



We get IT right!

USA – South Africa – UK

Saratoga Training Plan

Title	Business Networking
Trainer	Wayne Harris
Date	22 April 2007
Time	10-11 am (1 hour) + follow up work for each attendee.
Location	Boardroom, Unit E, The Outlook
Attendees	Stephen Coombes, Andy Benfold, Justin Taylor, Ian Silvester
Aims	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand what business networking is 2. Understand why business networking is a key strategy for our business 3. Able to prepare correctly for an event 4. Able to participate effectively in an event 5. Able to follow up an event effectively and assess success 6. Follow on material available to find out more
Agenda	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do we do business networking? 2. What is business networking? 3. Assess your existing network 4. Prepare for a networking event 5. Attend a networking event 6. Follow up a networking event 7. Measure success of an event 8. Follow on material 9. Q and A
Other Material Required	Powerpoint presentation could be developed Details of networking events available and identify which ones are actively used by the company Statistics to show success levels of networking
Follow on Material	Business Link Networking Material Other online material Attend events

Notes:

1. Why do we network?

- Task: List 3 reasons why we businesses network.

It is an identified marketing tool within the strategic plan and marketing plan. This is from the experience of the other Saratoga companies and companies generally:

People buy from people. There has to be TRUST for most transactions to take place. The easiest way to build trust is to get to know people.

Our own figures show clearly that networking is our most effective marketing tool. The majority of our sales to date have come from personal contacts: either existing or new ones developed through business networking.

Networking also allows us to meet people that may be able to help us or we can help them without them having to become a customer.

We network to make contacts and build personal relationships that may be of value to either, or both, parties.

2. What is business networking?

- Task: Write down a 2 sentence description of what you think business networking is

(Most of this information is from Business Link)

A network is an inter-connecting group or system.

Networking with others allows smaller businesses to share experiences and ideas and to improve in-house knowledge. Businesses can network with educational establishments, trade organisations and other businesses. Businesses that actively participate in networks generally find the partnerships more effective than passive participants.

When you network for business purposes you will have the opportunity to do some of the following:

- meet in organised or informal forums
- receive news bulletins and invitations to events of general interest, eg exhibitions, lectures by prominent business people or industry experts
- participate in debates on topics relevant to your industry or field of business
- contribute to or participate in surveys or research in your field or business sector

You stand to gain from the experiences of other businesses and share new ideas on a variety of subjects including:

- training and recruitment
- talent management
- new products and markets
- industry developments
- industry laws and regulation

You may meet customers, competitors, suppliers and service providers who are all looking for similar benefits and to widen their contact base.

For a start-up or small business, networking can provide a lifeline of support and business generation.

Networking can help you improve your business performance, products and staff skills. It provides opportunities for you to develop your knowledge and skills, including:

- Participating in benchmarking opportunities to help you identify areas where you can improve your business performance.
- Establishing staff exchanges and secondments. For example, an outside expert may join your business to oversee a specific project or you may second a graduate joiner to a supplier to learn about the supply process.
- Benefiting from economies of scale by involving employees in joint skills development programmes for staff in your business sector.

You can use networking to boost your reputation and gather new leads. You can:

- raise your business profile by becoming an established and regular networking member, getting your face and the business known
- meet new people and build mutually beneficial business relationships
- expand your markets by generating new business contacts with potential customers, suppliers and partners
- establish overseas partnerships, eg through international exhibitions and conferences

Networks can also be a key source of information and support. You can:

- compare and discuss issues of common interest, eg legal and regulatory developments, staff retention, supplier networks, customer service and computerisation
- develop and share ideas, innovation and knowledge of best practice

The extent to which you benefit will depend on the events and services the network partnership offers and how actively you become involved. Some businesses are reluctant to seek advice or get help for fear of being embarrassed or giving a competitor an opportunity to take advantage. However, for most businesses, the benefits of taking an active role in a network usually outweigh any potential concerns or reasons not to network.

Be an active participant in networks

Networks are established for collective benefits and are most successful and effective where there is give and take by participants and members.

This involves sharing your experience through dialogue and interaction with other partners, as well as learning from theirs. For instance, you could attend debates and discussion groups to contribute your ideas and experiences or offer to speak at a conference.

A network's strength in any particular area or service depends on how actively its partners exchange information with each other and reciprocate. For example, if you receive advice from a network partner, be prepared to offer your own help in the future.

Partners who are willing to pass on skills to each other will establish the network as a centre of excellence or expertise and facilitate future collaborations. If you have been pleased with a particular supplier, training provider or consultant, let your partners know why or arrange for them to give a presentation of their services.

A well-run network will thrive if its participants play an active role in keeping the network topical and relevant. If you have experienced the benefits of a network consider any other contacts who would enjoy them - talk to other businesses about what you have gained and introduce them to the network.

- Task: review the 3 things you originally wrote down. Do you need to change any?

3. Assess your existing network

If we accept the theory of Six Degrees of Separation, you will already have links directly, or indirectly, to many people that could be of benefit to your business or who you could be of benefit to.

Take time to analyse your personal network.

Family

Friends

Ex-colleagues

Associates of clubs/organisations

Any other people you already know.

Tell these people what you do.

Tell them the type of companies you are looking to work with. Maybe be specific and name individual companies.

Find out what they do within the business they work for/own/manage.

These people are more likely to trust you as they know you already.

They are also more likely to pass on your details to someone else they know that might benefit from your services.

They may provide a service that your business could benefit from.

- *Task: write down the names of 5 people that do not know what you do. Set yourself a goal of making sure you inform them of what you do.*

4. Prepare for a networking event

Know where and when the event is. It seems obvious, but make sure you know where you are going and what time you are expected to arrive.

1st impression count and you do not get a 2nd chance.

Dress - What image do you want to present?

- Can you wear something that you will make you more memorable?

- Do you have to wear company provided clothing?

- Is there a company dress code?

Attitude - Remember why you are going.

- Be positive from the start. This activity benefits the whole company.

Body language - Think about your normal body language in group situations. Are you open or closed? Do you need to make more of an effort to be open to others and make people feel you are approachable?

Targets/Aims

What do you want to achieve? Be clear and specific.

Are there specific people you want to meet? Review the attendee list.

Decide before you go what issues you currently have that you may need advice/ help for.

Tools

The old scout motto – Be prepared!

Make sure you have business cards

Take promotional gifts

Take flyers if you are running special offers

Prepare and practice your elevator speech.

- *Task: prepare a general elevator speech.*

1 minute to tell people what you do.

Be specific

Tell a story

- *Task: practice the speeches and feedback on each other and review.*

5. Attend a networking event

Arrive early and stay late (within reason) – these are the best times as people are most relaxed. This is informal time.

Circle and scan – take time to identify people standing on their own or small groups that are ‘open’.

If you are in a group think about your body language – are you open for people to join?

Remember your targets/aims - why are you there?

Collect business cards.

Sit with strangers NOT colleagues or people you already know well.

Listen – always show an interest and listen carefully. Ask questions. Think about what you can do for the person you are talking to.

Personality types.

Do you know what personality type you are?

It is generally accepted that there are 4 types and we each have some of all of them but fall mainly into one type in particular.

- *Task: Which of these best describes you?*

Type 1
Loves fun and will always make time for it
Likes to feel important
Likes things to be interactive
Favourite topic of conversation – you!
May use a 3rd party to welcome you to the office
Want to know the big picture not the details

Type 2
People focussed
Mediator
More sociable and caring
Not worried about formalities
Prefer one-to-one to a group

Type 3
Task orientated
Love the detail
Think of yourself as an expert in your field
Cautious
Will question things and seek quality
Very formal approach

Type 4
Bottom line focussed
Tend to take charge
Like targets
Always want to know impact on profit/costs
Don't like to waste time on small talk – get to the point
Want to have an agenda at meetings

Even more difficult is how to identify another person's type and approach them in a way that they will respond positively to.

Tips

Type 1
Give them a big picture overview
Make them feel that you respect them and their opinions
Don't check upon them

Type 2
Tell them how they can help you
Take an interest and listen
Smile more
Don't rush the conversation

Type 3
Focus on the detail
Specify your USP
Tell them exactly why they should use you.

Type 4
Be direct – what you do, who you are, how you can help them, what it will cost, etc.
Don't waste time.
Be confident

6. Follow up a networking event

Be prompt

Always do what you said you would do – telephone, e-mail, etc by a set time.

Make it prompt – this will keep you fresh in their minds and not let the opportunity lose momentum. It also removes the opportunity for someone else to step in.

Personal follow up only: no BCC generic e-mails. Networking is about personal relationships to build trust.

If there is an opportunity available inform sales and marketing so that it is recorded and resources are allocated to make sure we make every effort to win the order.

When you book an event, book a session the next working day or the day after to follow up. If you do not give this time you may as well not go.

7. Measure success of an event

The benefits may not appear after one event. This is a long term or medium term strategy. You can however check what happened against your targets/aims. Make a record of the contacts you made and any follow up done. In a few months you can see the full impact of networking.

- Task: design a simple sheet for recording the event, your targets/aims before going, the contacts you made, follow up done and outcomes.

8. Follow on

Check the web sites of the networking groups you are assigned to.

Attend events. Maybe try different ones to see if there any that suit you better.

Read articles on line about networking. There is always a new tip that might be of use.

Once you have a contact make sure they are in touch with what we are doing. Either pass them on to be added to the e-mail list or make sure you keep in touch personally.

Investigate online networking opportunities; ecademy / linkedin / business scene / etc

9. Q and A