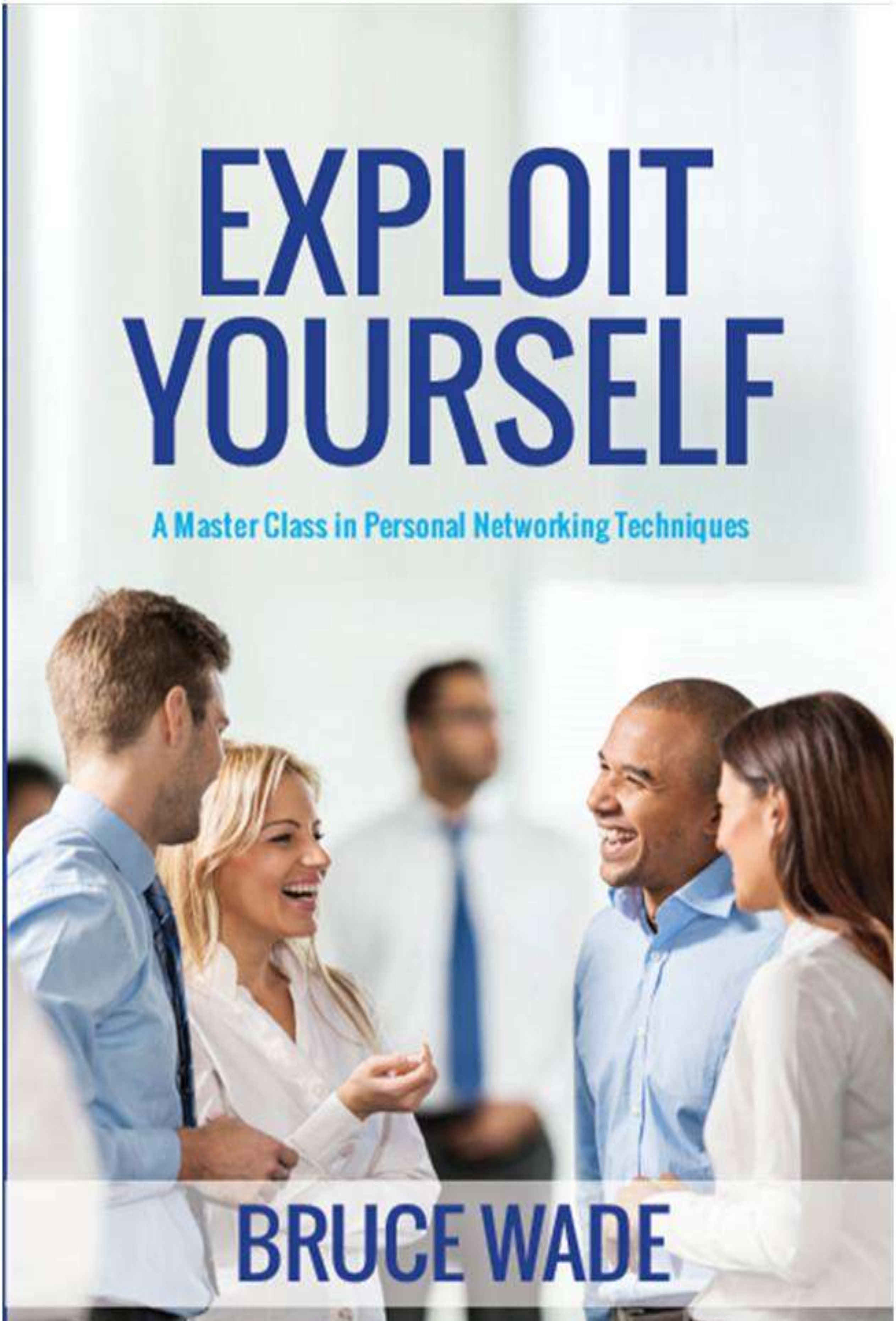

EXPLOIT
YOURSELF
A Master Class in Personal Networking Techniques
BRUCE WADE

Exploit Yourself

Master Classes in Personal Networking

By Bruce Wade

This book is dedicated to my friend and mentor
Colin Hall
who has shared his life lessons with so many
to bear much fruit across many nations

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

SECTION ONE: Start with the basics

1. Know yourself
2. Know your product
3. Know your audience

SECTION TWO: Meeting Someone

1. Dress Code
2. The handshake
3. Names
4. The business card
5. Call to action
6. Body language
7. Hormones of conversation

SECTION THREE: Personal Marketing

1. The sales cycle
2. The old sales funnel
3. The new sales funnel
4. Strategic networks
5. Referral farming

SECTION FOUR: Personal Presentations

1. Personal introduction
2. Business elevator pitch
3. Funding pitch
4. Words to avoid

SECTION FIVE: Events

1. Breakfast networking
2. Pure networking
3. Casual networking
4. Tactical networking
5. Expos and events

CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

There was once a boy who feared nothing more than speaking in public. He could not imagine a worse fate than being asked to stand up and speak in front of his class. Even reading aloud or asking a simple question would start his gut churning with anxiety.

The way he coped with this was not to talk. He learnt to think and play alone, allowing his imagination to guide him and take him to far off places where speech and talking to real people was not an issue. He would dream of standing on hill tops talking to thousands. In these dreams his speech was brilliant and fluent, and the throng cheered him on, wanting to hear more and more.

He also developed a passion for water, especially waterfalls and crashing waves. The energy of the water fed his body, mind and soul and allowed him to talk out load without the risk of being heard.

By the time he reached his last school year, however, his fear had become so great that before his final English presentation he was ill for days leading up to it. He knew it was impossible to go through with it. He would rather have his eyes gauged out by ravens; pins pushed under his toenails. But these were not an option. In the end he got through it. But only when the school agreed that he could talk after school time, to an empty classroom, and with the teacher sitting behind him. And still it was torture.

That boy was me.

And although I finished school and passed matric, it was with the ignoble title of "*Least likely to ever talk again*". And I would go on to wear this lowly crown for many years to come. So what was it? Where did the crushing fear of speaking in front of others come from?

It started when I was very young and developed a stammer in my speech. There were many reasons for this, but that is another story. As young kids will want to do, they mocked me and laughed at me whenever I got stuck on a word. I would then start choking and turning red in the face. My brother was no more supportive and continued taunting me after school and well after bedtime.

And so I left school and went into the world, not quite a gibbering idiot, but close. And as my various careers began to take shape, it became more and more important to speak to others. Presentations, interviews and teaching were a weekly occurrence. Before meetings, such as monthly updates to management, I would prepare myself for days, going through what I planned to say, sentence by sentence, carefully eliminating any words that tripped me up. I would then stick rigidly to the script. Each presentation I did, I died a little inside, and whenever I slipped up and stuttered a huge bomb would go off in my gut. I would then relive those moments for days and weeks afterwards, being reminded each time of how bad I was at life.

Then one day I realised it was me. I was the one to blame, not those who mocked and laughed at me. At the same time, I knew I could get it right. I could change a part of myself. I read books and watched videos of others struggling with the same speech problems, and I started to work on myself. It was to be a long road, but each time I spoke I made progress. I learnt how to breathe and control my anxiety. I discovered how to stand proud in the face of those who pointed and laughed. I decided that I would not allow others to determine my fate. It was my life and mine to make of as I wanted. And what I wanted was . . . to speak.

EXPLOIT YOURSELF

When I was deciding on a theme and title for this book, the term *Exploit Yourself* came to mind. It was originally the name of a workshop series I ran a few years ago. In the workshop we got a group of business owners to push themselves beyond their limits and so take their businesses into brighter futures.

Exploit Yourself may seem a little extreme. Some people even argue that it is not politically correct to use this term with so much exploitation happening in the world. But I think it is. And when it comes to becoming a good speaker and networker, taking yourself to your limits is exactly what you need to do. You need to exploit yourself and push yourself into places of discomfort, and sometimes pain, to get to do things you need to do. Growth only happens outside your area of comfort, for if you only continue to do the things you have done in the past, then where is the room for new experiences and growth?

We have a sign up in our office that reads *If you change nothing, nothing will change*. Another one says *Growth happens outside your comfort zone*. Both these are reminders to our staff and clients that if you want to see different results, you need to do things differently. And doing things differently will take you to places outside your daily routine – places that are not comfortable; places where you won't feel safe.

This book is about how to become a better networker and public speaker. If you have come to this book, it is perhaps true that these are areas of great discomfort for you. So I challenge you to read this entire book. It will give you critical advice and introduce you to crucial principles that if followed and adopted will make you a better networker and public speaker. Underline sections that talk to you. Try out the various activities and push yourself to do things you have not done before. Stand up and introduce yourself to people you do not know. Boldly go where you have not been before: it is not as bad as you think – in fact it becomes fun. Trust me on this.

This book is both a series of mini master classes on all the lessons I have learnt and applied in my own life, and it is a testimony to what can be achieved with a little focus, practise and support from others. Public speaking and networking are not a death penalty. They can be learned, even mastered. And then they can be enjoyed. They have become so for me. And if I was able to do it, anyone can.

SECTION ONE

Start with the basics

1. KNOW YOURSELF

When you know yourself you are empowered. When you accept yourself you are invincible. Tina Lifford.

Getting to know yourself is one of life's longest and most rewarding journeys. I am convinced that many of us never embark down this road for a number of reasons, some valid, others not so. But I would encourage you to spend time with, explore and begin to understand yourself.

My real journey of self-discovery started when I was first introduced to Colin Hall. Colin was Chairman of the Wooltru group back in my corporate days and a man you admired and avoided at the same time. At coffee stations there was a lot of talk about those who had accidently walked into a lift to discover they were sharing it with Colin. They then had to endure the next few floors with him as he interrogated them about their job, their successes and what they had done for his company. I took the stairs.

Many years later I was to meet the real Colin, the man behind the big job title, and I was surprised. He was not who I had imagined him to be. We spent a weekend together at Mount Fluer on a leadership retreat. Colin and his team lead us, a group of 30, through a number of exercises that challenged us physically, mentally and emotionally. I was tested to my core and came out the other side a changed person; a little bruised, physically and emotionally, but changed for the better. I had learnt that growth happens only in the exposed light, and this involves getting outside that notorious comfort zone.

So I started a journey that would take me through many years of self-examination, as I challenged what I knew and took as the norm. It would hurt, not only me but also those around me. I changed. I evolved. I became a better me.

I want to challenge you to do the same. We do not have a weekend away and 60 hours of dedicated face time together. But you have the rest of your life. Take the first step today.

To become good and even great at networking, it is vital to know and understand yourself. What are you good at? Where do you suck and what needs to improve?

In all respects, I am an avid supporter of John Maxwell when he says, "Do what you do well and do nothing else." But I do not subscribe to this when it comes to speaking, because speaking is not an optional activity. You cannot ignore it because you think you are not good at it. Just ask Moses, a biblical hero I have always drawn huge strength from.

Moses was brought up as an Egyptian prince. All his needs were met. He would have been educated to the highest level and had every resource at his fingertips. But he had another calling in his heart. His heritage called him back to his family roots and he soon found himself banished to the wilderness and tending sheep.

A number of years later he encounters God in the form of a burning bush and is given a new challenge and calling. He seems positive and full of acceptance until he is asked to go talk to Pharaoh. Then he falls apart. I understand this and relate to his turn-and-run attitude. He pleads his case with God and he is given magical powers to use as visual aids. But still he wants to run. He is then given a team of supporters and a mentor. Still he wants to run. Finally he accepts. But I have a feeling the conversation went on a little longer than what we read in Exodus.

Moses goes on to approach Pharaoh, visual aids in hand and mentor at his side, and fails again and again to get his point over. God has to bring on the super slide show: the 10 plagues. Finally Pharaoh relents and Moses is free to lead his people into the dessert.

Sound familiar? Well maybe not the burning bush and stick-snake accessory, but the call to do great things lies within us all. Some of us just need a little push in the right direction.

Moses worked hard to understand himself. So have I. I constantly push myself in directions I am uncomfortable with. I try new things, some end up well, others not. But I am learning about myself all the time. I know that singing is not one of my strengths, so I do not sing, not in public anyway. But that does not mean my stage career is over. I know what I can do, what I enjoy doing and what I need to try. Slowly after each new attempt, I learn more about myself, and so the list of what I have tried grows and so do I.

Exercise

Take a sheet of paper and divide it into three columns: *Can Do*, *Should Try* and *Shouldn't Do*. Jot down some activities under each heading. The C*an Do* items are the ones you find fun and energising. The *Shouldn't Do* are the things you have tried and are clearly not gifted at. For me it is singing, what are yours? Now look at the *Should Try* column. These are the activities that you know you need to try, but just haven't got around to yet. Each one comes with a long list of excuses and reasons why you can't, but write them down anyway. This is your challenge.

2. KNOW YOUR PRODUCT

"*Know your product inside and out before you start working and relate that knowledge to the consumer's needs."* Bill Bernbach

There is only one thing worse than a person unable to talk at a networking event and that is a person who can talk but does not know anything about their subject matter.

There are two extremes I have seen when it comes to product knowledge, and both of them are evident at expos and conferences. The one extreme is the newly appointed salesperson and demonstrator. They have been trained on the product and given a word-for-word speech to use in their presentation. They appear to be product geniuses and experts in their field. You may have seen them. They will often be found demonstrating food or cleaning appliances. Their demonstration of cutting, dicing, vacuuming and selling is flawless. They present with evangelical zeal normally reserved for Sunday sermons. They know all the benefits and how they relate to the customers issues. They are well trained in selling and the conversion of bystanders, for it is after all what they have been hired to do. But stop them in mid-sentence and ask them a different question, off script, and they fall apart. Their well-balanced, rehearsed act becomes dented and the true depth of their product knowledge is revealed.

The other extreme is seen at similar places. These are the true product experts. These are the people who have spent days, weeks and months developing the product from drawings, through prototype and on to market. They understand each screw, wire and feature of the design. They can engage with other technical experts in long discussions about the composition of the right polymer that offers the correct tensile strength for the job. But when placed in front of an audience, they freeze up and stare glazed-eyed at the potential customers. They have become so feature focused that their ability to relate or even communicate the benefits to others is all but impossible.

The balanced person is the one who is able to have both feet firmly on the ground, one in each camp: technical and marketing. The key networker is a person who understands the product enough to engage in the design, but also understands the needs and wants of customers. They have studied the problems experienced by the public and know how to address this through the feature-based benefits of the design. This is who you need to be.

EXERCISE

Get to know what you are talking about and trying to sell. The questions below will help you get your thoughts in order and assist you in the scripting of a killer pitch. We will talk more about the pitch later, but for now answer the questions below. (These questions are a simplified version of a product specification template that we use to help people unpack their product offering in preparation for marketing.)

1. What problem do you solve for your customers?
2. What is the product you are offering that addresses the problem?
3. What are the features of the product?
4. What technical information is relevant about the product?
5. What are the benefits to the customer that the features provide?
6. Who is involved in the supply, manufacture and delivery of the product?
7. What prices do you charge?

The answers to these seven simple questions will be vital when developing your pitch and networking script, which we discuss in later chapters.

3. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Everyone has a story to tell or a product to sell. Know your audience before you open your mouth. Anonymous

Understanding and knowing as much as possible about the person you are speaking to is essential for good communication. Gather as much information as possible about a person or persons before an initial meeting. One simple method of doing this is through "cyber-stalking": mining for information about the person on various social networks. You should look for details about the person, photos of them and indications of general behaviour. Read through their LinkedIn profile to form an outline of their job history, education and interests. You will begin to form a solid picture of the person you are meeting and how best to communicate with or market to them.

I am amazed at how easy it is to collate a full dossier of information on any given person if they are active online. We freely divulge details of our eating habits, friends, social activities and aligned activist campaigns. This all well dressed in tagged pictures, selfies and memes that build a very colourful and comprehensive image of who we are.

You might have paused to think about yourself and what you have revealed on the social platforms where you're active. Scary thought? No, not really, because the more authentic we are, the easier it is to be consistent and have nothing to remember other than the truth. So many people live lives that are layered in different versions of self and lies told to support each version. As a result it becomes harder and harder to keep all the balls in the air at once. Trying to remember to whom you told what in order to maintain the facade of the untruth consumes huge amounts of mental energy each day. The situation soon becomes unsustainable and the world begins to fall apart piece by piece. The message in this little aside should be clear: be authentic, be honest, be yourself. At all times.

Once you have been able to establish a basic profile of a person that includes the details you need, you can begin to build a solid marketing plan for the meeting with that person. It is a good idea to have a few items of general interest that can be used as an ice-breaker or to fill a gap in the discussions whilst getting a coffee or waiting for another person to arrive. But be careful not to go to places of high emotion or thin ice. Areas such as the latest political issues, sex, religion or abortion: these and a few others will almost always get you into trouble. Tread carefully around sport and alliances to teams. For many people, the support of their team is personal and passionate. When their team is not doing as well as expected they are vulnerable. Nothing ruins a potential sale like the mocking of your client's team.

When dealing with a larger group of people, follow the same advice. Ask for information about the group you will be encountering: age bracket, gender mix, interests, potential presenting issues, occupations and education. You can add more factors to this list, but you want to build a profile similar to one that you would build for an individual. It is a lot harder to get right, however, so when preparing to speak to a group, the best advice is to err on the side of caution. I suffer from the urge to show off my wicked, often misunderstood sense of humour and this has got me into a lot of trouble in the past. With my age has come the wisdom to keep my mouth shut, even though I may enjoy the jokes and comments in my head.

If, during your sleuthing, you become aware of issues that you can help your audience with, you need to note these down and use them to your advantage by incorporating them into your pitch or comments. When you acknowledge and help address a person's or group's issues you go a long way to developing a relationship with them based on concern and trust.

EXERCISE

Develop a dossier on someone you will be meeting in the near future. Try to gather all the information listed below through your investigation.

Start by doing a straight Google search on their name and see what comes up across different sites. Look for the following:

1. Names: full names or other aliases they may use.
2. Education: try to get a list of all their schools and courses. Look for common interests in school, courses or sport.
3. Family names: look for spouse, partner, girl/boy friends, children and any best friends that come up.
4. Employment history: look for frequency of jobs and different career changes. Again look for common overlaps with your career that you could use to start a conversation.
5. Scope out their photos on FaceBook, Instagram and Twitter: this will often tell you a lot about their social life and likes related to weekend activities and sports played or teams followed.

Copy their current or best profile picture to Google Images and see what other info you can find.

The above steps should give you enough information about the person to better understand them and be able to approach them with a choice of openers that address common ideas or places they have been associated with in their past. If you find anything unsavoury, do not mention it, as this will immediately erode trust. And in my experience, do not mention that you have been cyber-stalking them. People seem to take offence knowing they have been "investigated", even though all this information is in the public domain and is readily available to anyone.

Meeting Someone

> "I don't expect a big crowd. But hopefully if the first meeting is interesting the word will spread." Patti Smith

When you meet someone, you have between three and 15 seconds to make a lasting impression on them. During this critical time the other person will be judging you on how you appear, what you "feel" like and what you say. They will form an initial opinion in their minds of who you are, which allows them to categorise you into their hierarchy of needs. These categories range from *Need to know* through *Friend*, *Potential friend* right down to *I need to get away from this person*.

It is up to you to ensure you get categorised in the correct manner. If you fail to do this, you will need many additional conversations and transactions with this person to correct their first opinion.

So how can you make the most of the critical initial few seconds?

In this section we are going to look at a few key points that you can learn and practise, and so master the moment of meeting.

1. DRESS CODE

Dress for the occasion. There is nothing worse than arriving at an event and finding you are inappropriately dressed for it. If you are the only one in the room wearing jeans and a T-shirt, while everyone else is in suits, you have made a terrible first impression. It is always preferable to be a bit smarter than the requirements. This allows you to dress down if required.

I have known people to take a few outfits with them to an event, to be sure that they get it right. They sit in the car outside the venue scoping out others who arrive early. Then if necessary, they do a quick change in the car before making their entrance.

As a man, it is probably easier to get your outfit right compared to a woman. We can get away with jeans and shirt by just throwing a dinner jacket on. I am not going to offer fashion advice in this book: that is out of my area of expertise. But I will suggest a few tips that I have picked up from both my personal and friends' experiences.

Men

- Shirt in is better than shirt out.

- Top button open is better than top two or three buttons open.
- Shirt cuffs all the way down and buttoned or rolled up is better than unbuttoned or half rolled up.
- Pants fully up are better than hanging below the hips.
- Smart shoes trump sandals and slops.
- Jacket is better than no jacket; you can always take it off.
- Shaved is better than shadow or two-day growth.
- Wallet in back pocket is better than in side pockets.
- Keep keys, wallet and cell phone in the pocket of your bag.
- Manbag is better than bumbag.
- Briefcase is better than a rucksack.

Women

- Hair up is better than hair down for business.
- Hair out of the eyes is better.
- Less is more when it comes to makeup.
- Studs are better than anything that dangles from your ears.
- Leave any other body piercings at home.
- Less cleavage is better than more.
- Simple necklaces are better than anything that distracts from your face.
- Well-fitting is better than loose, which is better than too tight.
- Smart is better than casual.
- Casual is better than sweats and slippers.

I am sure there are a lot more points that could be added to these lists, but I hope that the above guidelines spark some thought before you leave for your next networking function. It is better to err on the safe side when it comes to dress and accessories.

EXERCISE

Take a photo of yourself each day before you leave home for work, a function, or to have fun. Then compare these pictures and ask someone you trust to help evaluate your dress sense and discuss what can be changed or improved.
It is too easy to just throw out everything and buy new if your credit card can match your enthusiasm; however, often all it takes is just a few minor tweaks and changes to get a whole new look out of something old.

2. THE HANDSHAKE

The handshake has its origin in a time when the meeting of two men could result in conflict and potential death. The two parties displayed their hands for each other before they got too close, which showed they were not hiding a weapon. The simple gesture of extending their hands forward also raised their sleeves and showed an unarmed, friendly advance. This later developed into a simple clasping of both hands as a form of a "man hug" at a safe distance. Today this has evolved and simplified into the handshake as a greeting.

There are a number of different handshakes in different cultures and age groups. These range from the full-hand-thumb-clasp-full-hand to a complex set of rehearsed moves and sound effects. In business, you should stick to the standard format. But if you find yourself in a different setting, learn quickly and just go with it. Better to try, and get it wrong and laugh, than to buck the tradition and do the wrong thing.

One thing that is important when greeting is eye contact. Look the person in the eye; this will endow the greeting with friendship and facilitate an adult-to-adult transaction from the start. It will also allow you to see the other person and remember whom you have met. It can be a good idea to try to identify something about the person's face that is different, such as a scar, scratched glasses or eye colour. You can then associate this oddity with their name to help you remember both who they are and their name for future conversations.

EXERCISE

Focus on your handshake over the next few days and watch others. Practise if you need to with a friend, and put into practice a good, solid, firm handshake that tells people you are here.

3. NAMES

Remembering names was a major weakness of mine at networking events, but I developed some secrets to getting this right. My best tactic is to get others to remember my name first. In some ways this eliminates the need for me to remember their names.

To encourage others to remember my name, I always wear a simple, bold name badge at all public events. I also lead with my name in all conversations and use my name when telling a story. For example, I might say, “I remember when a client called me yesterday and said, ‘Bruce, it was so great to hear from you.’”

The more you can repeat your name, the higher the chances of it imprinting on others’ memories.

Another technique I’ve learnt is to associate your name with a recent story, object or famous person. I am lucky to have a name that is very similar to a superhero’s name and a number of other famous people who have the name *Bruce*. But my best introduction, that is completely lost of anyone born after 1980, is the association with Elvis Presley’s Jail House Rock song, where he sings about his “Bruce Wade Shoes”. Corny I know, but people laugh and remember my name far longer than if I hadn’t made the inane reference.

One of the best introductions I have ever heard was from a young woman wanting me to assist her with her business. She found me in a crowd and walked right up to me, thrust out her hand and said, “Hi Bruce, my name is Robyn – like the small bird that sings in the early morning, but spelt with a Y.” Brilliant and confident, and I still remember her face to this day.

Remembering other people’s names is just a matter of associating their name with something that you notice about them. If I already know someone else by the same name, it is easy to just link the new person to the person I know. If not, I look for a mannerism or obvious feature that I can associate the name with. I then make a simple rhyme in my head to help me remember. These do not have to be shared and are just a mnemonic device for myself.

Here are some examples:

- Scary-hairy Mary
- Suited Simon
- Big-ears Belinda
- Small-nose Sue
- Sparkle-eye Sandy
- Bearded Brad

You get my point. Try it and you will soon be a wizard with names. Just do not, ever, share your rhyme with them; it will most often lead to a face slap or kick and a ruined relationship even before it has started.

EXERCISE

After each event you attend, write down as many names as you can remember and try to put faces to each name. The more you focus on trying to remember names, the more you will begin to recall each person's unique characteristic and their name. Remember not to share with people what you use to remember their name – this is your secret and should be kept such.

4. THE BUSINESS CARD

Other than yourself, your business card has to be one of the most valuable networking tools you can use to get people to remember you and call back. When used correctly, it becomes an extension of your initial presentation that they take away with them.

The correct use of a business card is mostly ignored at the events I go to. People swap cards and just stuff them into their pockets without a second glance. When this happens, I am almost certain that the “date” is over and no further interaction will happen.

To avoid this, I have learnt and implemented some useful tactics to, again, make a good first impression and to be remembered. I will discuss these below.

Firstly, my business card is printed on both sides. On the face is my business logo and tag line. On the reverse side is my name and contact details. This two-sided card offers a challenge to people who look at the front and wonder, sometimes for a few seconds, where my details could possibly be. Failing to grasp this and unwilling to ask a stupid question, they just carry on as though they never needed to know. So I now do the card flip when I present my card to them. I show them my details on the back, and then as I present the card, I flip it over to the company logo as I hand it to them. This gives them the information they need and reduces the confusion of what should be a relatively simple task.

I also point out something on the card, such as my slogan or that my Skype ID is slightly different to my name. This makes them actually look at the card, take note of my name again and read some of the information they have been presented with. In the process they are assisted in remembering who I am – a good thing for someone who is a potential client.

Another trick I employ in relation to business cards is to use my pockets to classify people when I meet them. This allows me to action the important people as soon as I get back to the office or in front of a computer. This is what I do.

In my left pants pocket I keep all my own cards. They are easy to get at and deal out at a moment’s notice. As I meet people, get to know their name, interests and relevance to my business or current point of interest, I am mentally separating them into one of three categories: *Yes*, *Maybe* and *No*. The *Yes* people are the ones I need to contact as soon as I can to set up follow-up meetings. These cards go into my shirt pocket, close to my heart. The *Maybe* people, those that are relevant but not urgent, go into my right pants pocket. These will be added to our mailing list and social media lists for further marketing and communication. The *No* people are the ones that do not fit my current profile of who I am looking for, but I never throw away a card. One never knows when a person you meet could lead to a positive lead or referral. These cards go into my back pocket. When I am back in the office, I do not need to sort through each card and try to remember who was who and what follow-up action to take with whom. This simple and effective sorting procedure gives me the ability to get to the people I need to get to as soon as I can in the most simplest of ways.

EXERCISE

Get your business cards out. Keep some in different places ready for use at any time and replenish each stockpile when they run low.
Develop your own method of collecting and classifying the cards you receive and always get back to people when you have promised to do so.

5. CALL TO ACTION

Never ever leave a conversation or interaction with another person without a solid agreed call to action. This may sound a little procedural and boring but think about all the meetings you have had with people that just end in short “OK”, “Bye” or “See you”. These are just endings that lead to nowhere. Even if it is just a brief encounter and card swap, end the discussion with a solid action that either you or they will take to enable a second date and follow up.

I love to tell people that I will be capturing their details, adding them to our mailing list and that they should expect an email soon. And further, if a meeting is required, that I will ask my assistant to set one up in the next day or two. This is a simple yet effective way to communicate my efficiency and to establish my accountability for what happens next.

It also gives me a huge sense of pride to talk about our well-defined sales funnel that has been set up and works. This is a great way to show people that we mean business and if we can run our business this way, imagine what we can do for their business.

EXERCISE

Make a point of always completing any conversation with a call to action, no matter how small. It gives you a huge sense of accountability and provides an excuse for others to follow up on your call. As before, always follow through on your word.

6. BODY LANGUAGE

When you first meet someone, it is important to be able to read the signs that they are interested in you and may be willing to discuss business or further proposals. Business is very similar to dating: the initial meeting, the first date, the follow-up discussion, the second date and so on. There are a number of key pointers that you need to look out for that will tell you whether things are going right or wrong for you.

Let’s begin with the bad things. If the person you are chatting to is not interested, they will display some closed body language to you. This includes folded arms, crossed legs away from you and one shoulder pointing towards you. If this what you are presented with, either walk away or do something better than what you have been doing. Things are not going well.

On the other hand, if they are facing you square on, feet pointing towards you with lots of eye contact, then things are better. A woman will normally display a few telltale signs that she is interested. She will expose her neck by brushing her hair back or tilting her head back slightly. Also look out for the forward tilt of her head as she looks at you through her eyelashes. My favourite is the suprasternal notch touch. This is when a woman touches or rubs the small notch just below her neck between the collarbones – a definite sign of openness and interest.

For men it is simpler because we are easier to read and often don't hide our subconscious feelings very well. An interested man will face you square on with arms open, on their waistband, or in their pockets. If they expose their thumbs, put their shoulders back and lean a little towards you, this is all good – you can take the conversation to the next level.

EXERCISE

Watch people and how they act when they talk to each other. As you begin to recognise the different body language characteristics you will be able to make a start on identifying your own.

If this lesson interests you, I would encourage you to read more on this subject and learn more about the silent language of communication that lies within our body movements and posture.

7. HORMONES OF CONVERSATION

We have four major hormones that flow through our brains when interacting with others. Each of these has different effects with different outcomes on the conversation.

The first is **oxytocin** – nicknamed the cuddle or the feel good hormone. Oxytocin is triggered during a pleasant or emotional experience. This hormone increases when we watch an emotional or funny movie or when we laugh. But it can also be triggered through others when we dance with them, make eye contact with them, give them a hug or firmly shake their hand. Learning how to trigger oxytocin in others is key to developing that initial bond with someone you want to do business with. Here are some tricks to assist in this process:

- When greeting someone, shake hands firmly and look them in the eye.
- Use your other hand to lightly touch their forearm if exposed.
- If you can go in for a hug or even a partial shoulder hug, go for it.
- A hand on the shoulder is better, but could be seen as a bit too much for cross-gender greetings.
- Tell a good story that will make others laugh, and laugh with them.

Oxytocin generates a sense of empathy and trust that results in the release of more oxytocin, and so a virtuous cycle can be set in motion.

Cortisol is our stress hormone. It originates from our adrenal gland and, when produced, causes our stress levels to rise. Cortisol also lowers our immune system and the rate of our metabolism. As you may guess, this hormone is not associated with any great relationship or future business dealings. We see cortisol levels rise in meetings when people are late, technology is faulty or when disagreements give rise to arguments.

Testosterone is the hormone excreted by the male testicles and to a lesser degree the female ovaries. Testosterone is the power hormone and will block any effect of oxytocin in the body.

When cortisol or testosterone levels are high in any meetings or discussions, the chances of a win-win solution are almost zero.

The fourth transaction hormone is **dopamine**. Dubbed the pleasure or sexual hormone, dopamine helps control the pleasure and reward centres of our brain. We not only see and understand the rewards we seek, but are also motivated to go after them. This chemical motivation drives us to achieve with renewed vigour and energy.

Dopamine is associated with sexual pleasure and intimacy, so even though it is a strong hormone to induce, it will often lead you into trouble in a professional relationship. A little flirting is never a bad thing to get a good deal concluded in the boardroom, as long as boundaries are set and nothing is taken further or misinterpreted.

A few ways to induce dopamine are through physical touch, high levels of trust and sexual foreplay. Again, none of these are recommended in business exchanges.

EXERCISE

Keep an emotional diary and record how you feel after certain events and exchanges with people. Try to identify which hormone was present and how that affected your state of mind and moods. Then identify the trigger event that caused this. Learn from this and begin to avoid the bad events and migrate towards the good ones.

Personal Marketing

"Timid salesmen have skinny kids." Zig Ziglar

I think it will be useful to pause here and take a slight deviation to better understand what marketing is and how it works in the real world. Without this knowledge people often enter a sales and marketing meeting with fists flying and come away bruised and rejected.

1. THE SALES CYCLE

For any sale to take place, one needs to go through the sales cycle. Very rarely are there any short cuts or deviations. By working through a simple six-stage process a relationship is built and trust developed between the seller and the customer.

Let's unpack each element of the sales cycle.

The **first stage** is to INFORM the client. This is when you introduce a product in response to an understood problem that the client is experiencing. It is normally a *did you know that-*type of discussion, where you inform the people you are speaking to that they are indeed experiencing a problem that needs to be solved. The outcome of this stage is to create a desire to know more. You know you are successful if they begin to ask for a more detailed explanation of what can be done to solve the problem and what you have in mind to do so.

This leads nicely into the **second stage**, when you EDUCATE. During this stage you should have enough information about both the problem, the various possible solutions and, of course, your solution. As you lead your audience through this stage with knowledge and confidence, they begin to learn more about the subject, and their need for a solution, but in particular your solution, begins to develop and grow. You know you have been successful in this stage when someone asks you, "Where can I get one of those?" Then like a well-oiled machine you progress to the next stage.

The **third stage**, the SELL, is as simple as handing ice-cream to children on a warm summer's day – but only if you have mastered the first two stages. When selling, it takes courage and boldness to stand firm on your first offer. Confidence in your self and your product are key here, as many people will want to discuss the different attributes of the product. In so doing they will be trying to find ways to negotiate the price or get a discount, which, if you accept, may financially impact on your business.

Once a sale has been made, it is important to follow up with an UP-SELL or a RE-SELL. These are the **fourth and fifth stage**. For most fast food companies this is just a way of life and entrenched into their training. “Do you want chips with that?” or “Can I super-size that for you?” are familiar to us all. But if it works so well in fast food, why do we shy away from it when we negotiate a sale? A product should always be accompanied by an array of different services or associated products that can be added on or up-sold, either at the time of sale or later as the need arises. If a customer is not aware of these options, they will never develop the desire to purchase them.

And that brings us back to the beginning of the cycle again, the **sixth stage**, when we need to INFORM, EDUCATE and SELL once again.

EXERCISE

Map out the sales activities that you currently use and identify in which stage of the sales cycle they fall. Identify the gaps and plan to fill these, and then prioritise what activities and processes need to be delivered in order to better secure sales.

2 THE OLD SALES FUNNEL

Sales funnels are nothing new; they were developed during the initial sales explosion after the depression in the 1950s. Companies realised that sales was a numbers game – the more people you put into the top of the funnel and converted, the more sales you could achieve. So teams were deployed to go door-to-door selling all sorts of products from encyclopaedias, aluminium siding, vacuum cleaners and other household goods. And it worked – for while. Then people started to avoid those pesky sales men at their doors and hid out in the back room until they left. So sales companies got creative and began to use phones. They called people up and sold to them over the phone, making confirmed appointments with sales consultants. Soon sales call centres were blossoming all over the world. The numbers that they could put into the top of the funnel increased and so did sales. Business was booming.

But over the years we have found ways not only to hide from the people at the door, but also to block our phones and register on no-call lists. As consumers, we are more street smart and not subject to sales manipulation. We investigate products first before we buy. We ask our friends on social media and look at product-review videos before we decide. Google, YouTube and Facebook have become the salesperson's worst nightmare.

Companies have needed to change tactics, but many have not. I am still amazed to see teams going from door to door in certain areas selling insurance, burial policies and products. And in most cases it still works, as long as you can find people who are ignorant, easily manipulated and unwise to the laws that protect the consumer.

As the effectiveness of mass marketing dwindled, we were soon led to the network-marketing model, and in turn the pyramid, multilevel marketing strategy took the world by storm. Many people got rich; many more didn't. Successful businesses emerged and thrived, learning how to develop vast networks of referral relationships that sold based on one-on-one conversations and trust. This was, and still is, the most effective way to reach huge markets. But it takes a lot of energy and effort to train and support your networks. Studies have shown that the business behind the business often does better than the products themselves. These sales and personal empowerment businesses utilise key people and coaches, together with an array of books, CDs and DVDs to empower their networks. Sessions are held weekly, monthly and quarterly, together with annual retreats, where sales and the reaching of targets are rewarded with much fanfare and glamour.

It worked and may still work, but again, the end consumer is becoming wise to the many different scams that have penetrated the multilevel-marketing sector. People have signed up and fallen by the way side, forfeiting their investment and losing friends. I know more people who have failed at this game than have succeeded. Maybe my friends are not the right ones, but based on my research, it does not seem to be working as well as it used to.

So what is the next thing? Mass manipulation does not work. Personal persuasion has failed and network relationships are fading fast. Where do we go from here?

To answer this, let’s look at a new kind of funnel – a sales funnel that is based on the sales cycle, with a dose of trust and a boost of personal conversations added. We call it trust networking and building profitable relationships.

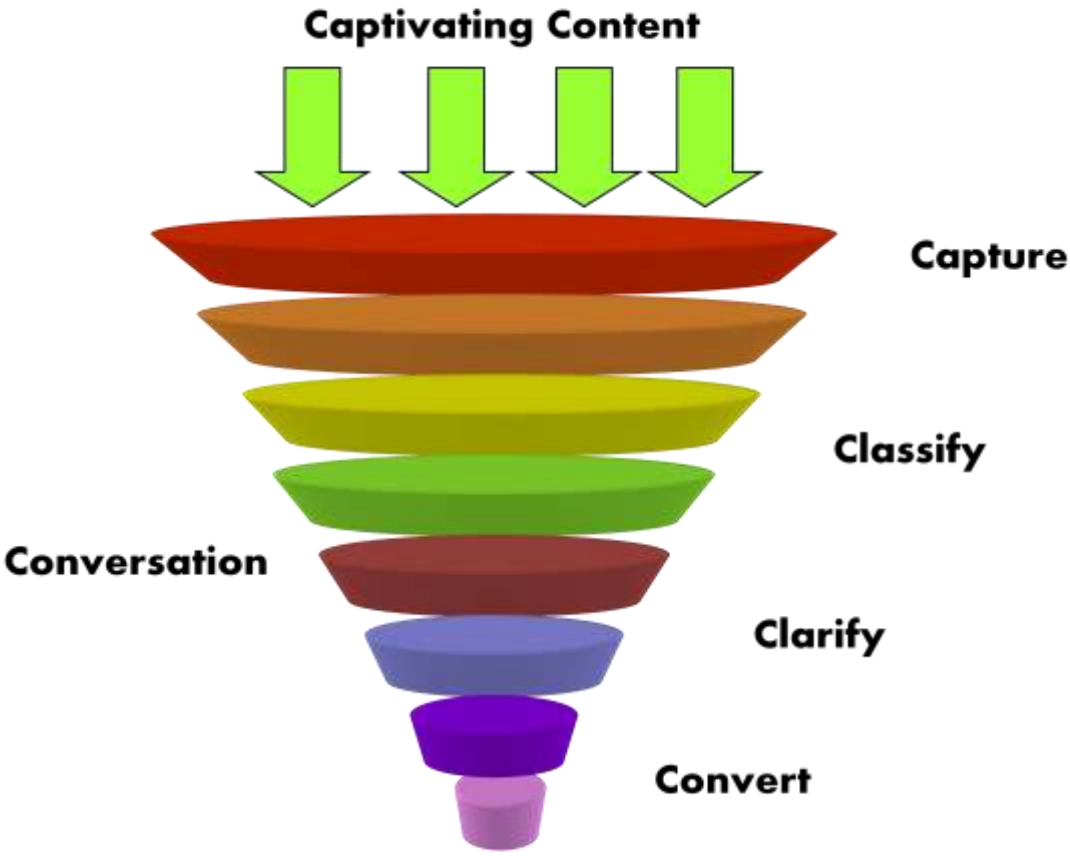
EXERCISE

If you are still in any way doing the numbers-sales funnel game, STOP IT now and make a concerted effort to rewrite and develop your sales funnel using the lessons in the following chapter.

3. THE NEW SALES FUNNEL

The new look sales funnel is a framework where a relationship between yourself and a potential customer is developed through interaction and trust. This sales funnel has six levels. Within your organisation you need to have defined processes to drive people through these levels, to get to that all-important SALE moment, and beyond.

Remember at all times the sales cycle we discussed earlier comes into play throughout this process.



The first level and at the very top of the sales funnel is CAPTIVATING CONTENT. This will attract people to you and your brand. The idea here is to have at least one type of content for every identified, potential point of contact. For example, a landing page on your website to attract people looking for you online; a Facebook page for those on social media; an advert in a trade magazine for those who subscribe and read trade related information; a presence at a networking event where you may encounter potential customers; a regular radio slot at an appropriate time. Each of these is strategically designed to have a maximum attraction value that will lead people to **the second level** in the sales funnel: CAPTURE.

It is vital that at each defined point of initial content there is some form of capturing mechanism that will allow you to record information for further contact. Even the bare minimum of information such as first name and email address is better than nothing. Capturing points can be in the form of a web-form, a registration sheet or a card swap.

Taking all the effort to meet someone (or captivate them) and not getting their details, so as to enable the next step in the process, is as bad as walking into a shop, where the owner pays rent, and spending time browsing and dismissing the shop attendant with a "Just looking", and then walking out. A missed opportunity is just that, missed.

Once you have your new contacts' details, you need to discern if they are potential customers or not. This brings us to **the third level** – CLASSIFY. I have a simple and effective way to classify people, which is similar to the way I collect business cards when at an event. People get classified as: *yes, no* or *maybe*.

The *no-people* get added to the mailing list for future contact and regular communications. I never discard their details as, although they may not be good for me now, I never know who they know or when their circumstances may change. Some of my best customers first heard me on the radio four years before they finally got to a stage in their lives where they needed to chat with me.

The *maybe-people* get the same treatment as the *no-people*, but in addition they are sent an email with details on our business and what we have to offer. They are not customer material now; however, they show potential for the near future. We need to inform and educate them on our services and help them keep our name top-of-mind for when the time is right for them to act.

The *yes-people* are sent an email, followed by a phone call in which we set an appointment for a one-on-one session with myself or someone else in the business. We have a clearly defined process linked to a form we use for this, with people assigned certain aspects of the process. Each name on our *yes-people* list is reviewed weekly in terms of their progress to **the fourth level,** which brings us to the clarify process.

The CLARIFY process is done face-to-face in a meeting or, when this is not possible, via Skype or on the phone. During this process we ask specifically designed questions in order to better understand the person's current position and needs that we as a business could assist with. These four questions are specifically designed to mine information from the person as well as develop a deep level of trust between us.

If all goes well in this process, we would have done all the "informing" and "educating" required to get to the "sell" and so onto **the fifth level**, the all important CONVERT process. This is when a quote is compiled, delivered and accepted.

The best example of how well this process works happened to me a while ago. An existing client asked me if they could refer a friend to me to help them start a new business. I of course said yes and they set up a meeting with me a few days later. This is what I call a *hot lead*. I got to the coffee shop a little earlier, as I do, sent an SMS detailing my location and table number, and waited for the person to arrive. A few minutes later a well-dressed man walked up to my table, shook my hand, presented me with his business card, and without me uttering a single word said, “Hi Bruce, my name is X. I have heard so much about you and what you have done for my friend. I want to start my business. I need you. When can we start?” I was bowled over at first, but then realised that my sales funnel was in full swing and operating the way it should.

But the convert and sale is not the end of the process. Too many companies I know have sales teams that just hand off the sale agreement to the delivery or installation team, with little or no information about the person. The customer then gets hit with a new face that has little understanding of what they have discussed with the previous person and no relationship to build on. The final and on-going process of the sales funnel is **the sixth level**, the CONVERSATION. This conversation is the one you and all your customers have through the dispersal of regular information and communication. This could be in the form of online newsletters, blog posts, social media articles, user groups, workshops, emails, and the all-important one-on-one chats over coffee or lunch.

Remember that the food for any healthy relationship is information, and this information comes from talking to each other on a regular basis, especially if things are getting tough.

EXERCISE

Take time to map out and define your new sales funnel for your business. Utilise all the stages discussed in the chapter and define the process, procedure and desired outcomes of each stage.

Once this is done, implement and test it in the market. Then evaluate, adjust and re-employ. Constant improvements and tweaking will move you closer to a smooth productive and profitable sales funnel in your business.

4. STRATEGIC NETWORKS

For every successful person in the world, there is a successful network around them. Networks are key to building various levels of support, assistance and guidance required for a future-focused life. We can break these networks down into three strategic networks, each with its own identity, focus and purpose.

The foundation network is just that: people who will give you a solid foundation in your life to support your future ventures. These people are often paid-for services and include, amongst others, your banker, your lawyer, a coach or advisors. The larger your future, the deeper and stronger the foundation network needs to be. Always be ready to upgrade this network to the next level when you have outgrown their expertise. You can never expect to be supported by people and organisations that have not been where you need to go.

The second strategic network is **the support network**. This is a special group made up of people who offer that all-important level of support. They don’t offer any form of fixing, troubleshooting or resolving – just the critical function of listening and personal counsel. These are people who you can call any time of day or night and ask for advice, or help with a trip to the airport. These people are key as close confidants and support.

The third strategic network operates as an outward-focused mechanism. The **expansion network** comprises of key people who know about you and share your enthusiasm for the business or project you are working on. They gain their energy from telling other people they know and connecting the dots between needs and offerings as they go about their day.

Each strategic network is separate in function and purpose and its success depends on the type of people you have chosen to be members. Building a functional strategic network is not something that happens overnight; it takes time, effort and investment.

Start each network with people you currently know, and then add those you need in each group to make it functional. To further grow this network, write down a potential member’s name or just a description of the type of person or job title that you need. Then begin the process of recruiting and assigning people into the network. You may feel it stupid to ask a stranger to become one of your network members, but once you see how keen people are to be involved in your life, it will become contagious and a part of your every day conversation.

EXERCISE

Make three lists of skills you need within each strategic network. Map these with people or businesses you already know and have relationships with and confirm the agreement with each person.

Group the unassigned skills and begin to seek out people or businesses that could fulfil these roles in your organisation. Then begin to build those important networks.

5. REFERRAL FARMING

Developing a referral farm is the final task in personal marketing. This involves ploughing, planting and watering, as all good farms require.

One good friend and client put it so well: "Farming requires constant work and effort to reap a constant reward." This he learnt after trying to run his fitness business by doing two weeks of marketing followed by eight weeks of running programmes, and then back to square one for two more weeks of marketing.

A fully functional referral farm is made up of active, strategic network members all equipped and tasked with their role in your life and business. They need to be constantly on the lookout for your interests and their efforts aligned with your goals. This requires that you speak to each of them in turn, sharing your vision and plans so they can go out into their networks and share aligned information that will bring results.

Some leads take years to yield a return. I have had people come to me three years after they first read one of our blog posts. Potential customers need a consistent message that they can learn to rely on and so develop that all-important sense of trust that will trigger a contact.

By using all the ideas in this chapter and the rest of the book, you will have a continuous flow of people wanting to follow, connect, friend and chat to you.

EXERCISE

Evaluate your current sales referrals process, looking for gaps and flaws. Take time to develop new processes and to improve and develop where required.

Make an effort to follow up on older clients and forgotten relationships, to set up coffee chats and meetings, to look for referrals and rekindle lost relationships.

Personal Presentations

"Before kids learn to hide who they are, they are just gushing to show us." Elaina Marie

As an active person in the business or social world you must be prepared to pitch yourself, your ideas and your business to people at the drop of a hat. This chapter will take you through the preparation of a number of key presentations and give you a framework to use for each.

Winston Churchill said, "The best unprepared speech I ever did was the one I prepared the night before." This tells us that there is no such thing as a good unprepared speech. Preparation is everything, and we are going to look at some simple techniques and tools that will set you apart from others. You will be to walk into a room with confidence, knowing that you are capable and prepared to handle whatever is requested of you.

The rules of any presentation are simple: Keep it simple. Unless you are presenting a scientific notation to a bunch of PhD graduates at MIT, keep it simple. People do not enjoy getting bogged down by detail. They are never impressed by your ability to show off how clever you think you are by using big words and techno jargon. Simple wins every time.

At the end of your presentation there are six questions that you can use to grade the success of your presentation. You need to imagine that you are asking these questions of your audience:

1. Can they repeat your main points?
2. Did they respect what you were saying?
3. Could they visualise what you were saying?
4. Could they relate what you were saying to their own lives?
5. Will they remember what you said the next day?
6. Do they want to talk to you afterwards?

Wow, heavy questions! But worth keeping in mind as you prepare your presentation.

Let's dive into the first presentation.

1. PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

We are asked to introduce ourselves many times each day. This should be done in a short, sharp 30-word sentence. Accompany this with your business card and a smile and you are already in the top 10 per cent of people in the room. So let's look at the 10-word personal introduction. It needs to include the following information:

- your name
- your interest
- your job function
- the business you work for
- a call to action

Write these out in point form and then string them together to make a sentence. Keep it witty and easy to understand. Drop any multi-syllable and technical words and it should be done.

Remember that people want to do business with people before doing business with your business, so be a person first. Be interesting and show yourself, step out from behind the business mask and be the real you. If you find this hard, try some of the following techniques:

- Mention your favourite sports team.
- Tell people of a recent accomplishment.
- Tell people about a book you are reading.
- Share something funny or interesting about your family

Here is an example:

Good morning, my name is Bruce Wade. Yes, like the superhero but slightly different. Super powers I do not have, but what I do for a living is often described as a super power as we coach and mentor entrepreneurs around the globe. Here is my card. Take care of it. It could be the most valuable piece of paper you get to hold today. Drop me an email or call if you need to chat. I'm always ready to assist others in their journey to greatness.

The more you practise this, the better you will become: practise, practise, practise, until you are confident.

EXERCISE

Write out and practise different introductions until you find one that sticks and works for you. Then use it as often as you can – at the shops with friends and at work functions. People will begin to remember you for this and use it when introducing you to others.

2. BUSINESS ELEVATOR PITCH

A business pitch is slightly different to the personal pitch. You get to expand this to 60 or 90 seconds, but the basic rules still apply.

If you can't tell someone what you do in less than 60 seconds, then you do not know yourself. The use of a well-prepared elevator pitch is similar to an automatic weapon strapped to your waist: always well oiled and ready for any situation.

The format of an elevator pitch is simple and once you get to know the format, you can adapt it to any situation and audience.

1. **Introduction**
   a. Tell us your name
   b. Tell us what business your are from
   c. Tell us what your business does
   d. Tell us who your clients are

2. **Tell a Story**
   a. What makes you different
   b. Share a specific example about your business

3. **Ask for Business**
   a. Hone in on a specific need that your business is looking for

4. **Call to Action**
   a. Give specific instructions

5. **Memory Hook**
   a. Repeat your name
   b. Repeat your business
   c. Tell us your slogan

Your pitch should remain the same in respect to the format, but be prepared to adjust the focus so it is relevant to your audience. Your story and call to action will be very different if you are speaking to a women's convention or a businessmen's breakfast. Know beforehand whom you will be speaking to and be prepared to make adjustments so as to capture the attention of your audience. Remember the six questions at the beginning of this section.

Here is an example:

Good morning, my name is Bruce Wade. I am the Chief Entrepreneur Officer at a firm called Entrepreneur and Management Solutions. We are based in Woodstock, Cape Town just under the shadow of Table Mountain.

We offer a number of services and solutions to emerging businesses and non-profits. Just last week I was talking to a group of people at a high school about what their future holds in the job market and what different options they have for their career.

If you are at a similar position in life, looking at options and wanting to maybe start your own business, I would love to meet up with you and invite you to one of our workshops and business introduction sessions.

My name is Bruce Wade from Entrepreneur and Management Solutions where growing your business is our business.

And once again: practice, practice, practice, until you are confident.

EXERCISE

Write out a number of different pitches and try them out at events. Ask others for feedback and improvements. Begin to listen to others and look at what you can learn, both good and bad, and use what you learn.

The key here is to be original and a little funny to ensure others remember you. Never try to just wing this and make it up as you stand up, you will fail and others will not take notice of you.

3. FUNDING PITCH

There will come a time in most businesses when you need additional funds to realise your next stage of business growth. This is when you need to be able to stand in front of a panel of people and present your idea, your business and your team. You need to present with enough confidence that you will inspire those in front of you to reach for their pens and chequebooks.

When pitching to a funder, make sure you are well prepared and have taken the following into consideration:

- You know what your product and business is all about.
- You have done your research and are sure of your details within your business plan.
- You have prepared and read through your business plan and you are confident in yourself and your business.
- You are pitching to the right type of funding company.
- You are sure of what you need from the funder.
- You are confident that you can pay your loan back.
- You have prepared a good presentation and practised until you can do it in your sleep.

When pitching to a funder, whether a banker, an angel funder or Venture Capitalist, your pitch needs to follow a certain formula to cover all the required aspects. It follows a similar process flow to your business plan.

This pitch should be no longer than 20 minutes or 10 slides.

On the subject of visual aids, there are unwritten rules for the use of these, whether they are slides or something else. Once again the simple rule applies. We will go into PowerPoint a bit later, but as for flipcharts, live demos, instruments or whatever else you plan to use, ask yourself this: will this visual aid add value to my presentation? The best speakers I have seen use only themselves on the stage. The more that is added to the stage in terms of visual aids, the more complicated it becomes and the greater the chance of the presentation going badly. So select your visual aids well and make sure they work and you know how to fix them if they stop working.

Before we begin on the presentation format a few notes on the slides:

- Do not clutter your slides with graphics and colours – less is more.
- Use a simple colour background with a contrasting font colour.
- Design a good cover slide.
- Create a good-looking header slide with your logo in your corporate colours.
- Display your logo on every page.
- Have no more than six points per slide
- Have no more than six words per point

- Treat your slides as a visual aid, not a text to read from.
- Do not use sound effects or fancy transitions.
- Do not use automatic timing on the slides.
- Keep animation to a minimum.
- Remember, simple is good.

When presenting, the more you practice, the more your confidence will grow and so the better you will get. Here are some guidelines to begin with:

- Stand on both feet; do not shift around.
- Use your hands or let them hang at your side.
- Maintain eye contact with the room.
- Do not look back at your slide show or talk to the screen.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Pause for effect to allow complex issues to sink in.
- Point with an open hand.
- Speak with conviction and confidence.

Your presentation should be based on the eight sections detailed below, each related back to your business plan. You need to assume that the people listening to you have not read your business plan and do not know who you are or what you do. So start from the beginning and work up to a climax at the end.

You should first write out your speech by answering all the questions below, and then create your slides – not the other way around. If you start with your slides, you will end up with a poor presentation. Remember, your slides need to complement you and your speech, not be the main attraction.

The eight sections of your presentation are as follows:

1. Tell them why they are here and what to expect.
    · Who are you?
    · What do you do?
    · Why should they care?

2. Tell them what your business does.
    · What is the problem you have identified and hope to address?
    · What is the opportunity or advantage in having this problem fixed?

3. Tell them why they should care about what you do and how viable your business is.
    · How many people need what you are offering?
    · Why do they need what you are offering?
    · How do you deliver your service or product?

4. Persuade them of your integrity and experience.
    · Who has used you before?
    · Why did they choose your solution?

5. Describe your product or service.
    · Show a brief overview of the product.
    · Keep this brief (two minutes), as this pitch is more about the business than your product.
    · Try to avoid a live demo unless you can guarantee that it will work.

6. Explain your sales cash flow cycle.
    · How do you make money in the business?
    · Give details on each of the following processes:
        - procurement
        - manufacturing
        - packaging
        - delivery
        - sales
        - after sales

7. Persuade them that you and your business can do this.
    · Talk about yourself and your team.
    · Give brief overviews of surety members.
    · Touch on staff expertise.
    · Touch on contractors and consultants.
    · Remember to emphasise the passion together with the expertise and experience.
    · Do not highlight your inadequacies.

8. Tell them what you want or need.
    · How much money do you need?
    · What are you going to use it for?
    · How do you plan to pay it back?

Each of the above sections should be on a different slide with points that can easily be linked to what you are saying.

Final guidelines for your funding pitch:

- Prepare your speech then your slides.
- Practise, practise, practise.
- Update your slides as you practise so they compliment your speech.

- Make a set of cue cards or highlight key points on your written speech to use as speaker notes.
- Make a printout of your slides to use as handouts if required (you never know when technology or electricity will fail you).
- If you are going to do a live demo of your product, make sure it will work and it is ready to use. Do not waste time in setting things up while the panel is waiting
- Make a copy of your presentation in the final format onto a memory stick or CD or both.
- Confirm the required audio-visual equipment is available or bring your own.
- Always be ready to stop and answer questions from the panel and then be able to continue with your presentation.
- Good luck! Remember that this is just a process in the development of your business. Embrace it, learn from it and enjoy it.

4. WORDS TO AVOID

To communicate effectively with others, there are some words that we need to avoid. When it comes to networking it is the same. These words, similar to our body language, lead people to subconsciously form the impression that we do not know what we are speaking about. Let's start with the dreaded filler words or noises.

Filler words are those *ums* and *ahs* that we say to allow our brains time to catch up with our mouths. They are habit based, and like any habit, filler words can be eliminated from our speech, be it when we are introducing ourselves or during a presentation. The best way to identify the filler words you use is to video yourself and watch it over a few times. Look for when you cast your eyes either down or up to the right – this is your thinking time. Then listen for the filler words.

I have noticed that filler words come in and out of vogue. They are used in a TV series or by a famous person and then seem to catch on like a virus. Examples would include words such as *absolutely* or phrases such as *of course* or *for sure*. We pick these up like a bad accent and then use them as part of our daily language. I have heard people starting every answer with *absolutely,* and not even know they were doing it.

Another, and faster fix, is to get someone close to you to point out to you each filler word you use when speaking. This is a great way to break the habit.

During workshops, we get participants to tap the desk or click their fingers to call the speaker's attention to filler words they're using. Nothing like pressure when introducing this on the first day of a workshop series and then having speakers endure the clicking reprimand from myself for the rest of the day.

Again, Toastmasters, is as an excellent way to improve your use of language and verbal sentence construction in a safe environment. One thing I have learnt from them is to allow your brain time to catch up. But, rather than looking away or using filler words, just scan the audience and look at them as if you are building up to something more powerful. This not only gives you a better command over the room, but no one will know your brain is catching up while doing so.

So back to those other words: the words we use when our personal confidence has failed us or we are talking about something we do not know; when words such as '*basically'* and phrases such as '*as I said before'* are uttered from our mouths.

Listen closely to political interviews on TV and notice how many times the person speaking begins a sentence with *basically*. What follows this word is typically just a load of made up nonsense. We use it to hide our lack of preparation and knowledge on a subject. So when asked what business you run, and you answer with, "Well, basically what we do is . . .", we all know that you actually have no cooking clue what you do or how it is done. This is then followed by a repeat of what you have thought you said and just to help with your personal lack of confidence you say, “As I said before . . . ”, and you repeat it all again. These two phrases are often combined with the left arm raised and the hand behind the neck as a sign of low self-esteem and a personal cry to escape the room and never return.

Exercise

Listen to yourself talk, practise in the mirror, record yourself, listen for those filler words and words that show your lack of confidence. And then improve one word at a time. It will take a few talks to get right and you may have to keep those new vogue words in check, but you will get better at this.

Events

"Succeeding in business is all about making connections." Richard Branson

Networking in business is just that. Net-working, not net-sitting or net-surfing. Networking takes work and often long hours of sitting in chairs whilst others talk and do their thing. But when it's your opportunity and you are standing up and holding that microphone, you had better be prepared.

But it is not all about your elevator pitch and you; it often comes down to who else is there and whom you need and want to meet before everyone packs up and dashes for the door.

I attend a fair amount of networking sessions, breakfasts and open meetings. All these provide an opportunity to utilise my skills and build my area of influence. Far more people know me than I can say I know. This is because I am often that guy up front talking or handing out business cards or asking good questions.

I have broken down the events I attend into different groups to allow some explanation and a description of the tactical approach to each.

1. BREAKFAST NETWORKING

These are the early morning events when it is often still dark outside and people are not fully awake and heading straight for the coffee machine. The first thing to do when arriving at one of these events is to scope out three places: where you want to sit, where the bathrooms are and where the coffee is. I try to book my seat at a table towards the side or at the back. This gives me a clear view of the entire room without having to twist and turn in my seat – very difficult when trying to eat scrambled eggs and bacon.

After this I head for the coffee machine, not just for the coffee but also as this is the best place to start a conversation. Coffee is like wine: easy to talk about and a good conversation opener. I am, as always, equipped with my name tag, business cards and a little dossier on those whom I was able to cyber stalk before the meeting. My eyes prowl the room, looking for those people I do not know and may need to know. My ears are tuning into different conversations, listening carefully for key words that relate to my field of expertise and a possible customer.

I am ready to pounce on anyone who shows any potential, and then the conversation starts. But the skill here is not to get trapped with one person for the entire duration of the short time before official things start. Share just enough to spark some interest, ask some leading questions, get a business card and move on. I do not have a problem excusing myself from a conversation to talk to others – it is after all a networking session and not a one-on-one session. If people get offended, it's tough – move on.

It is also important to acknowledge others with whom you have had previous encounters. Your name badge will help with these people, as they will look at the badge before greeting you, just to make sure they have the right person.

One other piece of ammunition in my armoury for any session is an update on news events. When it comes to big news items, it is critical to know some details so you are able to talk about these. You should also be equipped with some fact from an area of interest, be it space exploration or a tit-bit from the latest science journals. You can make an impression if you are able to change the conversation to talk about the new species discovered on the ocean floor or the reason trees are dying in the Amazon.

Once the event is called to order and people are seated, breakfast is served. This is normally done in one of two ways: table serving or buffet. If it is a buffet, get there fast, get your food and retreat. So much time can be wasted standing in a food queue, and in my experience, no one is keen to chat when waiting for food.

Eating less is more at a networking session – more talking, more listening and less fuss. It is almost impossible to have any form of bonding conversation when you have a plate full of eggs, sausage, tomato and bacon to contend with, while wondering how you are going to eat the fruit and yoghurt you took because it looked good, and never mind the three slices of toast on the other side plate. Take smaller portions, talk more and net-work, not net-eat.

Clear your plates from the table as soon as you can to give you room to write notes in your notebook when the speaking starts. It's very difficult to take notes with an eggy plate in front of you.

If there is a keynote speaker, take notes and begin to formulate a question to ask if the opportunity arises. More on questions later. When others introduce themselves, take notes about people who interest you, and about those with whom you need to share cards and ask for business or market to. I have even been so bold as to get up and give a person a card of mine when they ask a question to a speaker about a topic I know I know more about. This is a little cheeky, but the impact is huge and often others will ask for cards on my way back to my seat. I am known for this at the local Chamber of Commerce meetings.

At the end of the session, coffee is again a good idea. I like to make myself available in a well-located spot in case others want to chat to me before they leave, but also so I can find those whom I want to chat to. At this stage, keep conversations short and to the point, swap cards and move on to the next person. If anyone wants a longer discussion with you, a separate meeting can be organised for a later date and time.

You will then return to the office, having had breakfast, learned new things from the speaker, given and received business cards, to discover it is only 9:30 in the morning!

2. PURE NETWORKING

Networking events are often called just that. They come in different shapes and sizes with captivating sideshows such as mini-master classes, meals, drinks and guest speakers. But the main aim and goal of these events is networking. I attend a number of these each month and enjoy the interaction and reap the rewards of new contacts and potential clients.

But attending one of these without any preparation is a waste of time for yourself and others who have to endure your incompetence and ill preparation. Here is a simple checklist of things to do before going to a networking session:

- Learn as much as you can about the event and what it is all about.
- Learn as much as you can about the speaker and organiser.
- Dress well, look smart and represent the brand you are there to market.
- Wear your name badge, even if they issue others on the day.
- Have your business cards ready on your person and more available if required.
- Know where you are going and where to park.
- Be there early; latecomers do not get any privileges.
- Scope the room and select your seat to one side or at the back to have a clear view of the whole room.
- Take a pen and notebook in which to write names and interesting information.
- Have a prepared introduction, elevator pitch, and a list of focused discussion topics.
- Do not scoff at the food – eat and drink small portions to keep your mouth and hands free to network. You can always eat later when the networking event is over.
- Look for any official photographers and try get yourself into as many photos without having to do the photo-bomb thing.
- Make notes on cards or in your book about people you promise things to.
- Categorise cards you receive according to importance in different pockets to allow for faster turnaround time at the office.
- Do not get caught in long discussions – excuse yourself and move on to others.
- Target those people you need to talk to followed by those you want to talk to, and then others.
- Stay a little later than most.
- Action calls, promises and meeting requests the same day or the next morning.
- Post pictures, comments and thanks on social media at and after the event.
- Tag yourself in any pictures that others post.

Following this list will ensure you have a productive and rewarding session. Do not worry if you have a dull event and nothing gets done. I sometimes find myself getting a big plate of food, sitting in the corner and catching up on email and work issues. This doesn’t make me a failure; sometimes it's my mood or the event does not gel with me, but the speaker is worth staying for. Sometimes I am in and out of an event in 30 minutes.

Learn how to work the event to your advantage, get what you can and go. There is nothing wrong in going home early to spend time with family instead of sitting being miserable at some boring function.

3. CASUAL NETWORKING

Although casual networking events are less focused and require less effort, you still need to prepare yourself. Conversations can be longer and a deeper relationship formed with other participants. I enjoy having a glass of wine and chatting at these events. I am often able to offer some form of advice or tell a story that has a marketing lean to it that will normally lead to someone asking for a business card or a follow up chat.

Be careful not to be that focused, marketing person doing their elevator pitch at these events. You will chase people away and ruin it for guys like me. Taking it slowly always wins here.

When finding a seat, either at a big round table in groups of 10 or in a cinema style layout, choose your seat carefully. Identify your desired spot, ask if you can join the group and then introduce yourself to everyone at the table or next to you in the row.

Ask questions, give praise to dresses, outfits etc. and then join in on the general discussion. Do not feel bad to excuse yourself from the table to wander around and sit at other tables to chat. Only, be careful not to sit in a spot someone has just vacated in order to get more food. It will be very awkward when they return with a handful of plates and drinks and find you sitting in their chair.

I always leave these events early and ensure I have made my attendance known to those I had targeted. If it is an evening event and includes drinks, things generally go downhill once the main event is over. Many pictures will be taken and posted of people doing things out of character and contrary to their brand, and I do not want to be tagged or associated with these activities. So safe home I go, happy with my achievements.

4. TACTICAL NETWORKING

Tactical networking is more like hunting. It requires a lot of preparation and a stealth-like approach to get the best results. This connects with the strategic networks mentioned in section three of this book. In these networks you have identified people, job descriptions or businesses you need in your network but with whom you do not yet have any relationship.

The first place I start is LinkedIn. It is the easiest place to find information about a working professional and to begin to build that link that will conclude in a meeting. Once I find the person or business I am looking for, I build a virtual relationship with them with a “like” or friend request. Once this is accepted, it opens up their profile, revealing contact details, addresses and some other information I will need later.

I then move onto other social media platforms where they may be, or I explore the business’s website. These provide me with vital information about service offerings, social interests and possible other connections through whom I could leverage a meeting.

Once this groundwork is done, it is time for the hunt. I attend talks, meetings or events that my identified person attends, and then I accidently bump into them. If they are a keynote speaker, a well-timed question can be asked to draw attention to myself and to open up a conversation to be continued later.

This leads me onto the way you should be asking questions at any networking meeting, workshop or conference. Always wait until most of the questions have been asked. Then request your question by holding up your hand or even standing up. Make sure you are noticed and serious about your intentions.

When you ask your question, stand up, be bold and use some of the introduction presentations you have learnt and mastered. Introduce yourself and your, and then ask the question. Then wait for the answer, whist still standing.

This will draw the attention of the whole room to you, and the speaker will address you personally and in the context of your business. If your question is well timed and well constructed, the speaker will be prompted to say a few things before requesting to take the conversation “off-line” by asking you to talk to them personally at the break.

A sample question could go like this:

“Thank you for taking my question. My name is Bruce Wade. I am a business-development coach based in Cape Town. We experience two issues in getting people to attend programmes online: the course contains a lot of detail and data costs are often too high for them to complete the entire course. What in your opinion could be done; firstly to motivate participants to complete courses, and secondly to the infrastructure to assist a better completion rate?”

At this point, the hunt has been successful: you have sought out, targeted and successfully added another key member to your network.

Tactical networking comes in different shapes and forms, depending on the person or business you are hunting for. Just remember that only a few years ago the *six degrees of separation* law applied. Today we are looking at as low as three or four degrees. This means you can meet anyone who is connected online through as little as three or four points of contact. You just need to start with your own network. So start hunting and build those networks, be strategic and develop your brand.

5. EXPOS AND EVENTS

We have a number of exhibitions and events in Cape Town thanks to two huge conference centres and a multitude of awesome wine farms and hospitality venues scattered around and outside the city. The cost of exhibiting at one of these events has gone up over the years to amounts outside my available budget.

To maximise the impact and usefulness of these events, I have employed a new tactic that only costs me the entrance fee at these events. I have left it to the end to discuss this tactic, as it has to be one of my most successful marketing and networking activities. Further, knowing that not many people finish reading books such as this one, I wish to reward you for getting this far.

This is the tactic. I prepare for a specific event well in advance. I familiarise myself with the agenda online, and get all the information I need on any speakers, workshops and deals happening during the day of the event. Then I time my arrival and departure accordingly.

I take my small backpack, containing a bunch of business cards, my notebook and a pen. I dress smartly and, of course, wear my name badge. Those badges on the end of lanyards handed out at events serve no purpose in helping to identify people on the fly. At the event I start at the exhibition stalls and make my way to the planned proceedings and talks.

At each stall that interests me, I pause and observe for a bit before moving in to ask a question. I first introduce myself briefly and then ask about who they are and what it is they do and how it all works. Now, knowing they have spent a huge amount of money on the opportunity to exhibit, they go into their speech and tell me all about their products and services. I take notes, ask questions, nod and look interested in their talk.

Then as the crowd builds around us and they finish, they always seem to ask me back, “So, what do you do?”

This then opens up the opportunity I have planned for. I take a step or two back to allow others to hear what I have to say and begin my prepared elevator pitch. I share directly with them, relating my talk to their brand, but adding in my own gems and ideas. As I continue, I begin to involve those around me and turn from side to side in order to give some face time to the bystanders.

I push this to about two minutes and then pause after asking another question, related to my brand, of the stall attendee and so the conversation and focus on what I do continues. This can continue back and forth until the crowd has had enough and starts to move away. At this point, I thank them for their time, give them my card, take theirs and then make myself available for others to chat to me and ask me for my card.

This creates a pop-up stall for my brand and me that may last only a few minutes. However, I get to meet new people, collect cards and expose my brand and services without having to pay an exhibition fee, set up a stall, and stand around until closing in the late evening. I have gone through 500 business cards in one day using this tactic, and I have secured many deals, new business contracts and broadened my brand footprint.

I have also taken different clients to events and trained them in this technique and watched in awe as others have flocked to them after just a few trial runs. If you are brave enough and willing to give this a try, take the plunge at the next event and you will see that having an impact at events does not always mean a flashy stall and pretty girls. All you need is a tactical technique.

CONCLUSION

This book is filled with gems that I have learnt from others, developed myself and practised over many years. They have hugely benefitted both my own brand and those of the businesses I have represented. I have also gone on to teach many of these to others who have navigated a similar journey to success.

It is my hope that the contents of this book will do the same for you as you digest its ideas, implement them and practise them until perfect. I trust you will go from strength to strength, and even though you may feel inadequate and incompetent at the moment, go back and read the first few paragraphs in the introduction, and be inspired at how far I have come.

Many things in life cannot be taught or mastered, but public speaking, networking and making a positive impact in the hostile world of business are achievable through dedication and practice.

On a final note, if you struggle in any way with your confidence when speaking, may I encourage you to join a local Toastmasters group and watch, practise and learn through their programmes.

My local club has watched me go from speech-to-speech and strength-to-strength over the years, yet I am still learning from each speech assignment I do and the feedback I get.

Congratulations, your speaking and personal networking career awaits you.

EXERCISE

I would love to chat to you and share your networking stories and achievements with other readers. Please share and comment on our FaceBook page linked to this book.

https://www.facebook.com/exploityourself/