

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



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OBJECTIVE: This Module will provide trainers with competences, methodologies and tools to support entrepreneurs 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 [Module 9 – Going International](#).

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

Networking is a socio-economic 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 the entrepreneur, or refer them 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 the entrepreneurs 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 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.

The Trainer should be able to guide and support the entrepreneur to assess and validate this activity, and this Module, developed as part of the **BIC for SME** project, helps the Trainer to challenge the entrepreneur when investigating and examining important issues to do with the business. At the end of the module the entrepreneur (with the trainers support) 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 themselves to unknown persons and businesses

- Get new contacts with, and get to further know, other professionals who are important to the business

Some of the key networking benefits for business include:

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

Effective networking occurs at informal social or industry gatherings as well as more formally requested one-to-one appointments. Encourage entrepreneurs to have a ready supply of business cards to share contact information and to make notes of key items of interest or commitments that they may make during a conversation. With your help, entrepreneurs should understand the following:

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

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 Trainers with competencies, methodologies and tools to support entrepreneurs 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 themselves to unknown persons and businesses
- Get new contacts with, and get to further know, other professionals who are important to the business

2.2 Plan the Module Training Process

2.2.1 Undertake a Diagnostic Assessment / Baseline Survey

In order to identify the key aspects in networking and building relationships for each client, Trainers should use the **BIC for SME** Diagnostic Tool for Entrepreneurs. Trainers should then use the same tool to assess their own ability to meet those needs as a Trainer / Mentor / Coach.

The **BIC for SME** Diagnostic Tool will highlight areas of strength and weakness for the Entrepreneur and Trainer 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 3), which provides a visual representation of the Module where Trainers can highlight key areas to address.

Alternatively, or in support of the **BIC for SME** Diagnostic Tool, Trainers and entrepreneurs can use a simple problem-analysis tool to find the root cause of the issues involved in business and Business Plan development 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:

1. 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 organise topics based on importance (as per the Diagnostic evaluation), impact, interactions, etc.).
3. 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 Module

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

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

As a trainer you can use one or more simulation games with entrepreneurs 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 entrepreneurs to other relevant sources and modules of the programme so as to develop a robust, sustainable business such as <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:

Fig 1.1 Concept Map for Connecting with people and making them work for you



Section 3.1.1 Strategic Networking

Question:

What are the main stakeholders in a 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 you must get the entrepreneur to focus on 3 key things: their power inside the organisation, team or group; their possibility to influence the company (or a project) and its surrounding, their possible impact on the company (or a 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 entrepreneurs engage and involve stakeholders, the more they will uncover and reduce risks for their project.

Question:

What are the main networking opportunities entrepreneurs should be aware of?

Answer:

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

Question?

What is networking?

Answer

According to [Investopedia](#), 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.

Trainers should emphasise to their entrepreneurs that networking is a great opportunity to exchange best practice knowledge, learn about the business techniques of business 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

What information can entrepreneurs get from looking at or reviewing their 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. With the trainers help, such a review can highlight areas of strengths and weaknesses for the entrepreneur.

Social network analysis (SNA) tools can be 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.

This [video](#) briefly explains the concept.

Section 3.1.2 Tips and Hints

Question:

Do your client entrepreneurs have a good story to tell?

Answer:

There are basic rules of telling a story well:

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

Question:

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

Answer:

Some essential social media tips for business are:

- 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.

Question:

How important are relationships to a business?

Answer:

Relationships are important in life. Relationship building from a business standpoint can help entrepreneurs get new customers, retain current customers and manage their reputation.

Entrepreneurs should not wait until their marketing funnel is empty to start networking. If they want to build a robust business, they should get out and make connections today. **Entrepreneurs can consider these 14 networking tips sure to expand the number of opportunities that come their way.**

1. Attend Business Networking Events

The first step in successful networking for entrepreneurs is knowing where to 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, the local chamber of commerce might host gatherings for people in an industry sector. Additionally, it's worth an entrepreneurs while identifying meetings for professional associations and societies related to their field.

2. Choose a Goal

Entrepreneurs should know to start with a clear agenda. Before attending meetings or events, advise them to take the time to determine what the goals are for the experience. For example, they might want to make new connections or simply learn about the latest developments in their business or industry.

3. Get Social outside of work

Entrepreneurs can network and make business connections at sports / social events.

4. Know their Worth

It's not enough to provide clients with a great product or service. Entrepreneurs must articulate what it is they do and be able to convey that information at networking events. Whether the goal is to generate referrals or simply build contacts, they should take time to generate an elevator pitch that conveys what they do, for whom they do it, and why customers should choose them over competition.

5. Identify Conversational Icebreakers

Ask a question which gives contacts the chance to talk about themselves. The entrepreneur can ask how they got into the field or what they think of a recent development affecting the industry.

Some Examples:

Great Icebreaker Questions

- What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?
- What do you want to be remembered for?
- What is the best thing you've done this year?

Links:

- <https://museumhack.com/list-icebreakers-questions/>
- <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/10-the-most-effective-ice-breakers-for-starting-meaningful-conversations.html>
- <https://www.eslconversationquestions.com/icebreakers-speaking-activities/>

6. Bring a Buddy

Sometimes starting conversations with strangers is easier if the entrepreneur has a familiar face by their side. If they have a friend or co-worker who's also looking to expand their network, entrepreneurs can consider attending professional events as a twosome.

7. Overcome Introversion

Networking can be a personal challenge. Fortunately, there are some strategies for overcoming introversion and making connections. First, guide the entrepreneur in considering brainstorming icebreakers before a networking event, so that they don't have to come up with ideas on the spot. Advise them to take a breather if they get overwhelmed.

8. Find a Reason to Follow Up

Making connections is only half the battle; entrepreneurs also have to take steps to keep the relationship going. Entrepreneurs should strive to reach out to contacts a few times a year to follow up.

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

9. Don't Be Negative

When searching for conversation starters, they should avoid speaking negatively about former companies or co-workers. They don't want potential contacts thinking they'd say bad things about them.

10. Don't Be Selfish

It's important to remember that networking is about give and take. If your entrepreneur client is always the person asking for favours, the relationship is unlikely to last.

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

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

12. Make sure you are prepared for a networking event

Look up who is going to be there, check what their interests are, 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

Entrepreneurs must present the benefits of collaborating with their business for the person they are speaking to.

Section 3.1.3 : Game / Role Play

Question:

Could a game / role play be important to building external networks ?

Answer:

Playing games goes a long way towards fostering entrepreneurial success. The relevance is more for budding entrepreneurs and 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 amongst 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 real-life 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. 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 for the Trainer

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

Topics / Useful Links	
• Business Balls	https://www.businessballs.com/building-relationships/networking/b
• 3 Powerful Networking Strategies	https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/298262
• Create an effective networking strategy	https://www.marketingdonut.co.uk/sales/sales-lead-generation/create-an-effective-networking-strategy
• The 5 Best Business Networking Strategies	https://www.classycareergirl.com/2016/02/business-networking-strategies/
• Strategic Networking among Small Businesses in Small US Communities	https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238333892_Strategic_Networking_among_Small_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.	<i>“Business networking. Come costruire relazioni professionali in rete”</i> di Gianluigi Cogo (Autore), Simone Favaro (Autore)
2.	<i>“Il metodo Warren Buffett. I segreti del più grande investitore del mondo”</i> di Robert G. Hagstrom (Autore)
3.	<i>“Networking & lavoro. Come valorizzare le relazioni professionali”</i> Marco Vigni
4.	<i>“I robot non sanno fare networking (per adesso). 12 take away su come creare e gestire relazioni interpersonali nell'era digitale”</i> di Gianfranco Minutolo

Bibliography for International entrepreneurs

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

Key terms	
Offline and online	Business in the 21st century can really be divided into two types of operation; offline and online. Offline business is anything that takes place in the 'real world' such as shops in a shopping centre, retail banks on the high street and anything else with a public, physical presence. Online refers to business activities that take place primarily in the digital sphere; that is the Internet
Outsourcing & insourcing	he process of outsourcing refers to contracting out a business process to a third party. It usually happens to save money or because the company doesn't have the expertise required internally to complete the job. The opposite of outsourcing is insourcing, where you bring the processes usually handled by third party companies 'in house' (physically into the office). Insourcing is increasingly being used to describe a flexible approach to staffing where a third party outsourcer is brought in to work as one of the team.
Outbound and inbound	These are marketing terms. Traditional outbound marketing is what you'll be most used to; TV adverts, radio commercials, billboards, print advertisements etc. Outbound is very much the old fashioned way of doing things, where a company initiates the conversation and sends the message out to its audience. The new, more progressive way of doing things is called inbound marketing, where the customers find you, mostly through social media and various paid and natural search engine marketing efforts. Inbound marketing is a real buzzword in the digital sphere at the moment, so if you slip this in to a conversation at a networking event it's sure to impress.
Buy out and buy in	In the financial world a buyout is an investment transaction by which the ownership equity of a company, or the majority share of its stock, is acquired. The acquirer therefore 'buys out' the existing equity holders and takes ownership of the target company. A buy in is a term that can be used more loosely in business to refer to any sort of agreement on a course of action. Getting someone to buy in to your ideas is a valuable and often profitable skill that if you can demonstrate at a business networking event will give your reputation as having a business mind a boost.
Start-ups and selling-up	A start-up is a company designed to search for a repeatable and scalable business model. These newly created companies are in a phase of development and research for markets to do business with. The term became popular during the dotcom bubble of the late 1990's when loads of dotcom companies were founded (Google, eBay, Amazon etc).
Pitch Slide Deck	This is a PPT presentation of 10/12 slides which acts as a selling document to potential investors, helps to convince grant aiding authorities and financial institutions to assist the project and establishes a business strategy for the enterprise
Target Customers	The type of person that a company wants to sell its products / services to. You need the right product to satisfy the needs of your target customer.

Case Studies / Good practices / Exercises

- <https://www.cisco.com/c/en/us/solutions/enterprise-networks/network-architecture-customer-success-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 and having identified the key issues of concern or knowledge gaps in terms of supporting a business, you will have been able to set out a Training Roadmap on specific issues to do with networking and connecting with people.

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 you, as a trainer, do not omit crucial content because lack of time and that entrepreneurs will achieve fluency in key elements of the topic. The key steps are:

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: Trainers to organise 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 having demonstrated to the entrepreneur how to use the various tools contained in the Module (steps 1 – 4 above), the Trainer should confirm 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To define a list of useful stakeholders to involve in the business 	Promoter	2 weeks	Discuss with the Trainer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To define a story to tell to develop external relationships 	Promoter	6-8 weeks	Discuss with the Trainer

<ul style="list-style-type: none">To choose the best social media for networking and to define clear roles to manage them	Promoter	6-8 weeks	Discuss with the Trainer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">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 help the entrepreneur to 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
Entrepreneurs to introduce themselves to unknown persons and businesses	Done
Get new contacts with, and get to further know, other professionals who are important to the business	Work in progress

6. APPENDICES

N/A