



BSB40215 - Certificate IV in Business
Study Support materials for

BSBREL401- Establish Networks



STUDENT HANDOUT

BSBREL401 Establish networks

This unit describes the skills and knowledge required to develop and maintain effective work relationships and networks through relationship building and negotiation skills required by workers within an organisation as well as freelance or contract workers.

It applies to individuals with a broad knowledge of networking and negotiation who contribute well developed skills in creating solutions to unpredictable problems through analysis and evaluation of information from a variety of sources. They may have responsibility to provide guidance or to delegate aspects of tasks to others.

Elements and Performance Criteria

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
<i>Elements describe the essential outcomes.</i>	<i>Performance criteria describe the performance needed to demonstrate achievement of the element.</i>
1. Develop and maintain business networks	1.1 Use appropriate network strategies to establish and maintain relationships that promote the development of business opportunities 1.2 Identify and pursue network opportunities to maximise a range of contacts 1.3 Communicate information regarding new networks to inform individuals, colleagues and clients of potential benefits 1.4 Participate in professional networks and associations to obtain and maintain personal knowledge and skills
2. Establish and maintain business relationships	2.1 Develop and maintain relationships to promote benefits consistent with organisational/client requirements 2.2 Gain and maintain trust and confidence of contacts through demonstration of high standards of business practices 2.3 Use a high level of negotiation skills to encourage positive outcomes 2.4 Identify difficult situations and negotiate solutions using collaborative problem-solving techniques 2.5 Seek specialist advice in the development of contacts where appropriate
3. Promote the relationship	3.1 Develop strategies to represent and promote the interests and requirements of the relationship 3.2 Use appropriate presentation skills to communicate the goals and objectives of the relationship 3.3 Effectively communicate issues, policies and practices of the relationship to a range of audiences, in writing and verbally 3.4 Obtain feedback to identify and develop ways to improve promotional activities within available opportunities

Business networking is an effective low-cost marketing method for developing sales opportunities and contacts, based on referrals and introductions - either face-to-face at meetings and gatherings, or by other contact methods such as phone, email, and increasingly social and business networking websites.

The shortened term 'networking' can be confused with computer networking/networks, which is different terminology, relating to connection and accessibility of multiple computer systems.

A business network of contacts is both a route to market for you, and a marketing method. Business networking offers a way to reach decision-makers which might otherwise be very difficult to engage with using conventional advertising methods.

In addition, business networking brings with it the added advantage of recommendation and personal introduction, which are always very helpful for developing business opportunities.

Business networking is a way for you to make the maxim, "It's not what you know, it's who you know..." work for you.

The principles and techniques of business networking are mostly common sense. Many of the behavioural principles apply also to business and relationships generally, and specifically to selling, managing, coaching, facilitating, etc.

<http://www.businessballs.com/business-networking.htm>

Section 1 – Develop and Maintain Business Networks

Networking is a major part in creating and maintaining your effectiveness in your chosen field. Through them, you can make contacts, share information, learn new techniques and find solutions to problems. Through your contacts in those networks, you can find vendors, clients and even consultants who have the answers you need.

For networking to be effective, it needs to be a constant, ongoing activity. Well developed networks are things that grow, adding new contacts and new ways of using the contacts that you have. Your participation in keeping those contacts alive, maintaining relationships with them and helping your contacts make new contacts, gives you value in the network; making you one that others will see as a valuable member of the network and want to seek you out.

1.1 – Use appropriate network strategies to establish and maintain relationship that promote the development of business opportunities

Network development is haphazard for most people. Although they make casual use of their networks, they don't really put any effort into them, especially not the type of effort that brings forth beneficial results for their company. That may have something to do with not knowing how to develop their networks, and it may have something to do with being burned by other, who use their networks in an annoying way.

I think we can all say that we've experienced cases of friends and acquaintances who have pestered us for contacts, so that they can sell insurance, or get them involved in some multi-level-marketing scheme. While this is using networks to advantage, it may not be the most effective way to do so. What makes it annoying to most people is that it is a very self-centered use of networks, instead of

creating a win-win situation.

This is somewhat of a “shotgun” approach to networking, seeking out anyone and everyone you can. While the odds are that making a presentation to more people will result in more customers, that’s really not an effective network strategy. Better to use a strategy which focuses on people who have a high potential of being “quality” contacts.

There are a number of effective network strategies that you can apply, in order to make useful contacts to expand your network:

- **Association memberships** – Whether professional associations, trade associations, or homeowner associations, they are all comprised of groups that have something in common. That commonality gives you a way of forming relationships with people, which can then lead into business contacts
- **Conference participation** – Conferences are another place to meet people of like interests. Attending or speaking at conferences gives you the opportunity to meet others. Make yourself available as a conference speaker; especially if you have an uncommon specialty, which could be of interest to a wide range of people. Even if you aren’t the keynote speaker, any speaker is sought out for contacts.
- **Distributing materials** – Distribution of flyers and brochures allows people to determine if they feel contact with you would be beneficial. It is a relatively inexpensive way of contacting a sizeable group of people with focused information. To be effective, you need to be selective as to who your materials are being distributed to, aiming for people who will be the right sorts of contacts.
- **Individual marketing** – While it may seem slow, there’s still nothing that beats face-to-face meetings with individuals. By being able to focus all your attention on one person, you are able to build relationships and find common ground faster. In sales situations, that personal attention can lead to a higher percentage of conversions.
- **Maintaining regular contact** – Networks, like any sort of relationship, need to be fed in order to survive. Without regular contact, there is no way that you can keep your networks going. That’s why it’s important to build your networks on quality, instead of just quantity. Knowing lots of people can be helpful, but knowing the right few can be much more successful.
- **Seminar attendance** – Seminars are another great place to meet people of like interest to add to your network. Your common interest establishes a purpose for the relationship, which is then easy to build upon. Always take the time to talk to people you meet at these seminars, seeking those who would be useful contacts in your network.

Let me repeat something that I said up there, that is, the importance of building quality relationships in your network, instead of just quantity. If all you are doing is looking for people to make your life-insurance pitch to, quantity might work. However, **if you are looking to build a network of people who you can benefit from and who can benefit from your professional services, it is important to seek out the right people for your network.**

Think of it this way, there are some extremely social, outgoing people, who are instantly friends with whoever they meet. They can have just as good a time going out with one friend as they can with another, no sweat. But, when it comes time to move or their car breaks down and they need a ride to work, none of those friends are available.

On the other hand, there are those who don’t have many friends, but when they need those friends, they’re always right there. While the one with lots of friends has a great time, as long as everything

is going good, when things go wrong, they're all alone. That just makes things worse. That one with few friends may not be going out all the time, but when they have problems in their lives, there's always someone to help carry the load. So, which network is the more effective?

Actually, we could call both networks effective, only in different ways and for different purposes. So, you need to determine the purpose of your network, and seek out people who fit correctly into that purpose. That then becomes an effective network.

1.2 – Identify and pursue network opportunities to maximize a range of contacts

As you look around your life, you may encounter that you have more than one network. This is actually rather common; because we tend to keep the various parts of our lives separated. So, it's normal to have a social network, a business network, a family network, and maybe a church or religious network. While there may be some overlap between different networks, they are essentially separate entities.

Another use of this "separation of networks" is that it can help us keep our various relationships organized in our minds. When we deal with people in our friends and family network, we act a certain way; then when we deal with people in our professional network, we may act differently. Each would be appropriate for that particular network.

Looking at the various networks you currently have in place, where can you find opportunities to create new network relationships? Let's say that you are a lawyer, for example, who is an antique car aficionado. As a member of your local antique car club, you meet all sorts of people, from all sorts of walks of life. Perhaps there are other lawyers and one or more of the local judges who are also members of that association and have the same interest. The relationship you create through your common interest can become a useful business relationship as well.

It has been said that there is more business conducted on the golf course than in all the board rooms in the world. Why is that? Because all of us feel more comfortable doing business with people who we know and are comfortable with outside of our business relationships. That golf buddy or club member may become the best business contact you've ever made.

While your selection of hobbies and interests shouldn't just be done to create contacts, you should seek out every opportunity you can to use your hobbies and interests to create networking opportunities. **Maximizing a range of contacts means to have and maintain the best group of contacts possible. That isn't going to happen without an investment of time and effort.**

Some people try and create a false interest in something, in order to create a contact with someone that they want to network with. Going back to our lawyer example, a lawyer might pretend a fascination with antique cars, and become a member of that club, just to make contact with the judge. The only problem with that is that the judge is going to see right through their act, especially when they find it hard to keep it up. Besides, there are cheaper ways to make contacts than buying and restoring a classic car

All of us are regularly faced with opportunities to make new network contacts. These opportunities are often disguised as activities that we'd like to avoid. Yet, it is through those very same activities that we can meet someone who becomes a key contact in our network.

Take a boring office party for your spouse's work, for example. Nothing can be more boring than

going to a party where you don't know anyone except the person you're going with; and where they'll be busy talking to all the people that they know. Okay, you can try and come up with excuses, you can go and sit there with a bad attitude, grumbling the whole time or you can seek out somebody whom you have something in common with, or who can be a valuable addition to your network.

If you are there bored, you can be sure that every other spouse that came has the same problem. Okay, so who amongst them is worth you knowing? Find them, make that contact, and increase your network.

Literally anything can become a networking possibility. I know a woman, who has to be one of the all-time champions at networking. This woman knows everyone who is anyone in our region. Although she is not a celebrity herself, she has celebrities seeking her out, to get to know her. She has put me in contact with politicians, business leaders and the media on many occasions. That woman is one of the most valuable contacts I have in my network.

1.3 – Communicate information regarding new networks to inform individuals, colleagues and clients of potential benefits

One of the things that makes networks so effective is the whole idea of your network contacts connecting you with other people who can be helpful to you and your business. Well, if you expect them to do that for you, then you should do that for them as well.

If a network has been helpful to you, there's a strong likelihood that it will be helpful to other people who you are already networking with. Your friends, co-workers, professional colleagues and clients are all looking for new network contacts, just as you are. Why keep that information to yourself? Unless you are concerned about someone else stealing your sales leads, make sure you share it with those others.

This is especially useful when you find a new network to plug into. Since it is new for you, there's probably a good chance that it will be new for that other person as well. Your connection with that network may not only provide benefit to you, but to your colleagues as well. You can even do this in cases where you've decided that the network might not be right for you, but may be beneficial to others.

Communicating this information to your friends, colleagues and clients may motivate them to share similar information with you about networks that they are involved in. This then becomes a win-win situation for both of you, allowing you to help each other out.

When you talk to your contacts about these new networks, always be sure to share as much information about the network as you can. What benefits have you received from being part of that network? What other benefits are there available, that your friend may be able to take advantage of, even if you didn't take advantage of them. What type of membership and impact does this network have? If possible, make sure you get flyers and other information about the group, so that you can better share about it.

This issue of benefits is an important one. Most of us see ourselves as very busy people, who don't have time to waste just getting to know people. However, when we start talking about benefits from the relationship, all of a sudden our attitude changes. Instead of being seen as a waste of time, it

suddenly becomes a very valuable investment of our time.

Pretty much all networks are looking to grow. Therefore, **one who brings new members into the network are seen as valuable members of that network. That becomes a quick way of increasing your standing in the network**, providing more opportunity to connect with people, and for them to seek you out to connect with you.

Remember the woman I was talking about in the last section? It doesn't matter what group she's with, she's considered one of the main people in that group. Why? Because she knows so many people and is extremely good at connecting them together. She constantly thinks "Who do I know, that this person should know?" I don't know how many times she's done that with me. Everyone wants her as part of their network, so that she can connect them to her contacts.

Being a network member who makes connections makes you a valuable member of the network. It also makes you one that others seek out. That makes your ability to use the network all that much more effective.

1.4 – Participate in professional networks and associations to obtain and maintain personal knowledge and skills

Another one of the great uses of professional networks, especially those that are also professional associations is in helping you with ongoing professional development in your field. Most professional associations include some sort of conference or seminar as part of their regular monthly meetings. In addition, they'll hold annual or other events, which are a great way of keeping up with the latest information in your field.

Often, the information presented at these seminars and conferences is more applicable to your job than the information learned in a professional degree program. In my years of engineering, I attended every seminar conference and professional association meeting that I could, all as an effort to maintain myself current in my rapidly changing field.

These seminars typically presented the latest in technology, methods and products; all of which helped me daily on my job. By comparison, the information I learned in school dealt with theory and fundamentals. While that was important, it wasn't often that I could solve a problem in the workplace with a theory. Nor could I apply that theory towards saving money for my company. To do that, I needed to know the latest and greatest.

The same situation exists for medical doctors. Have you ever noticed how many certificates and degrees the average doctor has hanging in their office? That isn't because they graduated from so many universities. Somewhere in all that, you'll find their college degree. The rest of those certificates are from participation or attendance at one seminar or another. They attend these seminars to learn new techniques, learn about new breakthroughs in medicine and learn new equipment to help them make a more accurate and rapid diagnosis.

In addition to being able to learn about new techniques and equipment in the seminars and conferences, there is usually quite a trade of information that happens during the breaks and eating times. When gathered together, professionals of whatever type tend to talk shop. Much of that talk is how they share information about the technology they are working with.

I've walked away from more than one luncheon at one of those meetings, with my notebook full of ideas that I needed to look into when I got back to the office. Granted, some of those ideas came from vendors, who were trying to sell me their products. That's okay; I'll take an idea from anywhere I can get it, as long as the idea helps my company. Vendors are good sources for those ideas.

There have even been a few times, where I was sitting at one of those luncheons, and one of my professional colleagues, who I hadn't seen for a couple of months, came up to me to share an idea or piece of information that they came across in a trade publication, online, or in a seminar they had attended. Because we knew each other from that network, they thought of me, when they heard that information. Two months later, when we saw each other at the meeting, they were able to share something with me, which solved a problem which had been nagging us in the plant for months.

Professional networks can rise out of almost anything, some of which you might easily overlook at first glance. Check your involvement with the following:

- Advisory committees
- Colleagues
- Committees
- Governmental agencies
- Internal or external customers
- Lobby groups
- Local inter-agency groups
- Other organizations
- Professional or occupational associations
- Project specific ad hoc consultative reference groups
- Specific interest or support groups
- Suppliers
- Work team

Section 2 – Establish and Maintain Business Relationships

Having a network is one thing, developing it is something else. Many people look at networks as just knowing a bunch of people, but in reality, the only effective members of your network are those that you have taken the time to develop a relationship with.

Essentially, the networks are the places you look to find the people whom you need to form the relationships with. Once you find those people, the network also gives you a good starting point, a common ground that you can use to start the relationship. It also gives you a forum to use in maintaining that relationship, albeit not one which allows enough contact in and of itself.

Once you start that relationship, you need to add other contact with that person, in order to build the relationship. Getting together for lunch, meeting at association events and going out to play a round of golf are all valuable ways of building that relationship.

2.1 – Develop and maintain relationships to promote benefits consistent with organizational or client requirements

No relationship is going to develop and grow or for that matter can be kept healthy without feeding

it. The nourishment that these relationships need is called time. Time to get to know one another, time to share information, time to share experiences and even time for a few jokes. How can you know another person enough to say that you have a relationship, without spending time with them?

Unlike personal or social relationships, your network relationships are business relationships. Therefore, although you might talk about the football game, that's not really what your relationship is about. That few minutes you talk about football is just the beginning, after that you get down to business.

Business relationships have to be mutually beneficial to survive. While everything that you do in the relationship must be beneficial to your company, you must keep in mind that the people who you are in relationship with need to receive some benefit from the relationship as well, in order to make it worthwhile for them to stay in the relationship.

As a business relationship grow and matures some things begin to become automatic. Your communications will become clearer and your common ground will already be established. Mutual needs and desires will already have been discovered, and ways to meet those needs and desires will have been determined and established as the norm of your relationship. You will find that you begin to do things for each other, without the need of so much pre-planning and a secure agreement in place.

This doesn't mean that an established relationship doesn't have room for problems or conflicts. Actually, the familiarity that comes with an established relationship makes it much easier to fall into conflict. It also becomes much easier to offend one another, due to misunderstandings and not taking as much care to avoid conflict and offense.

You must be sure to maintain the focus of your business relationships on meeting the various organizational or client needs and requirements that formed that relationship in the first place:

- Access and equity principles and practices
- Defined resource parameters
- Ethical standards
- Goals, objectives, plans, systems and processes
- Legal and organizational policies, guidelines and requirements
- Marketing plan
- Work health and safety policies, procedures and programs
- Quality and continuous improvement processes and standards
- Quality assurance and/or procedures manuals

Maintaining all of these necessary requirements may pose problems at times, or may be the very issues that create conflict in the relationship. Your motive for overcoming that conflict is in ensuring that your organization's needs and requirements are met.

2.2 – Gain and maintain trust and confidence of contacts through demonstration of high standards of business practices

Business relationships, like any relationship, need to operate on trust. Think about it; if you can't trust someone in business, what do you do? You stop doing business with them, right? Well, guess

what? Everyone else does the same thing.

Do you know what true confidence is? It's best demonstrated by a little child who's standing on top of something and says, "Catch me, Daddy" right before closing their eyes and jumping off. It doesn't matter if Daddy's looking or not, they're sure that Daddy will catch them. That's confidence. The kind of confidence we need to build in others, if we are going to have successful business relationships.

In today's day and age, ethics and morality have dropped, reducing our ability to trust those whom we do business with. Because of that, those who demonstrate themselves to be people of integrity have a distinct advantage. Everyone likes to do business with one that they can be confident will not only treat them well, but bend over backwards to do so.

I don't know how you define integrity, but www.dictionary.com defines it as: "adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty." That's a pretty good definition. I've always operated under a slightly different personal definition, which is: "doing the right thing, even if it's going to cost you." You see, **I've found that when I do the right thing, especially when I do the right thing and it costs me, people appreciate it.** In fact, they appreciate it so much, that even though I might lose money on that transaction, I can count on that customer forever.

People want to do business with those they can trust. They'll even pay more, just for the peace of mind that comes from knowing that they don't have to worry about how the other person will treat them. When every other business is suffering, they will remain strong, based purely on their reputation for honesty and integrity.

In your networks, you will find that people will trust you more, confide in you more, and help you more, when they are sure that they can trust you to do the right thing with the information that they give you. Whether that "right thing" ends up being to their personal advantage or not, they'll still confide in you. Of course, if there is any way that you can arrange for them to benefit from their actions or information, without breaking the bounds of integrity, they will appreciate it. However, even when you can't, as long as they know that you've done the right thing, they'll be satisfied.

Part of this is how you treat your network contacts in your dealings with them. If they tell you something in confidence, do you keep it in confidence? Or, do you conveniently forget the promise you've made to them, so that you can share that information with others? What about money? Can you be trusted with it? If someone gives you too much change, do you pocket it or pay it back? When you sell something, and a part is missing, do you bend over backwards to get them that part, or do you pretend you didn't know about the problem?

These are all common everyday occurrences which give us the opportunity to show whether we are people of integrity or just people. The thing is, people watch our reactions in those cases, understanding that the way we are doing business with others is the way that we will do business with them.

If you want solid relationships with your network contacts, you have to demonstrate integrity in these and other circumstances. The people you have contact with need to know that you are worthy of their trust and confidence, or they won't give it to you.

2.3 – Use a high level of negotiation skills to encourage positive outcomes

While most of us are very uncomfortable negotiating, we must realize that is a fact of life. Many things that we do require some sort of negotiation, whether it is buying a car, being hired on a job or establishing a working relationship with another department in our company.

Negotiation, like most everything else in business is a learned skill that improves with practice. “Natural” negotiators are mostly a myth. Those who appear to be naturals are only those with lots of experience. Perhaps they were raised in a culture which encouraged negotiation as a normal way of life. This gives these people a strong advantage. The rest of us have to learn it.

Hardball negotiations might be practical for a one-time event, such as buying a house, where you don’t have an ongoing relationship with the person. However, the majority of your negotiation, and all the negotiations you do within your network, are with people with whom you are attempting to create and maintain a long-term relationship. **The only types of negotiations that work in those cases are win-win negotiations.**

There are a number of factors that go into successful negotiation. Most of them deal with your preparation for the negotiation session. Basically, the person who has the most information is the one who is going to be able to control the negotiations. Therefore, it is important to research and know about the subject you are negotiating about, the person you are negotiating with, what they want and need to get out of the negotiation and how much leeway they have in the process.

Don’t stop there though; you also need to know where you are coming from and what your wants and needs are as well. Ask yourself about the following:

- **Goals** – What do you want & need to get out of the negotiation? What does the other person want and need?
- **Trades** – What do you have that the other person wants? What are you comfortable giving away to get what you want?
- **Alternatives** – If you can’t reach an agreement, what alternatives do you have? How good or bad are those alternatives? How important is it that you reach an agreement?
- **Relationships** – What is your relationship with that person? What is the history of your relationship? Can failure to reach an agreement damage your relationship with that person? Will there be any hidden issues which can affect the negotiation?
- **Expected Outcomes** – What are you expecting to be the outcome from this negotiation? What outcomes have you had with this person in the past? How will that affect this negotiation?
- **Consequences** – What are the consequences of winning? What are the consequences of losing? What are the consequences for the other person? Does that matter to you?
- **Power** – Who holds the power in the relationship? Who controls resources? Who will lose the most if an agreement isn’t reached?
- **Possible Solutions** – Based upon all of the above considerations, what possible compromises can you come up with?

As you enter into your negotiations, realize that what the other party has asked for is not what they are expecting to get. Take negotiating the price of a car, as an example. The sticker price isn’t what the dealership really expects to receive for the car, it’s their starting point. Likewise, what the buyer offers really isn’t what they expect to pay for it. The process of negotiation brings the two parties to an agreement, somewhere in the middle.

Don't forget that you always have the option of walking away from the negotiating. In a situation where you are negotiating to buy something, this can be one of your best strategies. When you walk away from the negotiation, you immediately have the upper hand in the negotiation, especially if the other party wants to make the sale.

The actual negotiation process depends a lot on both personalities and personal communication styles. There are a number of negotiation skills you can use, for the purpose of moving the negotiations in the direction that you desire:

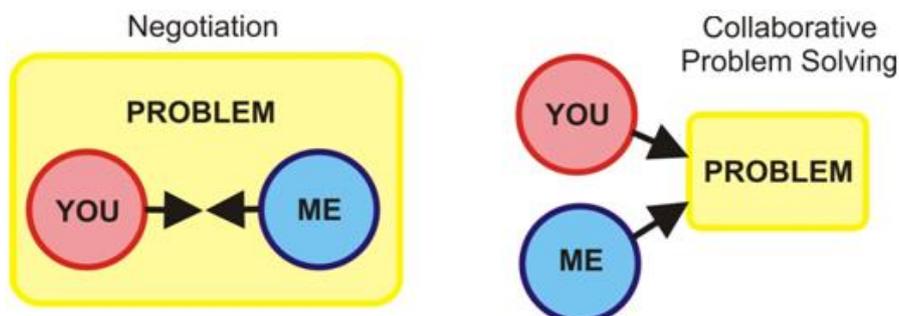
- Assertiveness
- Bargaining
- Collaboration
- Confidence building
- Conflict resolution
- Empathizing
- Offers and counter offers
- Solution designing
- Stress management

Remember, even if you are uncomfortable with the negotiation process, you must remain visibly relaxed and in control of your emotions and thoughts. **Don't let yourself become reactionary in the negotiations.** You always want well-reasoned responses to their statements. Nor should you let the other party lead you down a road of their making, you will lose the advantage there.

2.4 – Identify difficult situations and negotiate solutions using collaborative problem-solving techniques

In difficult cases, normal negotiation may not be the way to solve the problem, especially if it looks like a win-win solution is not obvious. In those cases, a collaborative problem-solving technique may be more effective, and leave you with that desired win-win option. Even if not, by working together to find a solution, whatever solution will be more palatable to both parties.

The main difference between negotiation and collaborative problem solving is one of perspective. In negotiation, even in friendly negotiation, each party is predominantly looking out for their own interests. In essence, it is a "me against you" situation. In collaborative problem solving, both parties are joining together as a team, to solve the problem. That makes it become a "me and you against the problem" situation.



When approaching a problem from a Collaborative Problem Solving point of view, there are a number of steps which are typically employed:

- **Share Perspectives** – use communication skills to understand the other person’s perspective of the situation, along with their needs and desires.
- **Define the Issues** – clarify the problem you are facing and the topics for discussion.
- **Identify the Interests** – go beyond the stated positions or solutions to figure out what both parties really need to receive out of the situation. What would bring you to agreement? Try and find common ground between both parties.
- **Generate Options** – brainstorm the situation, seeking as many possible ideas for resolution, looking at the problem from every possible angle.
- **Develop Objective Criterion for Deciding** – what standard would be fair to both parties? How can you both gain from the solution? Reduce your options, eliminating those that offer the least benefit to both parties.
- **Evaluate Options to Reach Agreement** – of the various options you have, which provides the greatest benefit to both parties? Which has the least negative impact on both parties?

Be sure to gain an understanding of your differences in communication in the beginning of this process. While one may see the glass as half full, the other may see it as half empty. Your differences in perceptions will affect how you are viewing the problem and how you are defining it.

By working with “interests” instead of “positions” you broaden out your possible solution set.

When you start with a position, you are only stating one solution; however there might be several different solutions that will meet the needs of your interest. At the same time, by sharing your interests, you may find more common ground than you will with your positions. These shared interests won’t be obvious, if all you are doing is stating your position

you can uncover underlying interests by asking the following types of questions:

- Why is that important to you?
- What changes would that solution make?
- What would that mean to you?
- How will you benefit from that?
- What’s your basic concern in wanting that?

Since most people won’t be immediately aware of their underlying interests, they will probably have to think about it for a moment. This doesn’t mean that they are trying to come up with a manipulative answer, just that they are seeking an answer.

Shared interests are your strongest ally in collaborative problem solving. That creates a place for you to start from, a way of coming into agreement and a definite goal that is desired by both parties. Although not all your interests will be shared, capitalize on those that are, allowing them to be the center of your discussion and the center of your solution.

2.5 – Seek specialist advice in the development of contacts where appropriate

There may be times when it can be helpful to seek the advice of a specialist in developing contacts.

These people not only know useful places and methods for finding contacts, but also have many contacts of their own, which can help you connect with the contacts you need.

Just as with any consultant, the decision to use a consultant for development of contacts must be balanced against what that consultant brings to the table. **The quality of consultant you utilize has much to do with the results you receive.** Some consultants may be able to bring you lots of contacts for your network, but that doesn't mean that they will be quality contacts. In the long run, fewer contacts of a higher quality are much more useful, than a long list of contacts which only take up your time.

As part of utilizing a specialist to develop contacts, you need to have thoroughly defined the types of contacts you need. Without that criterion, the specialist doesn't have the ability to provide you with anything more than "generic" contacts.

Your consultant should be able to find you contacts that meet your criterion, specifically based upon your objectives. However, those objectives aren't the only thing that the consultant needs in order to find contacts that will make the relationship work. In addition, you really need them to find potential contacts who for one reason or another would be interested in a joint venture or partnership with your company.

Social media networking has become a specialty branch of marketing. Since social media has become such a powerful tool in creating a buzz about products, events and services, it is a valuable part of anyone's networking. However, not all of us are skilled in the use of social networking. Developing contacts through social networking and developing posts that people will share requires detailed knowledge of how the social network functions; a much more detailed knowledge than what it takes to use your Facebook account to keep up with your college chums.

Another type of specialist for developing network contacts is the specialist in developing potential sales contacts. Again, the quality of the contacts you receive will depend a lot on the quality of the consultant you hire. If they are unable to provide contacts which might have a serious interest in your products, their services are worthless.

Regardless of the type of contacts you are utilizing specialists to develop, your contact with them should be based on results, not on time spent or on sheer numbers. You should develop specific criterion for your contacts, and only pay them for contacts which meet that criterion.

Section 3 – Promote the Relationship

Since your network relationships are business relationships, they are more like relationships between your company and their company, with you and your contact being the intermediary between the two. Therefore, you must be sure that everything you do is with the highest standards of integrity and business ethics.

Once your relationship is developed, you can start working together to use it for the benefit of your companies. This will require finding ways of working together in the relationship and promoting the relationship.

Promoting a business relationship is much like promoting a business, with the added complexity of maintaining a correct balance between the two companies in the process of the promotion. If your promotion focuses more on one company than the other, it can cause problems, strife and even division in the relationship. The best way to avoid this is by focusing on the relationship, not on

either company.

3.1 – Develop strategies to represent and promote the interests and requirements of the relationship

Generally speaking, when two companies work together on a new venture, it is because of their weaknesses more than their strengths. Every company, like every individual has weaknesses, so they look for others to work with, who are strong in their areas of weaknesses. When the two work together, each brings their strengths to the table, fulfilling the needs of the other partner's weaknesses.

When working together with another company in a joint venture type of operation, it is imperative that the relationship, its purposes, goals and objectives be well defined. Additionally, the input, participation and responsibilities of the two parties must be clearly defined. Finally, you need to define how the proceeds from that relationship will be shared.

There are two basic ways to present the relationship to the public:

- As a totally separate entity
- As a merger of two companies strengths

Which one of these two you decide to use will depend upon a number of factors, such as:

- How risky the new venture is
- How much of a potential that new venture has to damage the reputation of the companies involved
- Whether the reputation of the “parent companies” could help start the new venture off on the right foot
- Whether the brand identification of the parent companies share commonality with the new venture

Regardless of how you start out, eventually the new venture will need to generate its own identity. That new identity may be connected to the parent companies, but it still needs to be unique for the company to be effective.

Many times, the “birth” of a new partnership or joint venture like this is presented with blazing trumpets, as if it were the jointing of two royal families. The idea is to gain media attention, thereby garnering free publicity for the new venture. This is especially effective when the parent organizations are well known, instantly giving legitimacy to the new venture.

This type of promotion strategy has the advantage of giving the new partnership an opportunity to start out quickly, building upon the previous successes of the parent companies. It also has the potential of drawing the customers of both parent organizations into relation with the new venture, creating an instant customer base.

In addition to promoting the new venture externally, it also needs to be promoted within the parent organizations, making the personnel there aware of the new venture. This ultimately can help in fostering a team attitude and additional ways for the companies to work together.

3.2 – Use appropriate presentation skills to communicate the goals and objectives of the relationship

In addition to marketing activities which may be undertaken to promote sales of the new venture's products and services, there is also a need to promote the venture as an organization. News media, the business community, the parent companies and others will need to grasp an understanding of what this relationship is all about

While advertising activities are effective to a point, promoting the relationship to these types of people will require a more personal touch, presenting information that is more in-depth about the relationship, its purposes and its goals.

Creating a live presentation and introducing your relationship in that presentation is a very effective way to provide this information to these groups of people. The greater depth of information you are able to supply will help with their understanding and hopefully encourage them to be supportive of this new relationship.

When you create your presentation, don't just think about what you want to present, but also what information your audience is going to want to hear. You are much more likely to get the results you want by giving them what they want to know, than any other means. When you can show how your new venture can be of benefit to them or the community, you are much more likely to have a positive reception to your relationship and its objectives.

It is always important, in any presentation, to be clear about your goals and objectives. Some presentations muddy up these issues, talking all around them, without actually mentioning them. By being clear and direct about these all-important factors, you eliminate speculation, making people more comfortable with who you are and what you are doing. Even people who are not in agreement with your goals and objectives will be more comfortable with your organization, by knowing what those are.

As with any presentation, this needs to be well thought out, clear and professional. Avoid being overly showy, as this tends to make people think that you are trying to hide something. Bring as much information to the table as possible, so that there aren't any doubts on the part of your audience. Even so, be ready for questions. Many times, even in the most well-prepared, clear presentation, somebody doesn't grasp a key point, causing them to not grasp the presentation in its entirety.

Don't allow yourself to become side tracked in your presentation, going overboard in describing the history of both parties. Nor should you get into so much technical detail that you lose your audience. You are there to present your goals and objectives, the "how" of that is immaterial for the sake of the presentation. **A well prepared presentation always takes into account the audience that it has been prepared for.** That means that you might need to modify the presentation for different audiences.

Finally, be sure to be clear about the form and substance of the relationship. A joint venture is different from a partnership, which is different from a merger. If you don't explain the nature of the relationship, people will make their own, wrong assumptions. Those assumptions are generally the worst possible scenario for your purposes.

3.3 – Effectively communicate issues, policies and practices of the relationship to a range of audiences, in writing and verbally

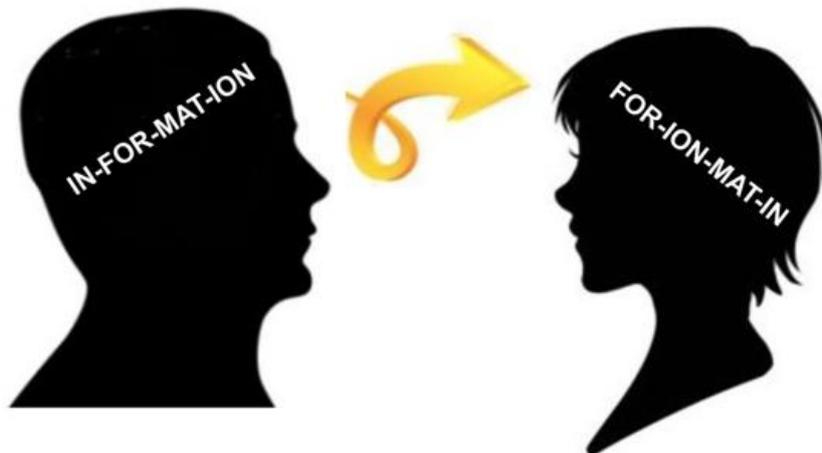
Although presentations are a great way to communicate information about your relationship to the public, they aren't the only way. Not everyone will come to your presentation, so you need alternative ways of presenting information to those who don't come. Communicating this information can be critical to the success of your relationship and its purposes.

Whatever information you wish to convey should be presented in a variety of manners, to include:

- Press releases
- Press conferences
- Reports to stakeholders
- Statements on your organization's web site
- YouTube videos

Just as with the presentation we discussed, which talked about your organization's goals and objectives, you need to insure that this information is presented as clearly as possible. It is unfortunately very easy for people to misunderstand the information that you present; therefore, you must look for ways that it can be misunderstood, and insure that you correct those misunderstandings before they can occur.

Effective communication only occurs when the message that you present is heard and understood by your audience in the same way that you intended. Any change to that information makes it ineffective.



The great advantage of written communication, over verbal communication is that it gives you the time to think through what you are going to say, refine the wording, and review it, before giving it over to the recipient. This reduces the chance of miscommunication, and gives you something that you can refer back to, in the case that there is a miscommunication. The problem with written communication is that most people are lazy, and prefer to hear or see something (presented in video) instead of reading it.

The same basic communication may need to be made several times, modified to meet the needs of different audiences. Different groups of people interpret the information in different ways, based on age, gender, socioeconomic position and education level. To insure that each group grasps the message in the intended manner, specific communications may be needed.

While you shouldn't give away information that is considered private or critical to your relationship without extensive forethought, you should communicate as often as possible with all potential stakeholders and customers. This is an essential rule of marketing, that of keeping your name before the people, so that when they have a need, your name is the one that they think of. Break your information down into a number of smaller "bites" for dissemination, instead of giving them a banquet of information at one time.

3.4 – Obtain feedback to identify and develop ways to improve promotional activities within available opportunities

Unless you have an uncanny ability to create perfect promotional material and to do perfect promotions, you will probably have to settle for falling a little short of perfection. However, that doesn't mean that you have to be satisfied with being short of perfection or that you have to stay there. You can and should take that as a challenge to improve your activities and promotions.

While your personal opinion about the quality of your presentation is as valid as anyone's, you shouldn't base what you do only on your opinion. After all, you're not the one that's receiving your presentation. So, while you might think it is excellent, your audience may not have the same opinion.

The best way for determining customer or audience reaction to your promotional activities is to get feedback from the people who are seeing it. Ultimately, these people are the experts; only because they are the ones who have to watch, listen and assimilate what you are trying to convey. So, even if they don't know enough to prepare a presentation on their own, their opinion on yours is of great import.

There are a number of strategies for seeking out feedback, such as:

- Focus groups
- Random selection of people leaving presentation
- Surveys

The methodology you choose isn't nearly as important as the message information you receive. Whatever you do, don't take an attitude of trying to prove yourself right, instead take an attitude of trying to find information. It's very easy to get defensive when receiving criticism about your work, and stop trying to learn from that feedback. But, once you start defending your work, you stop improving it.

It feels great to receive positive feedback, but that really doesn't help anyone to improve. On the other hand, that negative feedback that we really don't want, will show us valuable information about what and how to change.

When you ask for feedback, make sure that include questions to gauge:

- Accuracy and sufficiency of information
- Appropriateness of audience
- Benefits to organisation
- Impact of message
- Liaison with networks
- Participation of competitors
- Use of media

By being specific, like this, you will also receive more specific information. Maybe your presentation is excellent in providing accurate information and is perfect for your audience, but doesn't really have much impact. While that may still be useful, you clearly need to seek out ways to increase the impact. Or, you could have the opposite, where you have a message with lots of impact, but not enough information. Again, this is very valuable information for making your presentation better.

Whatever feedback you receive is valuable. At the same time, don't just jump because someone said something in their feedback. You need to analyze what they've said and compare it to what others say as well. Only then can you make appropriate changes.

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