

Networking Nuggets

Crafting your networking Introduction – step by step



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Introduction

For small businesses in particular, and for certain types of larger organisations, networking is an necessary and important strand of marketing and key means of raising awareness and making contacts. And from contacts come referrals, and from referrals come leads and from leads come sales. At least that is the plan, isn't it?

Of course when you start attending networking meetings, it brings with it the dreaded 1 minute introduction or the 40 second pitch or the elevator speech. We have probably all experienced 'The Ramble', the 'Rabbit in the Headlights' approach, the 'Hard Sell', the 'Incomprehensible' and the 'Mis-Timed' introduction. We may even on occasion have been guilty. It is also probably true to say that the majority of people who go to networking meetings would easily say that the 'Introduction' is the worst part of the whole experience.

And yet if you get it right, the Introduction is an amazing and valuable and unique way of raising your profile in the business community, making connections which can be priceless, interesting all the relevant people in your product and service. One of the networking groups captures this in their strap line – meet, know, like, trust. In other words a good introduction well delivered will help people meet you, know about you, like you and trust you enough to find out more, make referrals and possibly be a customer as well.

This guide is to help demystify the networking introductions, give you a clear guidance on what to say and how to say it. It doesn't include everything that could be said on the subject of networking itself – just focuses on how to build an effective and engaging introduction which you can use straight away once you have finished reading it!

The guide contains 6 Networking Nuggets each with a worksheet which you can use (or copy and use) to start working on your own personal introduction.

By the end of the guide you will have an introduction that will be concise, compact &convincing. And then it is up to you to go to your meetings and stand up, stand out and speak out.

Good Luck

Catherine Sandland



Networking Nuggets

How to use this guide

Complete the diagnostic activity on the next page. Highlight the areas you might want to focus on first. Or you could read all the way through and take logical steps to create your perfect pitch.

Each Nugget has a clear explanation of what needs to be done, an example and a worksheet for you to complete. Each worksheet builds up to your perfect pitch.

And...

You can only go so far on paper. You know that feeling, it all sounds wonderful in your head but when you start to speak it out loud it sounds all gobbledygook? You have to hear it aloud (and preferably the first time you do this should not be in front of your networking meeting!)

Here are some ideas for perfecting your delivery i.e. the sound and the look of your pitch:

1. record it and review
2. say it in front of a friend (who will be supportive but also honest)
3. ask for feedback
4. get a mentor/coach
5. take a course or attend a seminar to build up skills and confidence in delivery.

**White Hart Training and an off shoot of White Hart Training, Phenomenal Woman offer mentoring, coaching and a range of programmes and events to support people seeking confidence and competence in speaking to groups.



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Diagnostic Activity

		Yes	No	If No, read...
DO YOU KNOW				
1	How your business is relevant to this specific group?			Nugget 1
2	How will what your business has to offer help people or benefit them? What will it enable them to do..And how??			Nugget 1
3	How does your business' product or service make your clients feel?			Nugget 1
4	What your potential client's problem is and how you can solve it			Nugget 1
5	What your potential client's pain is and how you can heal it			Nugget 1
CAN YOU				
6	Get eye contact with everyone on the room?			Nugget 2
7	Can you break through people's trances (those states people go into when they hear the words 'and now for the introductions.')			Nugget 2
8	Get everyone's attention even if they are eating breakfast at the time			Nugget 2
DO YOU				
9	Use testimonials in your introductions?			Nugget 3
10	Give examples of how you have helped/served others?			Nugget 3
11	Know what you are going to say and in what order in advance?			Nugget 4
12	Consider your posture?			Nugget 5
13	Consider the use of your voice?			Nugget 5
14	Know what to do with your hands?			Nugget 5

Where you have answered no to any of the questions, you have been pointed to the relevant nugget for you. You might want to revisit this activity at the end of the guide to review what you have learned and your commitment to action.



Networking Nuggets

The purpose of the Introduction

Lots of people mistakenly think that the introduction is a direct sell but in 40/60 seconds, what can you realistically sell? All that happens is, you rush through everything you do and no one listens and no one hears.

And...people hate being sold to (an immediate barrier goes up, they get very negative, they switch off and maybe even resent the speaker)

But...people love to buy. And they buy when they are interested, when what is being said has resonance with them i.e. they know it is for them and they start to like and believe in you.

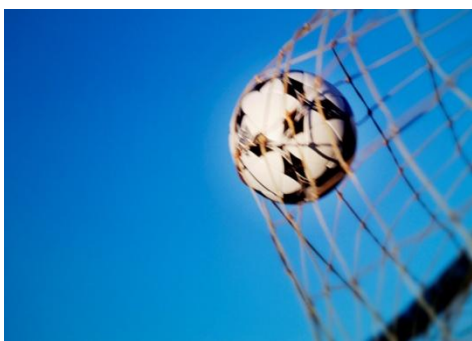
So, in fact, don't even try to sell your product or service in the introduction: set out to help people be interested in what is relevant to them, help people like you and help people believe in you. In that way, you will attract people to you after the introduction and start to build relationships up with them. Or they go away with a positive view of you and a clear idea of how you can help their client or their customer so they can recommend with confidence.

Set yourself some clear aims and outcomes for your networking introduction. They may read like this:

At the end of my introduction today:

1. I will meet at least one person with whom I feel confident I can contact to explore future opportunities
2. At least two people will approach to ask for more information or to comment on my content
3. When I ask for feedback on my introduction , each person can clearly state my business and how I help my customers

You may think of others that you want to achieve as well. These three at least will check that your introduction has been engaging enough to attract people to you and your message has been clear enough for people to be able to recall it. And will result in tangible action i.e. one to ones to develop further business relationships.



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#Networking Nugget 1 – Fabulous Focus

People are essentially selfish when they listen to a presentation and what they want to know and they want to know it quickly is:

So what – how is this relevant to me, how can I make use of this information,

and

What's in it for me (WIIFM) – okay, I can see that it is relevant, but how is this going to make my life easier, more profitable, streamlined, less frustrating, enjoyable, fun, inspirational...

And the WIIFM is about how what you have to say is beneficial for them as a listener there and then and for them as a potential referral-giver. (i.e. how can what this person is saying help my customers/contacts.)

People often make the mistake of simply stating what they DO and the activities their business is involved in. And their history and their organisational structure and qualifications and where they are located...that's not the SO What factor or the WIIFM. In fact, that is what is guaranteed to send your audience to sleep!

Identify what problems your target customers have and then state how your service helps them solve the problem

Problem	Solution
Don't have enough time to plan a party	We can take away the stress of trying to do everything and plan this for you right down to the nitty gritty details : and get everything there in the right place at the right time so you can enjoy your party

Identify what pain your potential customer is currently suffering and then state how using your product can heal that pain

Pain	Healing
I am overtaken with nerves at the very thought of standing & speaking in public	I can work with you to develop techniques and thinking and specific skills so you can feel supremely confident when you are in a group.

Instead of giving a feature of your business, tell the audience how it can benefit them

FEATURE	BENEFIT
Completes your monthly accounts	Takes away the administrative hassle
Calculates your tax bill	Makes sure you only pay what you need to the tax man



Networking Nuggets

Worksheet #Nugget 1 – Fabulous Focus

<p>Who is your target customer? (if you say everyone, then you need to niche this down. It is impossible to serve everyone and no one will have clarity on what you have to say if it is for everyone. Is it an industry sector, a particular gender or age, a size of company, a type of role or occupation)</p>	
<p>Write down the problems that potential customer suffers at the moment. If you don't know , go and find out. Ask them. Read and research.</p>	<p>Write down the pain that your potential customers are suffering at the moment? What is difficult for them? What makes them sad, frustrated, what are they losing, what is it costing them?</p>
<p>How does your business solve the problem? Write this as a solution, NOT as what you do..i.e. I streamline your systems so you can find out what you need quickly and make good decisions.(rather than I provide systemised administrations services allowing you to increase customer spend)</p>	<p>How does your business solve their pain?</p>
<p>It is the pain and the problem you speak about solving and healing. And your solution and healing are the benefits of your business. – The So what factor and the WIIFM factor. Emphasise that and the audience know that you understand them (they can believe in you) and they know you are interested in them (so they can like you)</p>	



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Networking Nugget #2 – Keep 'Em listening

In all presentations and in networker introductions in particular, you only have a few seconds at most to create an impression and after that your listeners will view and interpret your presentation through those filters – negative or positive. So grabbing their attention and making sure that they like what see and hear from the start is vital if you want them to listen .

So let's start with appearance: when you think of a confident and credible speaker, what do you visualise? Upright and probably standing, head up, smiling, relaxed and alert. and you could probably think of lots more as well. And yet I am sure that you have seen people give their introductions sitting down, hidden behind a table, crouched over a chair etc. We often do this because we mistakenly believe that we have to rush in to the introduction and we don't take time to get ourselves in what I call a 'speaker state' .

So here are three simple tips to follow to give out the appearance of confidence, to help you be in control of your self and your audience and to get yourself into 'speaker state'.

1. **Adopt** an upright posture – shoulders back, arms in line with your waist with a hand clasp or by your sides. Head facing forward and straight and a smile
2. **Breathe!** (seriously – one lovely lady who was speaking quite competently fell over at an event I attended simply because she took a deep breath in at the beginning and never breathed again for the presentation.)Several deep breaths from the diaphragm rather than the throat is calming and relaxing
3. **Connect** and smile at the audience to reassure them that you know what you are doing, nod to them and seek to get eye contact with as many as possible BEFORE you start.

Secondly the very best way of grabbing the audience's attention and keep it is to get the audience to participate in your short introduction. You can do this in three ways

Mentally – ask them a rhetorical question (how many people...?), set them a puzzle (did you know that...?)tell them a story which they have to visualise (you know this happened to me the other day...)

Physically – get them to raise their hands to a question (one of the ones I use is 'how many people would like to stand supremely confidently in front of people and present?) . Remember you must put your hand up too otherwise they may not follow

Emotionally – get them to laugh or smile at perhaps a story or something self depreciating, intrigue them by stating a startling fact or figure or raise their hackles by stating something controversial.



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Worksheet Nugget #3 – Keep 'em listening

Think of the different ways you can open your introduction and build up a variety of different ways to start and finish your presentation so that if the same people are in the room, your introduction is always fresh and attention grabbing

Mentally	Physically	Emotionally
Examples: Stories Did you know that... How many people here...? Imagine a situation where...	Examples: How many people ... (and raise your hand so they raise theirs) You'll probably want to make a note of this... (not as an opener but great during) Just have a look at the people here today....	Examples: Tell a story – happy, funny, sad, thoughtful...use pauses and tone to draw the audience Share a testimonial and emphasise how you have helped..
What can you use for your business? HINT link it to your WIIFM and So What factors		



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Networking Nugget # 3 Storytelling

Stories work at so many levels and are great ways of bringing your networker introduction to life as well as being engaging to listen to . Here are four good reasons why you should use stories:

1. They are **memorable**. People do not remember facts and figures and models and concepts and they certainly don't remember management jargon and techno babble. They do remember stories though and will be able to recall these much easier
2. Stories allow the **passion** and the zest and the fire in the belly to be expressed and in a way that people want to listen to. If people are going to like, know and trust you they need to see, hear and feel a little bit of your personality coming through – this can come through what stories you choose to tell and the way you tell them
3. Stories are great ways of adding **pace** and colour in to your introduction – by their very nature telling a story requires different modulations, pauses for effect, dramatic language, day to day language rather than techno babble.
4. Stories draw people in, people switch off the conscious brain when listening to stories and this means we can use stories to speak to the **subconscious** – great where you may have non engaged audience and great where you need to overcome objections.

So , how can you use stories?

Obviously in a 40/60 second introduction any stories you use are going to have to be succinct and specific. Longer presentations give even greater scope. Here are three types of stories you could consider using:

1. **Testimonial** - let one of your customers tell the audience how you served, helped them. Try to avoid reading a testimonial as that is definitely not very engaging and leads to a monotonous voice. Instead say things like ...one of my customers said the other day ..blah blah blah about my services and this sums up what I am all about ..etc etc
2. **Explain** how you approached helping a customer or a particular situation you had an impact on
3. Use **topical** or **metaphorical** stories to illustrate your point (a brand marketing expert I know uses stories about animals to make the point about standing out and being attractive to your customers .An employment law expert usually cites a case in the papers or in court)



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Worksheet Nugget #3 – story telling

Stories

Write down some specific examples of when you have helped, added value, contributed customer.

For example, one of the stories I sometimes tell is this – I knew a lady who was very confident and competent in her job and yet she called me when she had a big presentation to prepare and was a complete shivering wreck . Instead of talking about the conventional way of writing a presentation i.e. PowerPoint and 'hello, today i want to talk about...' I asked her to tell me her story. And something incredible happened. The meek and nervous woman changed in front of my very eyes back in to that self confident and competent lady whose story was engaging, powerful and moving. We agreed that that story was her presentation and would tell the audience far more than a bullet point PowerPoint ever could...

Specific examples of where you have helped, resolved, added value	
For each story, start to build up a short, succinct story which will engage, and 'show' the audience what impact you have almost subconsciously	
What is the background situation (briefly)	
The key characters (max 3)	
The problem	
How your action helped, added value, resolved	

Now practice saying them out loud with pace and passion and pauses for effect.



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Networking Nugget#4 – Structure and Sequence

There is nothing worse than an introduction which drones on and on with no purpose of focus to it. Even worse is an introduction which is a list of everything that person does and where they are located and how long they have been in business. We have already looked at engaging and involving the audience and delivering an introduction which makes them want to listen and meet you to know more.

Structure helps you do two things:

1. helps the audience **understand you** and be able to recall what you have said afterwards
2. helps you **remember** what you have to say because there is an order and a flow .

So here are three structural building blocks:

Building Block 1: The POW beginning – open with a bang (revisit some of the ways we looked at to get your audience to participate in Networking Nugget # 4)

Building Block 2:IN a short networker introduction aim to include one or two (no more) pieces of information and number them if possible i.e. I have two stories to tell today..I have one key message this morning..'

Building Block 3:The WOW ending – be clear about who you want to talk to or your ideal customer (i.e. I would ideally like to meet representatives from the chemical industry) or leave with a tease – 'If you want to know how this can help you, come and speak t me afterwards...'

Each building block should be linked so that your networker introduction flows and so that you can easily remember where you are. examples of links are:

- so that leads me on to say...
- the second point I wanted to highlight is...
- you are probably wondering what that story has got to do with...well...
- so I want to leave you with this final thought...



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Worksheet Nugget #4 – Structure and Sequence

Strategy Planner

Use this format to sketch out your introduction: this way you can see your presentation at one glance – no more need for scribbled notes you can't see or read on the day. You can also build in a flow which will mean your presentation will run to time and be focussed.

Introduction	Key message	Conclusion
Bullet point here your POW opener	Bullet point here your key message	Bullet point here your final thought and /or who you want to meet (or the tease)
Linking phrase	Linking phrase	Linking Phrase



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Networking Nugget#5 – It's not what you say, it is the way that you say it

We all know that sometimes the way people present gets in the way of their content: those presentations where we can't make sense of what is being said, or we can't be bothered to make sense of it or we switch off because the voice, of the body language or the tone or the pace builds a barrier...

While every word should make a difference (especially in a short introduction), the reality is that unless we consider the voice that we use to express those words or the visual impact we create through our body language and appearance – then people may not hear those words even if they really want to.

So, three top tips to remember:

1. **Posture** and **breathing** mean that you will look more confident and have sufficient breath to let your voice do all the wonderful things you want it to.
2. Our **voice** and our **language** need to be congruent. so if you say something is exciting, sound excited. If something is shocking, sound shocked
3. our **hands** in particular can illustrate and reinforce our message so use them – put a hand up if you want people to take note, use two hands to bring in people if you want to be inclusive, differentiate between your left and your right if you have two different points to make.

And this is hard to write on paper– to prepare for this part of your introduction, you need to do it, stand up and speak it out, note what your body language is and your voice pace and rhythm and keep in what works and focus on that. Getting someone to listen and give you feedback is also great. (and get them to note what you do well and get them to ask you to do more of things rather than not to things – this will mean you focus on the positive and go in to a presentation knowing what to do – rather than what not to do!)



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Conclusion

By now you have worked getting a fabulous focus for your introduction and ways of getting people to engage and stay listening . You have worked out some ideas of stories you can include in your introduction and put this in a succinct structure which flows.

And now you need to:

1. **design** a few more so that you can always have a choice of introductions to suit different audiences or simply to ring the changes for regular audiences.
2. **Practice** before you go to a networking event and get feedback if possible
3. **Practice, practice, practice.....**

Remember that no action takes place before a decision has been made. What decision have you taken about how to prepare and deliver your introduction? Make a note of the actions you will take in the Action Plan below:

What will I do	Whose support do I need	How will I know when I have achieved it	When will I review
1.			
2.			
3.			

If you would like any more information about Networking Introductions or how to put together and deliver powerful presentations, then visit www.whiteharttraining.co.uk or call Catherine on 07946604859

Good luck

Catherine

