

MODULE 8: CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AND MAKING THEM WORK FOR YOU



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OBJECTIVE: This Module will provide entrepreneurs with competences, methodologies and tools to support them in understanding the importance of personal relationships, in engaging trainees, in creating new business opportunities, (and developing and maintaining new market and customer opportunities). It also helps them to exploit techniques, tools and events to increase the effectiveness of networking activities.

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1. BACKGROUND

Note: this Module should be considered in conjunction with the following modules: Module 9 - Going International.

Networking is about interacting with people and engaging them for mutual benefit. It can help you establish a new business or grow an existing one. You can also use networking as a tool for finding investors, customers, staff, suppliers and business partners with minimal cost to your business.

Networking is a socioeconomic business activity by which businesspeople and entrepreneurs meet to form business relationships and to recognise, create, or act upon business opportunities, share information and seek potential partners for ventures.

Business networking involves making connections not only with likely customers or clients, but also with other individuals who might refer business to you, or mention your name in some positive way to people they know. It also involves making contacts with people who provide information or training, and can be an excellent way of locating reputable vendors to hire for your own business. Although many people associate networking with asking for favours, successful networkers know that networking is not all about them. Networking in business is about creating trusting relationships and friendships with other businesspeople. A key part of effective networking is helping other businesspeople with their needs. That's why you'll find that the best networkers are often connectors who help others by referring customers, providing testimonials, or helping to promote events and other businesses in some way.

You should be able to assess and validate this activity, and this Module, developed as part of the **BIC for SME** project, helps you to investigate and to examine important issues to do with the business. At the end of the module you should be able to:

- Build a network in the light of business and individual goals;
- Gain a new insight on how to transform existing contacts into effective relationships;
- Introduce yourself to unknown persons and businesses
- Get new contacts with, and get to further know, other professionals who are important to your business

Through this module you will also be able to understand the advantages of networking, including:

- Strengthening business connections. Networking is about sharing, not taking.
- Getting fresh ideas.
- Advance your business and get access to new opportunities.
- Achieve interconnected business contacts thereby accessing more knowledge.
- Build confidence.
- Gain a different perspective.

You will be aware that networking allows access to opportunities which you might not be able to find on your own. A network has the potential to provide you with insight into different areas of business, information on what key stakeholders look for and advice on how you can improve professionally. This Module, developed as part of the BIC for SME project, will help you when investigating and examining important issues to do with the business including:

Strategic Networking

- Definition of Networking.
- Best Networking Practices.
- Importance of Networking inside and outside the organization.
- Internal and external customers
- Concept of Social Network Analysis

Tips and hints

Overcoming psychological obstacles and fears; face-to-face contacts; body language; international cultures; preparation for networking, memorising faces and names; using business cards effectively

Game / role play

Try one or more simulation games to test and understand social behaviours and dynamics such as influence, sources of power, leadership, etc

2. MODULE GOALS (MODULE DIAGNOSTIC, ROADMAP & DELIVERY)

2.1 Module Goals

In Section 3 a detailed breakdown of the Module content is provided. However, the broad objectives of this Module are to provide you with competencies, methodologies and tools to:

- Build a network in the light of business and individual goals;
- Gain a new insight on how to transform existing contacts into effective relationships;
- Introduce yourself to unknown persons and businesses;
- Get new contacts with, and get to further know, other professionals who are important to your business

2.2 Plan the Module Training Process

2.2.1 Undertake a Diagnostic Assessment / Baseline Survey

In order to identify the key aspects around this module, you should complete the **BIC for SME** Diagnostic Tool for Entrepreneurs with your Trainer / Coach / Mentor. This **BIC for SME** Diagnostic Tool will highlight areas of strength and weakness in terms of your knowledge and competencies in this topic and will provide a Roadmap in terms of the actions to be undertaken to enhance knowledge and competencies. This Roadmap is supported by a visual Concept Map (see Section 4), which provides a visual representation of the Module which will highlight key areas to address. **Note:** The **BIC for SME** Diagnostic Tool and training material is designed to be used with the support of a Trainer / Coach / Mentor but can also be used by entrepreneurs on their own if they wish to do so.

Alternatively, or in support of the **BIC for SME** Diagnostic Tool, you can use a simple problem-analysis tool to diagnose challenges or problem issues involved in the business such as:

• Fishbone Diagram - The fishbone diagram or Ishikawa diagram is a cause-and-effect diagram that helps entrepreneurs to track down the reasons for imperfections, variations, defects, or failures. The diagram looks just like a fish's skeleton with the challenge or problem at its head and the causes for the problem / related issues feeding into the spine. Once all the causes that

underlie the challenge have been identified, entrepreneurs can start looking for solutions to ensure that the problem doesn't become a recurring one.

- Five whys The primary goal of the technique is to determine the root cause of a defect or problem by repeating the question "Why?". Each answer forms the basis of the next question. The "five" in the name derives from an anecdotal observation on the number of iterations needed to resolve the problem.
- Etc.

2.2.2 Develop a Training Roadmap & Action Plan

Following the initial Diagnostic or Baseline Evaluation and in order to make the training intervention effective, it is important for the Trainer / Mentor / Consultant to:

- Select the elements of the Connecting with people and making them work for you Module to be covered and set timelines for same.
- 2. Set the training sequence (Trainers to organize topics based on importance (as per the Diagnostic evaluation), impact, interactions, etc.).
- Select the pedagogy (how the selected elements of the Module are to be covered in terms of
 practical work, lectures, reading material, exercises, etc., as well as linking them with other relevant
 BIC for SME Modules).
- 4. Set Action plan and Milestones to be achieved KPI (see Section 5).
- 5. Determine Outputs assess the result achieved (see Section 5).

2.2.3 Delivery of the Connecting with people and making them work for you Module

The delivery of the Module should take approximately 20 Hours (including supported and (primarily) independent learning).

Following your Training / Mentoring / Coaching intervention, you can use the **BIC for SME** Diagnostic Tool for Entrepreneurs and Trainers a second time and assess the progress you have made in terms of enhanced knowledge, competencies and skills.

3. CONTENT OF THE MODULE

3.1: Module Content

This Module looks at key issues in creating a networking system around a business idea:

3.1.1: Strategic Networking

- Definition of Networking.
- Best Networking Practices
- Importance of Networking inside and outside the organisation.
- Internal and external customers
- Concept of Social Network Analysis

3.1.2: Tips and Hints

Overcoming psychological obstacles and fears; face-to-face contacts; body language; international cultures; preparation for networking, memorising faces and names; using business cards effectively.

3.1.3 : Game / role play

Use one or more simulation games to test and understand social behaviours and dynamics such as influence, sources of power, leadership, etc. In addition to this Module, the Trainer should help to identify and expose you to other relevant sources and modules of the programme so as to develop a robust, sustainable business. (Example https://www.speednetworking.com/)

An overview of the Content is provided below and can also be found in The Diagnostic Tool in the Roadmap Worksheet.

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Trainers key areas

Social behaviour
Simulation games to lest and understand social behaviour
Simulation games to lest and understand dynamics
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Fig 8.1 Concept Map for Connecting with People and making them work for you

Section 3.1.1 Strategic Networking

Question:

Who are the main stakeholders of my business?

Answer:

Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the organisation's actions, objectives and policies. Some examples of key stakeholders are creditors, directors, employees, government (and its agencies), owners (shareholders), suppliers, unions, and the community from which the business draws its resources. To properly manage stakeholders the entrepreneur must focus on 3 key things: their power inside the organization, team, group; their possibility to influence the project and its surrounding; their possible impact on the project and its result. Key stakeholders can provide requirements or constraints based on information from their industry that will be important to have when understanding project constraints and risks. The more you engage and involve stakeholders, the more you will reduce and uncover risks on your project.

Question:

What are the main network opportunities in your area / sector?

Answer:

- Conferences.
- After-hours events.
- Industry and trade associations.
- Trade shows.
- Online networking.
- Diversity groups.
- Speed networking.

Question?

What is networking?

Answer

According to <u>Investopedia</u>, networking is the exchange of information and ideas among people with a common profession or special interest, usually in an informal social setting. Networking often begins with a single point of common ground. Professionals use networking to expand their circles of acquaintances, find out about job opportunities in their fields, and increase their awareness of news and trends in their fields or the greater world.

Networking is a great opportunity to exchange best practice knowledge, learn about the business techniques of your peers and stay abreast of the latest industry developments. A wide network of informed, interconnected contacts means broader access to new and valuable information. In an Irish context a good networking example is ProfitNet.

Question:

Is working in a co-working space suitable and useful for my business and a good opportunity to improve my networking?

Answer:

The successful spaces are great for hiring members of staff and keeping company culture positive. Focus on hiring nice, friendly, and smart people with a sense of empathy. They will be the face of your coworking in the future.

Question

What information can I get from looking at or reviewing my networks?

Answer

Such a review is useful for examining the social structure and interdependencies (or work patterns) of individuals or organisations. Organisational network analysis examines the information flow among individuals and looks at where knowledge resides in an organisation. It depicts the informal social network - typically of groups working in the same enterprise. Social network analysis (SNA) tools are used to analyse patterns of relationships among people in groups. SNA involves collecting data from multiple sources (such as surveys, emails, blogs and other electronic artifacts), analysing the data to identify relationships, and mining it for new information - such as the quality or effectiveness of a relationship. Value network analysis (VNA) examines the deliverables exchanged among roles - typically groups of people from multiple organizations that need to work together. Social influence network analysis scans social media to identify influential people, associations or trends in the collective.

Section 3.1.2 Tips and Hints

Question:

Do I have a good story to tell?

Answer:

Basic Rules of Telling a Story Well:

- Be interested in the story yourself and tell it with energy and some level of excitement.
- Bring the characters in the story alive.
- Vary the amount of detail or description you add to elements of the story such as the characters,
 setting and problem.
- Tell with feeling.

Question:

Does social media for my business have to be managed regularly and professionally?

Answer:

Some essential social media tips for business

- Start with a plan.
- Decide which platforms are right for you.
- Know your audience.
- Expand your audience.
- Build relationships.
- Share compelling visuals whenever you can.
- Focus on quality over quantity.
- Use the right tools.
- Be consistent.

Question:

How important are relationships to my business?

Answer

Relationships are important in life. They make us feel safe and help us deal with stress. Relationship building from a business standpoint can help you get new customers, retain current customers and manage your reputation.

Don't wait until your marketing funnel is empty to start networking. If you want to build a robust business, you should get out there and make connections today.

Consider these 14 networking tips sure to expand the number of opportunities that come your way.

1. Attend Business Networking Events

The first step in successful networking is knowing where you should go to make connections. While almost any activity or event can serve as a networking opportunity, small business owners and professionals with local businesses should attend local business events. For example, your city's chamber of commerce might host gatherings for people in your industry. Additionally, it's worth looking at meetings for professional associations and societies related to your field.

2. Choose a Goal

Start with a clear agenda. Before attending meetings or events, take the time to determine what your goals are for the event. For example, you might want to make new connections or simply learn about the latest developments in your business or industry.

3. Get Social in Your Off Hours

Just because you're away from the office doesn't mean it's time to stop networking. If you want to expand your reach, make an effort to chat with attendees at various social activities.

4. Know Your Worth

It's not enough to provide your clients with a great product or service. If you can't articulate what it is you do, then you can't hope to convey that information at networking events. Whether your goal is to generate referrals or simply build your contacts base for the future, you should take time to generate an elevator pitch that conveys what you do, for whom you do it, and why customers should choose you over your competition.

5. Identify Conversational Icebreakers

If you want to overcome initial awkwardness and make a good first impression, consider opening with a compliment. For example, you might tell the person sitting next to you at a seminar that you like their shoes or tie. Similarly, asking a question gives contacts the chance to talk about themselves. Ask how they got into the field or what they think of a recent development affecting your industry.

6. Bring a Buddy

Sometimes starting conversations with strangers is easier if you have a familiar face by your side. If you have a friend or co-worker who's also looking to expand their network, consider attending professional events in pairs. Just be sure you make an effort to connect with other attendees rather than sitting in the corner chatting the whole time.

7. Overcome Introversion

If you're naturally shy, having success in networking can be a challenge. Fortunately, there are some strategies for overcoming introversion and making connections. First, consider brainstorming icebreakers before a networking event, so you don't have to come up with ideas on the spot. Second, feel free to take a breather if you get overwhelmed. Go to the restroom, take a walk, or grab a coffee. You can return to the room refreshed and ready to meet new people.

8. Find a Reason to Follow Up

Making connections is only half the battle; you also have to take steps to keep the relationship going. Strive to reach out to your contacts a few times a year to follow up.

Of course, being successful in networking is about more than what you do. It's also about what not to do. Here are some tactics to avoid if you want to boost your business connections.

9. Don't Be Negative

When searching for conversation starters, avoid speaking negatively about former companies or co-workers. After all, you don't want potential contacts thinking you'd say bad things about them given the opportunity.

10. Don't Be Selfish

Whether you're chatting at a chamber of commerce event or attending an informational meeting, it's important to remember that networking is about give and take. If you're always the person asking for favours, the relationship is unlikely to last. For best results, look for opportunities to help your networking contacts prosper in their own careers.

11. Don't Be Afraid to Ask for What You Want

We all need help now and again. If you want your networking efforts to be a success, you have to be bold enough to ask for assistance. Before attending that next meetup or seminar, make sure you can articulate what it is that you're seeking. Then, when someone asks how they can help you, tell them what you need.

12. Make sure you are prepared for a networking event

Look up, who is going to be there, check what are their interests, make sure you are at least broadly familiar with the subject of the event

13. Consider who you would like to meet and why

14. In the conversation always make sure to present a win-win situation

You can present yourself, but it is also up to you to present the benefits of collaborating with you for the person you are speaking to.

Section 3.1.3 : Game / role play

Question:

Could a role game be important to building my external networks?

Answer:

Playing games goes a long way towards fostering entrepreneurial spirit. The relevance is more for budding entrepreneurs and the first timers (but also the veterans) to use games as a way to develop and hone entrepreneurial skills. Besides being fun, games can be an extremely effective way to teach complicated or disparate ideas. Games offer immediate rewards, encourage playful competition, inspire 'out of the box'

thinking and promote collaboration among teams. Researchers studying the effectiveness of games in learning say that games "are an obvious terrain in which to set minds free and let them wander around", which can lead to innovation and breakthrough ideas.

Question:

What are the advantages of business games?

Answer:

There is a simple explanation for the growing popularity of business games: they work. Overwhelming scientific evidence confirms that the use of games and simulators improve the learning process. Why? There are at least three reasons:

- a) Learning by doing. The secret to success of business games resides in their capacity to represent reallife problems and afford the direct practice of knowledge and skills via simulators. Learners are given a safe environment (therefore lacking economic risks) to immerse themselves in the same corporate issues that company executives face regularly, responding and interacting with them from the very beginning.
- b) Interactive learning. Another key aspect of business games is their capability to capture learner engagement and participation. Numerous studies demonstrate that our brains remember knowledge better if we actively participate or interact when learning it. Compared to classroom-based or video lessons, business games bolster direct participation, including emotional involvement, of the learners.
- c) Cost reduction. Even though developing a good business game requires time, knowledge and money, once created, economies of scale entail an enormous competitive advantage. Unlike classroom lessons, these business games can be quickly and securely implemented anywhere in the world. Many of the best business games currently available only require learners to have smartphones and an Internet connection.

Examples of business games

Though something of a quirk in the beginning, there are currently an enormous amount of business games on the market, useful also for internationalization sector. The following are only four of the most salient ones:

- Capitalism https://www.capitalismlab.com/business-strategy-game/. First published in 1995, this video game soon became a business game classic. Used by Harvard and Stanford universities, Capitalism helps students understand and tackle the challenges of virtually every company and sector (marketing, distribution, manufacturing or import/export). Its latest version, Capitalism Lab, was released in 2012.
- Beer distribution game https://www.kearney.com/web/beer-distribution-game . Designed by the Business School at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) toward the end of the 1960s, this game has often been reinterpreted and reworked. It was designed to teach all the secrets of supply and distribution chains (with cost overruns, delays and multiple suppliers).
- SimCity https://www.ea.com/games/simcity. This legendary video game is centred on the process of building and managing a city. Players must build transportation services and utilities such as water supplies, electricity, sanitation or education while managing their budgets (raising or lowering taxes, changing budgetary items, etc.) to satisfy the needs of their citizens. Another similar, critically acclaimed game is Cities: Skylines.
- Merchants https://arc-institute.com/en/serious-business-games-2/merchants-ia. Players of this business game are transported back to medieval Venice to engage in multiple "real" negotiations regarding the shipment of goods, silk trade or sovereignty of various Mediterranean islands. This video game imparts all the secrets and techniques of negotiations and has been highly successful in companies across the globe.

3.2 Useful Material & Templates

Links to **Materials and Further Reading** are provided below:

To	pics / Useful Links	
Business Balls		https://www.businessballs.com/building-
		<u>relationships/networking/b</u>
•	3 Powerful	https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/298262
	Networking Strategies	
•	Create an effective networking strategy	https://www.marketingdonut.co.uk/sales/sales-lead-
		generation/create-an-effective-networking-strategy
•	The 5 Best Business	https://www.classycareergirl.com/2016/02/business-
	Networking	<u>networking-strategies/</u>
	Strategies	
•	Strategic Networking	https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238333892 Strat
	among Small	egic Networking among Small Businesses in Small US Com
	-	<u>munities</u>

Businesses in Small US Communities	
 6 strategies to improve your business networking skills 	https://www.bdc.ca/en/articles-tools/entrepreneurial-skills/improve-networking/pages/business-networking-tips-entrepreneurs.aspx
The Entrepreneur Game by EESpeaks	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21mVYhjALZ4
 What Game Are These Entrepreneurs Playing? 	https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/281704
Entrepreneur games	http://entrepreneur-games.buildinboston.org/

Bibliography for Italian entrepreneurs

1.	"Business networking. Come costruire relazioni professionali in rete" di Gianluigi	
	Cogo (Autore), Simone Favaro (Autore)	
2.	"Il metodo Warren Buffett. I segreti del più grande investitore del mondo" di Robert G. Hagstrom (Autore)	
3.	"Networking & lavoro. Come valorizzare le relazioni professionali" Marco Vigini	
4.	"I robot non sanno fare networking (per adesso). 12 take away su come creare e gestire relazioni interpersonali nell'era digitale" di Gianfranco Minutolo	

Bibliography for International entrepreneurs

1.	"Superconnector," Scott Gerber and Ryan Paugh	
2.	"Never Eat Alone," Keith Ferrazzi and Tahl Raz	
3.	"Giftology," John Ruhlin	
4.	"The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," Stephen R. Covey	
5.	"Networking Is Not Working," Derek Coburn	
6.	"Give and Take," Adam Grant	
7.	"How to Win Friends & Influence People," Dale Carnegie	

Key Terms

Key Terms	
Unified Commerce	The practice of providing flexibility, continuity and consistency across digital and physical channels to deliver a superior customer experience. This consistency includes multiple phases of the customer's buying journey, including when a customer is searching, browsing for, transacting, acquiring and consuming a product or service.
Subscription Business Model	The way revenue is made so that a single customer pays multiple payments for prolonged access to a good or service.
Conscious Consumerism	Purchase decisions that have a positive social, economic, environmental, and political impact.
Industry 4.0	The current trend of automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies, including cyber-physical systems, the Internet of things, cloud computing and cognitive computing and creating the smart factory
Personas	Fictional characters, created based upon market research in order to represent the different user types that might use a service, product, site, or brand in a similar way.
Tech-enabled Personalisation	Personalization is the practice of creating personal interactions and experiences for existing and prospective customers through the use of digital marketing technologies to grow these customers into your best customers.
Web Analytics	The collection, reporting, and analysis of website data.
Predictive Analytics	Amalgamates huge inflows of data with historical records to forecast activity, behaviour and trends in the future.
Statistical Analytics	The science of collecting data and uncovering patterns and trends.
Marketing Analytics	The practice of measuring, managing and analysing marketing performance in order to maximise its effectiveness and optimise return on investment.
Talent/HR Analytics	Gathers insights into a company's current workforce and potential employees.

Big Data Analytics	The often complex process of examining large and varied data sets, or big data, to uncover information such as hidden patterns, unknown correlations, market trends and customer preferences.
Cybersecurity	Cyber security is the practice of defending computers, servers, mobile devices, electronic systems, networks, and data from malicious attacks.
Augmented Reality	The technology of combining real word images, video, etc. with computer- generated information and/or imagery.
Virtual reality	An artificial environment that is created with software and presented to the user in such a way that the user suspends belief and accepts it as a real environment.
Mixed reality	An advancement of augmented reality (AR) $-$ a "hybrid" environment, interactive virtual objects can be mapped to the physical environment, blending the real and the virtual.
Immersive Technologies	Immersive technologies is an overall term used to cover technologies such as 360-degree filming and augmented and virtual reality, which are used to create unique storytelling experiences that blur the line between the digital world and the physical world.

Case Studies / Good practices / Exercises

- https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/solutions/enterprise-networks/network-architecture-customersuccess-stories.html
- https://saylordotorg.github.io/text-six-steps-to-job-search-success/s11-06-networking-case-studies.html
- https://www.cmswire.com/cms/social-business/networking-for-success-4-case-studies-on-social-business-012623.php
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324830338 Business networking in social media A
 case study of Polish export professionals

4. ROADMAP & ACTION PLAN

Having completed the Diagnostic evaluation you will have identified the key issues of concern or knowledge gaps in terms of how connecting with people can support your business, while your Trainer will have been able to set out a Training Roadmap on relevant issues.

As outlined in Section 2.2.2, the Training roadmap (learning path) is a structured sequence of training activities proposed to teach a topic. While it should be comprehensive, it also needs to be practical, in order to organise the learning over a series of sessions. It will ensure that users do not omit crucial content because lack of time and that they will achieve fluency in key elements of the topic. Steps:

- 1. Set the goals derived from the BIC for SME diagnostic needs check (see Section 2)
- 2. Set out the Roadmap and Action Plan by selecting the elements of the Module to be covered and timelines (see Section 2)
- 3. Select pedagogy (how the selected elements of the Module are to be covered in terms of lectures, reading material, exercises, etc.,) (see Section 2)
- 4. Set sequence: organize topics based on importance (as per the Diagnostic evaluation), impact, interactions, etc.. (see Section 2)
- 5. Confirm Action plan and Milestones KPI
- 6. Output: assess the result achieved

Having understood and practiced how to use the various tools and templates contained in the Module (steps 1-4 above), you should be able to identify (ideally with the help of a Trainer / Coach / Mentor) a set of action items including a timeline indicating: what is to be done, by whom, when and how. Examples are provided below:

4.1 Action Plan

What	Who	When	How
To define a list of useful stakeholders to involve in your business	Promoter	2 weeks	Discuss with the Trainer
To define a story to tell to develop your external relationships	Promoter	6-8 weeks	Discuss with the Trainer
To choose the best social media for networking and to define clear roles to manage them	Promoter	6-8 weeks	Discuss with the Trainer
To study the best game play useful to influence strategic networking of business	Promoter	8-12 weeks	Discuss with the Trainer

Such an action plan will be provided as a 'take away' for the entrepreneur in the form of a handout / infographic thereby providing them with a practical guideline on tasks to be completed.

4.2 Countermeasures

Not all Action Items will progress as planned. It is therefore important that you consider some possible Countermeasures such as:

- Inability to assess progress of networking / social media activity (use tools such as google analytics for social media analysis or identify suitable metrics for networking activities)
- Lack of satisfaction in terms of a company story (engage a marketing expert or undertake a training course)
- Etc.

5. FOLLOW-UP & OUTPUTS

It is important for the Trainer / Mentor / Consultant to monitor output achieved against the original Diagnostic evaluation, Roadmap and Action Plan. For example:

Task / Objective	Outcome (Date)	
Build a network to support corporate and individual goals;	To Do	
Gain a new insight on how to transform existing contacts into effective relationships;	Done	
Introduce yourself to unknown persons and businesses	Done	
Get new contacts with, and get to further know, other professionals who are important to your business	Work in progress	

6. APPENDICES

N/A