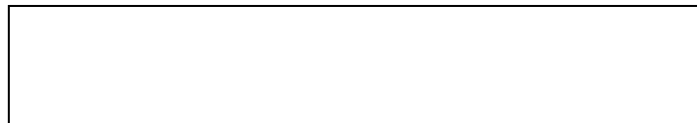

Networking Skills for Conferences, Events and Exhibitions

MADE The Entrepreneur
Festival: **Sheffield**
madefestival.com

Fringe Event

Adelphi Room, Crucible Theatre
Tuesday 20th October 2015



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Networking Skills for Conferences, Events and Exhibitions

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Workshop Aims

1. To identify actions you can take to enhance your networking skills when you attend conferences, events and exhibitions
2. To share existing good practice.

Initial Introduction

Please write down word for word how you want to introduce yourself to the group. You'll have an opportunity to review your introduction during the morning.



A Networking Process



1. Decide Objectives

- Have a clear idea of why you're attending an event.
- Ask yourself: "what's my objective in attending this event?"
- Plan and focus on achieving your objective before, during and after the event
- Be flexible – the event you're attending may offer you different opportunities from the ones you were expecting.

1. Decide Objectives

What are your objectives for networking?



Here are some of the benefits of networking:

- Career development
- Confidence boosters
- Creating customers
- Creating suppliers
- Exchanging new ideas and suggestions
- Exchanging political, financial, sectoral/industrial and legislative awareness
- Finding competitors
- Finding people to collaborate and work with
- Getting your name and your business/ organisations names known
- Making friends
- Mentoring
- Producing professional and technical advice
- Raising your profile
- Re-assurance you're not facing problems and challenges alone.

Networking Tip 1:

Don't look for immediate results – you could be disappointed

- The Benefits of Networking are varied
- Take the broad view of potential benefits; it's not just about getting more customers!
- Some benefits may not be immediately apparent

2. Do Research

Research on-line

Where possible, start networking with people before the event.

Like, comment, follow, post, updates, tweet, retweet etc.



Company websites



Facebook



Linkedin Groups and posts



Pinterest



Twitter #hashtags

3. Create Rapport

Definition of Rapport

Rapport can be defined as:

“Harmonious mutual understanding”.

“A relationship, especially one of mutual trust or emotional affinity.”

Establishing and then building trust or emotional affinity with people you don't know is perhaps the most important part of networking. Establishing trust leads to the building of rapport which in turn can lead to a productive work relationship.

Establishing rapport in a networking situation involves creating trust quickly with people you don't know.

There are two distinct reasons for being effective at establishing a rapport with people at networking events:

1. So that you have at least one person you can talk to at the event
2. To enable you to identify people you can help or people that can help you or that you can help

3. Create Rapport

How do you feel when you first walk into a room or an event where you don't know anyone else?

(We'll see by the end of the morning whether we can change this)

3.1 Starting Conversations

In the space below write down some phrases that **you** personally would be comfortable to use to start a conversation with a 'network stranger'.

**Networking Tip 2:
Starting Conversations**

Don't assume you need to start a conversation by introducing yourself..... your introduction can come a few minutes into the conversation

Make the first Move

If you don't know anyone, approach and introduce yourself to someone.

If you're naturally shy remember other people will be shy too and usually will welcome being approached.

Who would you introduce yourself to at a networking event if you didn't know anyone?

3.1 Starting Conversations

How to start a conversation - First Listen, then Tell

Most people welcome an opportunity to talk about where they work and what they do, so start conversations by asking questions of others, not by telling others about yourself.

- Do you know anyone else here?
- Have you been to something like this before?
- Have you been to this event before/is this your first time at this network?
- Have you learnt anything from this?
- Hello do you know anyone else here?
- How long have you been in business/ your current role?
- I don't know anyone else here, may I join you please?
- Is anyone else sitting here?
- Is it normally as busy as this?
- May I join you?
- The food here is good (or bad!)
- This is my first time here, can I join you?
- What do you do?
- What does your organisation/team/department/ do?
- What made you come to this event?
- What's your connection with this event?
- Where do you work?
- Where do you work?
- Why did you decide to come to the event?

What other ways do you use to start conversations?

How do you personally overcome shyness, lack of confidence?

Networking Tip 3: Grab a seat before a drink

When I go to a conference I put my bag/coat on a chair in the main venue before I go back to the coffee area for a drink. Usually by the time I get back to the main venue someone is sitting near by bag/coat and this gives me an opportunity to say hello to them.

3.2 Actively Facilitate Introductions

It's quick, easy and very helpful to put people at ease when they attend an event,

- Actively facilitate introductions where people don't know each other, even if you've only just met them.
- Check whether people would like introductions even if you think people might already know each other
- Never assume that everyone knows everyone else – even if they are from the same organisation
- With small groups 'whole group' introductions are possible, in large groups aim to get people to introduce themselves to at least 2 other people

3.3 How to introduce yourself

When you introduce yourself your introduction should be:

- **Clear** Let people know what you do simply
- **Concise** KISS – Keep It Short and Simple
- **Enthusiastic** Never apologise or appear embarrassed
- **Distinctive** Make it interesting and memorable

If you have something that you're proud of (and it won't sound like boasting) then mention this in your introduction.

If you have a particular challenge at work consider mentioning this.

Include anything unusual or memorable about your work

- e.g. a new job
- an interesting project
- an interesting client or supplier
- something different about you or your work
- a significant change you've had.

3.3 How to introduce yourself

When you introduce yourself, if appropriate consider explaining what you do but also the benefits of what you do:

Some Gas Fitters introduced themselves by saying:

"We make sure you're safe"


An accountant's introduction was

"We're accountants and we work with our clients to help them improve their bottom line"

A family solicitor seemed embarrassed that she was 'just another solicitor'. After some questioning it emerged that she was a family solicitor and worked hard to minimise the damage divorce can cause young children.

Another true story – At a networking event in Burnley an IT consultant came to the venue a few minutes before everyone else, put one of his business cards on every chair, sat down and waited for people to come and network with him!

**Review how you introduced yourself at the start of today's workshop.
Are there any changes you would like to make?**



3.4 Building Rapport through questions

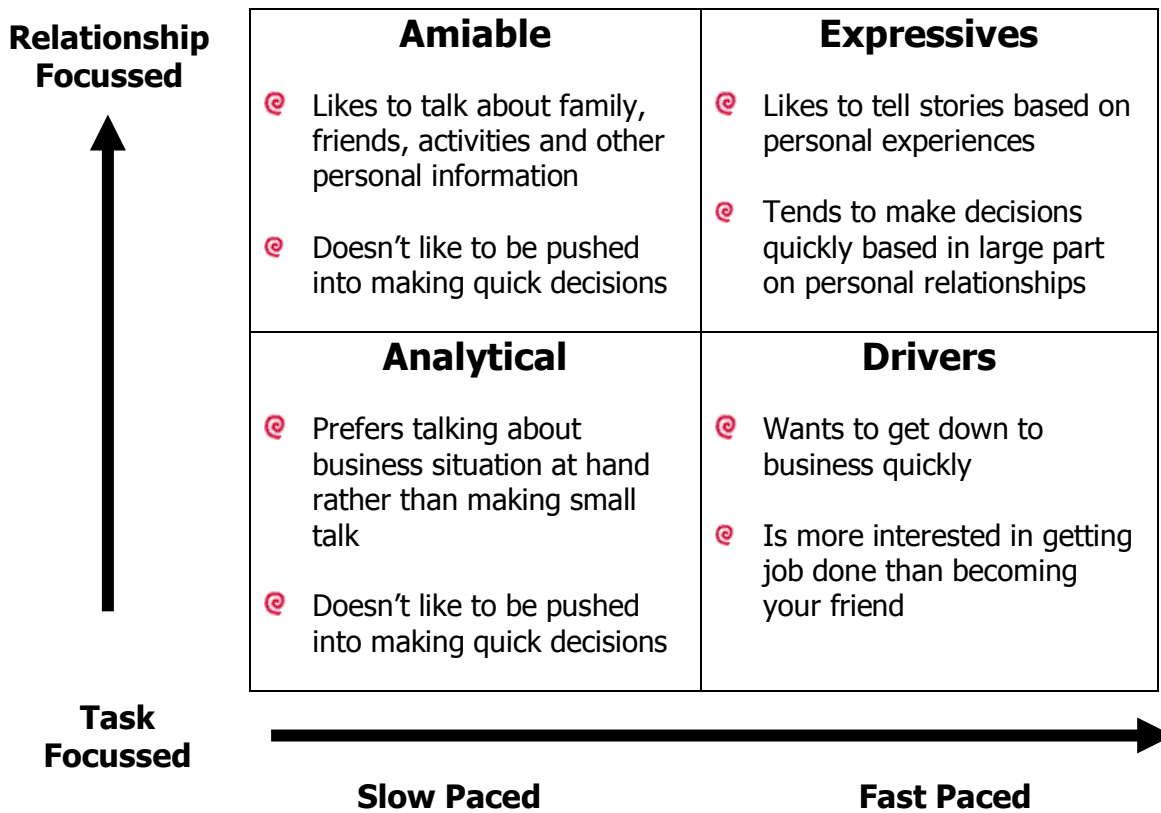
Ask Questions

- Asking lots of questions shows an interest in the other person which helps build rapport.
- Finding out about the people you meet will help you judge whether continuing to network with them will help you (or them).
- Asking lots of questions may help you discover a shared interest that can help build rapport

Ask yourself - will networking with the other person:

- Keep you/them up to date with what is happening in a professional area?
- Help you/them keep up to date with best client service practice in the sector?
- Generate new ideas and approaches?
- Help you/them update professional/ specialist skills?
- Lead to career opportunities for you?

3.5 Building Rapport through understanding people



Adapted from Merrill D W and Reid R H (1999) 'Personal Styles and Effective Performance: Make Your Style Work for You' CRC Press,

3.5 Building Rapport through understanding people

Body Language

“When people are like each other, they like each other”.

One way of checking whether you have built rapport is to be aware of other people’s Body Language. We talk about “reading” body language!

Mirroring

Mirroring is basically copying the other persons’ body language. Mirroring includes copying the position of the head, arms, legs, feet, tone of voice and even breathing ie becoming a mirror image of the other person.

Matching

Matching is similar to mirroring but there can be a time delay, ie you don’t immediately mirror the other person. It’s easier to match rather than mirror someone if you can’t see the other person because you’re having a phone conversation.

Matching can include using the same speed of speech, the same emphasis etc.

Meeting

Meeting can be used when matching isn’t appropriate for example when someone has had a bad experience. Meeting can be about finding common ground to build rapport.

Pacing and Leading

If you want to take control of a conversation you will need to pace and lead the other person. This can involve moving the other person to a better rhythm, subtly speeding up (or down).

- **Objective Focussed Behaviour** – deciding what you want from the transaction
- **Body Language Leakage** – when your body language gives away what you really feel or mean
- **Body Language congruence** – when your tone, words and body language all communicate the same message

4. Continually Contribute

What do you want and what can you give?

Networking is about give and take

- The more you put into a network the more you'll get out of it.
- Offer to help other network members and contribute to networks even if there doesn't appear to be any immediate personal benefit for yourself.
- Act as an intermediary putting people together but make sure people recognise your contribution.

It may be that there is a match in the room today between people's needs and wants.

What do you think you could offer a connection?

What do you think a network or connection could offer you?

What Do other Networks Do Well?

Do you have any examples of effective networking that you could share?

4. Continually Contribute

Maintaining personal networks can involve:

- Setting up and/or contributing to blogs, LinkedIn Groups and using other social media sites
- Following and engaging with people on Twitter
- Emailing/tweeting information
- Sponsoring people
- Telephone calls
- Offering to help people
- Volunteering to help organise networks/ networking events
- Saying thank you if the other person has helped you
- Recommending and referring people

How do you currently keep in touch with people? How do you let people know you're 'still out there'?

What could you do that you don't do to maintain your personal network of contacts?

5 A Six Stage Approach

Stage 1: Plan Your Networking

1. Set yourself objectives for your **broad** Networking activities.

eg: Attend 4 networking events a year
Get 2 new clients from networking activities a year
2. Set yourself objectives for specific Networking events or activities

eg: Meet one person who could be useful to me
Give useful advice to one person
Develop one more relationship

Stage 2: Before Attending an Event

1. Check your supplies of business cards - (Write on Business cards- personalise them before handing them to people, this makes them personal and memorable)
2. Obtain/ask for delegate list
3. Research via web who will be attending
4. Think through any connections/links
5. Rehearse/Prepare your introduction
6. Contact people in advance to say you'd like to meet them at the event.

If you're not comfortable introducing yourself with a 'sales-pitch' approach, at least make your introduction interesting and memorable. Maybe tell them something that will encourage them to ask questions.

Stage 3: On Arrival

If there is a signing in sheet, take time to see who has already signed in. Tell the host this is what you're doing.
Look around the room to see if you know anyone.

3. Developing and maintaining personal networks of contacts

Stage 4: Building Rapport to Develop Relationships

Start Conversations by asking questions

Listening to establish Rapport, Listening to see what benefit/connections there might be. Listen with your eyes and your body, not just your ears. Show you are listening and ask follow-up questions.

Stage 5: During the Networking Activity

Do	Don't
Explain what you do	Ask: "Do you need our research expertise?"
Try and take a genuine interest in other people	Do all the talking
Look to build long term relationships	Look for immediate quick sales
Say: "It's been nice chatting and I'm going to do a bit more circulating now"	Deliberately look bored and hope they get the message and go away
Introduce people to one another – even if you don't know them	Stay chatting to someone purely because you are personally attracted to them
Try to relax if you're suddenly alone for 5 minutes	Panic or look uncomfortable

Stage 5 Follow-Up Activity

Writing to people

Stage 6 On-Going Activity

Network Leader

Send info/send funnies/ask questions