals. Plus, with a little detective work, you can quickly build up a picture of who you should be talking to, what they're like (check out their recommendations) and what they've done before.

You can also build up a map of who reports to who and gain a clearer picture of the people you'll need to influence to make the sale. (For a start, take a look at the "Viewers of this profile also viewed..." box on their profile.)

Tip 3: Never make a cold call again

With LinkedIn, you can almost always learn enough about someone to make your call, or sales pitch (if you're further into the process), more relevant and useful to them. And it's not simply a case of digital stalking. Personally, I'm always open with the people I call about having looked at their LinkedIn profiles. I find it helps break the ice. Plus, it shows I've gone to more trouble than 90% of the other salespeople who call them every day.

I pay particular attention to changes in profile, status updates, connections we have in common and anything they've posted to a group (which can be reason enough to call them in the first place). Also, with a paid account, you can see expanded profiles of everyone on LinkedIn (not just those of your immediate contacts). This provides even more useful insights you can use to make a real-life connection.

Tip 4: Get past the gatekeeper with InMail

Ask anyone in sales – senior decision makers are a tough group to get through to. It's not surprising when you think of it: they get besieged with calls and emails every single day. So, to protect their time they screen calls, ignore most of their mail and have gatekeepers to prevent unwanted sales approaches from getting through.

While you might try everything you can think of to get through to senior execs using traditional channels, sometimes they are simply too well guarded. That's where InMail comes in.

InMail is LinkedIn's internal email system and allows you to send an email to any LinkedIn user without requiring an introduction. Basically, it ensures your email gets through to their inbox. LinkedIn claims that an InMail is 30 times more likely to get a response than a cold call (which, if anything, sounds conservative from my experience).

InMails are only available on paid accounts. The higher level the account you have, the more you get. On the entry-level business account you'll get three to five InMail 'credits' each month. This means you'll want to reserve them for when everything else fails. But the good news is

that if you receive a response to an InMail within 90 days – even a “not interested” response – the credit you spent to send it gets refunded.

Tip 5: Unlock a smarter way to search

LinkedIn has a fabulous search facility. With their advanced search you can find people by title, company, location or keyword. Grab a paid account and you can add company size and seniority level too. By intelligently mixing the different filters you can get really deep and identify key individuals quickly and easily.

You can also save your search criteria and get a weekly report listing anyone new who matches the other persons you’re looking for. So, for example, I could save a search for IT Security Managers in the pharmaceutical industry within 50 miles. Then, each week, I’ll get an email with anyone new who matches my search (and who deserves a closer look). This is a powerful feature that you can use every day.

Tip 6: Learn what’s happening in your prospect companies – follow them

As any salesperson will know, change creates opportunity. People join, people leave, companies make important announcements – any change can present a good reason to get in touch and offer to help.

LinkedIn makes discovering these changes easy. You can follow any company that has a LinkedIn page. That way you’ll see anything that changes directly in your updates. It’s an easy way to stay up to date and spot new opportunities.

Tip 7: Use groups for more than simply keeping up to date

Like most people on LinkedIn I use groups to learn more about the industries I focus on, but they can also be a great source of new sales prospects. Member questions are great for telling you about frustrations and unmet needs. They can also give you the perfect reason for contacting a prospect.

But groups are incredibly useful in three other ways:

1. They can give you further insights into what’s happening within a prospect company – how active they are, whether they’re hiring etc.
2. They allow you to see more of an individual prospect’s details – in particular their full name. This is usually restricted to first level contacts (which reinforces the importance of tip 1).
3. Group membership gives you both the reason and capability to make more connections (it’s one of the criteria you can select when you send a connection request).

Tip 8: Make your profile work harder for you

While a lot of what I’ve said so far concerns outbound activity where you are going out to discover information and make contact, it’s important not to ignore inbound too. If they’re interested, your prospects will invariably look at your profile. So, it makes sense to ensure it is 100% complete and delivers a professional impression of both you and your company. Make sure you include current links to your company site, your Twitter account and Facebook page (I find that a significant number of people who check out my LinkedIn profile go on to follow me on Twitter).

You should also get some high-quality recommendations – especially from existing happy other persons (quality is better than quantity). This will give visitors a better idea of what you’re like as a person. After all, even in B2B, people still buy from people.

Finally, always add a photo. It makes you more tangibly real and creates a good impression. Make sure it’s a good quality shot (nothing wacky or from a recent party) and remember to smile!

Tip 9: The ‘look and look back’ trick

It always amazes me how few people know that you can see who’s looked at your profile. Unless visitors have set their profiles to anonymous, you can click on the “Who’s viewed your

profile?” link and see a list of them. The free account limits how many you can see while paid accounts give you the whole list. Of course, once you know this, it can become quite a compulsive activity. This can work for you in two ways:

1. The fact that someone looked at your profile is a good excuse to reach out with a connection request
2. If you look at other people’s profiles, a certain proportion will always look back (see 1 above)

Even when you get visitors described as “Procurement Professional from the Pharmaceutical Industry” you can still click on them. LinkedIn will then give you a list which will include the actual visitor. It then takes just minutes to quickly visit each profile to show you’ve looked back.

Tip 10: Integrate LinkedIn with Sales Cloud

You could use Salesforce Sales Cloud to track and manage my sales pipeline. Then you can easily integrate my LinkedIn contacts with my Sales Cloud records and tag where they came from. It means you can quickly see their work experience and education as well as our shared connections. You can also add in their photo (which I find really useful).

What are you waiting for?

While LinkedIn will not make the sale for you, by using it intelligently you can gain a tangible advantage over your competitors. It gives you a crucial edge that can translate into improved sales performance and more prospecting results.

And finally

The Principles of business networking

1. Elevator speech.	Describe yourself concisely and impressively.
2. Be different.	Differentiate yourself. Aim high. Be best at something.
3. Help others.	Help others and you will be helped.
4. Personal integrity.	Integrity, trust and reputation are vital for networking.
5. Relevant targeting.	Groups and contacts relevant to your aims and capabilities.
6. Plans and aims.	Plan your networking - and know what you want.
7. Follow up.	Following up meetings and referrals makes things happen.
8. Be positive.	Be a positive influence on everyone and everything.
9. Sustained focused effort.	Be focused - and ever-ready.
10. Life balance.	Being balanced and grounded builds assurance.

Application exercises



Networking goals and benefits

Key point	Your notes
What do you understand by the 'term' business networking – what does networking mean to you?	
How do you use networking now? What benefits or use do you gain currently from networking or similar activities?	
What would you like achieve from using networking in the future?	

Notes

Self-Appraisal Questionnaire

How are your general networking skills? Are you "up to par"? Your answers to the following questions may surprise you.

1. Have you written clear and well defined goals for your present networking activities?	Yes No
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2. Do you have a scheduled action plan for your networking?	Yes No
3. At social or business functions, do you walk in with the commitment to leave with the names of at least 2 or 3 new people who may be able to help you meet your personal and professional goals?	Always Sometimes Never
4. Do you make a point of following up quickly and appropriately with those people you do "connect" with?	Always Sometimes Never
5. Do you keep an organized and accessible file of information on people you have met including interests, occupations, hobbies, families, what you spoke to them about, etc?	Yes No
6. Do you make it a point to schedule a specific time every week to "re-connect" with people you've met but haven't spoken to for a while?	Yes Sometimes No
7. Do you review resources to seek out interesting activities and opportunities that might help you meet your personal and career goals?	Always Sometimes Never
8. Have you set aside a "specific" time each week to confer with people who can help you and your professional goals?	Always Sometimes Never
9. Do you set aside time after work hours for recreation at least once a week?	Yes No
10. Have you met with a new networking acquaintance in the past month?	Yes No

Give yourself 10 points for every "Yes" answer, 5 points for every "Sometimes" and 0 points for every "Never" or "No".

Review

Key point	Your notes
I. Have you written clear and well defined goals for your present networking activities?	

2. Do you have a scheduled action plan for your networking?	
3. At social or business functions, do you walk in with the commitment to leave with the names of at least 2 or 3 new people who may be able to help you meet your personal and professional goals?	
4. Do you make a point of following up quickly and appropriately with those people you do "connect" with?	
5. Do you keep an organized and accessible file of information on people you have met including interests, occupations, hobbies, families, what you spoke to them about, etc?	
6. Do you make it a point to schedule a specific time every week to "re-connect" with people you've met but haven't spoken to for a while?	
7. Do you review resources to seek out interesting activities and opportunities that might help you meet your personal and career goals?	
8. Have you set aside a "specific" time each week to confer with people who can help you and your professional goals?	
9. Do you set aside time after work hours for recreation at least once a week?	
10. Have you met with a new networking acquaintance in the past month?	

Networking best practice

Key point	Your notes
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<p>In your opinion, what skills do you need to be good at networking?</p>	
<p>With regard to business networking, what areas are you good at?</p>	
<p>What do you still find challenging? Where can you improve or would like to improve?</p>	

Notes

My networks

Make a list of all your current and future network 'groups', contact circles or types of connection.

Current networks

Possible future networks

Working a room

Key point	Your notes
How easy do you find it to 'work a room', approach and engage conversation with strangers.	
What do you find works?	
What does not work? What stops you being really excellent at the skills of network?	

Notes

Personal and business introduction

Write a short 10-20 second introduction for you and your organisation/focus

“My name is.....”

Organisation introduction

“We specialise...”

Rapport strategies

Make a list of ten ways you can rapport on purpose

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Practice at every opportunity

Question planner

First chose an event

Identify a typical or target contact or contact type

List questions that you can ask to:

Break the ice

Get the person talking

Start a conversation

Get them to focus on topics of value

Get a commitment to follow-up

Invite them to ask or get information from you

Building interest

Make a list of interesting stories, facts or anecdotes about you, your organisation or relevant to others.

Working a Room-Networking Prep Sheet

These suggestions are solid. Apply them in actual situations and strengthen your networking skills.**This information was adapted from Susan RoAne's book, **How to Work a Room**.

Name of Event: _____

Write down your self-introduction:

Write down three follow up points that you want the person you are speaking with (employer/alum) to know about you. Think in terms of your career achievements, formal education, transferable skills, specific knowledge areas, and personal attributes:

Identify three things you want to accomplish from networking at this event: Why are you in the room?

Keep Networking Agreements in mind

Be Interested

Concise Communication

Commit to Adding Value

Initiate Meaningful Conversations

Conversation Starters

Complement the other person

Be subtle

Be sincere

Be observant

Ask a conversation starting question that...

Is relevant to event/situation

Draws out person's interests and/or needs

That YOU already have an answer to

Short answer to "What do you do?" to create intrigue framed as "Who Am I?"

Adjective + professional title (Creative SW Engineer)

Career direction ("I've been a ___, but I'd rather be ___")

Catchy title (Chief Transformational Engineer)

Who Am I?

List of my favourite questions to ask

What Energizes Them: What are you passionate about?

Solve Problems: What problems are you working on now?

Future Vision: What would you start if you knew you could not fail?

Understand Their Interests: What interests you about (topic)?

Focus the Conversation: What do you like most about _____?

Follow-up actions, email or phone call planner

Key point	Your notes
How do you follow-up, administer and track your contacts – existing and new ones?	
How could this be improved?	
How often would you keep in contact?	
How do you or could you integrate face to face networking with online networking	

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Notes

Now draft a follow up letter or email or key points for a phone call