## Lesson 10 Worksheet: Networking for Creative People

This worksheet will help you get started networking with other people in your field of work, by getting out there to meet people!

**1. Get some business cards**

When you meet someone in person, giving them a business card makes it easy for them to contact – and you want to make this as easy as possible.

Don’t get cheap and nasty ones. Receiving a paper-thin business card with poorly printed text is the equivalent of a limp handshake – it creates a poor first impression. But you don’t have to spend a fortune either.

If you have the budget, get a good designer to produce a great-looking card for you. Remember, you’re supposed to be a creative, so a nicely-designed card helps to enhance the impression.

If you’re on a budget, Moo.com is a good place to order nicely printed, reasonably priced cards. They have some pretty good templates, so even if you’re not a designer you should be able to produce something that looks acceptable..

Your card needs to contain:

* Your name and/or business name
* Your job title or a description of your services
* Your website
* Your email address
* Your cellphone number

You may also want to add your favourite social networking profile, but don’t clutter the card with irrelevant links.

**2. Find events**

*(i) Industry events*

If you know where and when the most important networking events are for your industry, start putting them in the diary. If not, ask well-connected friends and colleagues for advice, and look in trade journals and on industry websites.

As well as formal networking events, look out for shows, exhibitions, conferences, gigs, lecturers and other events where members of your tribe will congregate. And make sure you stay behind for the drinks afterwards!

*(ii) Creative Mornings*

Go to CreativeMornings.com and see if your town or city is listed. If so, you’re in luck – there will be free creative lectures every month, with inspiring speakers and other creatives you can get to know.

*(iii) Meetup.com*

Go to Meetup.com and search for events in your town/city based around your topics of interest.

**3. Attending an event**

Remember your business cards! And make sure you’re dressed appropriately, i.e. as formally or informally as the others who are likely to be there.

Be prepared to say what you do when someone asks you. This doesn’t need to be a full-blown ‘elevator pitch’ – just a brief statement that conveys the essential information. If you’re at an industry event, then your job title and company is problem enough (“I’m a planner at Ogilvy”). If you do several things, or you’re in an unusual line of work, you’ll need to come up with something more descriptive.

When you arrive, don’t be shy to walk up to people and introduce yourself. This is a networking event, so introducing yourself is normal behaviour. *Don’t* lead off with what you do! Just introduce yourself by name and ask for their name. Hopefully the conversation will develop naturally after that, but here are a few suggestions to get things going, in case you need them:

* Ask who they are and what they do.
* Ask what brings them to the event.
* Ask who else they know here.
* Ask for more information about what they do (it helps if you’re genuinely interested).

The golden rule is that *most people love talking about themselves*, so if you give them the opportunity, you shouldn’t be stuck for conversation. And if they have an ounce of social savoir-faire, then at some point they should pause and ask what you do in return. Which is your cue to give the explanation you prepared above. If they’re intrigued enough to article more detail, then by all means tell them. If not, don’t push it on them.

The obvious pitfall is that you could get stuck with an egomaniac who chunters on about themselves and how marvellous they are, oblivious to your glazed stare. If this happens, you have several options – remember, you’re under no obligation to waste your whole networking time with them:

* Say “Thanks, it was great to meet you...”
* Ask them for a business card.
* Wave to someone you know and say “Excuse me, I’d better just catch Bob...”
* Invite someone else to join the conversation.

Another nice thing to do at a networking event is look around for people hovering at the edge of the group, and invite them to join in. If you’re feeling nervous, I can guarantee you won’t be the only one. Helping someone else out is a great way to start a conversation.

Don’t worry about working the entire room, it’s better to have meaningful conversations with a few people than a quick hello with everyone. Unless you are having a really good time, don’t stay right to the end – you don’t want to look *too* eager!

**4. After the event**

When you meet someone genuinely interesting and/or potentially useful, make an effort to stay in touch.

* Look at their website and subscribe to their blog/newsletter if it looks good.
* If their business card has a social networking profile, add them as a contact on that network.
* Send them a ‘nice to meet you’ e-mail.

In the weeks ahead, keep an eye out for opportunities to help them, or things that may be of interest to them. E.g. introduce them to another contact who may be helpful, or forward them an article that relates to their interests.

Consider inviting them to future events, or meeting up for a coffee to stay in touch.

Don’t pester people who don’t respond. Look out for the ones who share your interests and who also seem keen to stay in touch, and nurture those relationships.

Be wary of asking for favours too soon. It’s much better to build relationships through generosity and sharing mutual interests. It could be months or even years before either of you is in a position to help each other directly, but once you’ve established a genuine relationship then it’s much easier to ask for help – and it will be more readily given.

Finally, notice how you feel when you help someone in your network, connect two people who can help each other, or introduce someone new to the network. Chances are that you feel good, it’s a nice thing to do. And while there may never be any direct ‘payback’ to you in this instance, every time you help others in this way you are strengthening the network of which you are a part. And the bigger and stronger the network, the better off all the members are – including you.