Practical networking

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Who am I?

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- Freelance careers and education consultant since August 2021, The Career Doctor Online

- Qualified, experienced careers practitioner in HE, PG Dip CEIGHE

- Qualified secondary teacher, PG Dip Ed

- Researcher experience in Humanities and Geoscience

- Research Staff Careers Consultant (0.4 FTE), University of Edinburgh

- Board of Youth Highland, Personnel Committee British Ecological Society, Volunteer Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Incredible Edible Inverness

A branching scenario game to help university students overcome barriers to networking

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Introduction

- Networking is one of the most important and powerful skills students can use in successful career development.
- Most fail to realise its full potential, do not understand its purpose, and often actively avoid it.
- Barriers include fear of rejection or "bothering" people, not knowing how to start, beliefs that networking is for business people or "asking for a job".
- **The Networking Game** enables students to experiment with, evaluate and learn networking skills and strategies.

Student Views of Networking

- "Manipulative", "cynical", "insincere", "bragging"
- Networkers are: "charismatic", "extroverted", "bold", "pushy"

"I fear I may come across as insincere, fake, a careerist, which would be awful... I would like reassurance that successful networking doesn't have to be involve dishonesty or being like... The Apprentice!" [3rd year Chemistry student]

Students also express significant anxiety about perceived differences in status.

These perceptions and fears are unfortunate - research shows that graduates who are skilled networkers are more successful starting and progressing in their career.[1,2]

The Networking Game:

- Provides a risk-free environment for students to learn about and experiment with networking.
- Is powered by Labyrinth, a University of Edinburgh online authoring and delivery application for branching case scenarios.
- Contains scenarios designed to address commonly held misconceptions about and challenges encountered during networking.
- Challenges players to guide a final year student, "Sam", through a series of decisions at a career information and networking event.

Playing the Game

Ask Dr. Cartwright a question.

- players identify motivation for playing the game
- can track their progress

Thought bubbles help users bridge the 'action-observer' gap[3] – Dr Cartwright might appear bored speaking with students but is just tired – and attempt to address the status anxiety.

- decisions about behaviour
- questions to ask
- other situations that arise during the event

- 'Devil's Advocates', offer conflicting advice at crucial points in the game.
- draws players into internal debate, adding extra dimension to decision-making process

Feedback is for Learning

Start to do some research.

- decisions have associated learning objective - green feedback boxes are presented to the player after making choices
- this example shows researching topics and people relevant to your interests before an event can help decide who to speak to and what to speak about

- personalized feedback is given based on player's choices
- feedback relates to misconceptions and challenges they encountered
- summarises how choices were effective (or not) in helping Sam
- players can see what actions they might have taken to improve their performance

www.careerconnect.ed.ac.uk/networking-game

Does it work?

"I wanted to make a success of the encounters. Sometimes I was nervous when attempting an approach I suspected might not work. When some actions did not have a beneficial effect, I got slightly angry. On the whole, however, I felt people were surprisingly easy to talk to." [3rd year Humanities PhD]

"I was surprised. I didn't think [professionals] would be flattered by students wanting to talk to them." [3rd year Chemistry student]

"The conversations didn't have to be these big things...you could talk to quite important people about normal things. They might actually find you interesting. Networking seems easier than I thought." [4th year Business Student]

"Since playing the Networking Game, I've gone to lots of employer events. Not because I specifically want to work for that company, just to meet people and get ideas. I don't think I would have done that before playing it." [4th Year Chemistry student]

Acknowledgements

References

1. de Vos, A. et al.(2009) Proactive career behaviours and career success during the early career. J. Occup. Organ. Psych 82, 4, 761-777
2. Sturges, J. et al. (2002) A longitudinal study of the relationship between career management and organizational commitment among graduates in the first ten years at work. J. Org Behav. 23, 731-748
3. Malle, B. & Pearce, G.(2001) Attention to Behavioral Events During Interaction: Two Actor-Observer Gaps and Three Attempts to Close Them. J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.81, 2, 278-294.

HOW TO WIN
FRIENDS AND
INFLUENCE PEOPLE

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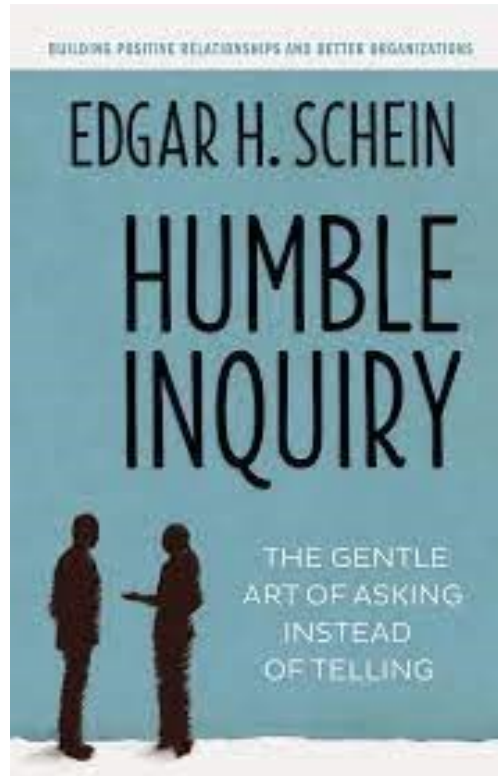and Human Relations, New York City*

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SIMON AND SCHUSTER

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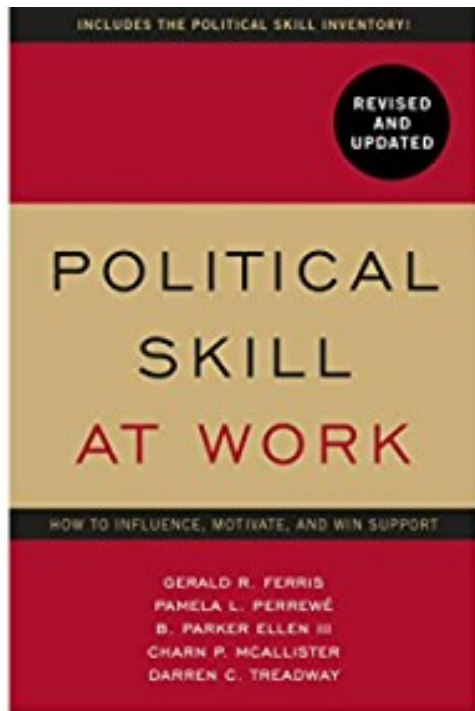
https://www.ted.com/talks/adam_galinsky_how_to_speak_up_for_yourself?language=en – How to speak up for yourself

- Follows on from "Making Friends and Influencing People" – March 2024
- But don't worry if you didn't attend that!
- Today's focus on practical things to do to strengthen our networking practices – won't focus on why, but what and how

The key messages from last time

- "When dealing with people, let us remember we are not dealing with creatures of logic. We are dealing with creatures of emotion, creatures bristling with prejudices and motivated by pride and vanity." And probably shyness and insecurity,

- "If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own."

- Avoiding the "action-observer gap"

- Unconditional regard and approaching networking with compassion for ourselves and others

Networking

- What do you feel is currently preventing you from networking effectively?

- What are some of your goals in networking, more effectively?

- How will you use what you've learned today to make an action plan that works for you?

2 minutes self-reflection

Making Friends and Influencing People Activity 1: Networking is helping others

Use networking as way to share knowledge and expertise, your skills, offer advice, help solve problems. In your groups, identify:

- **what you are good at**

- **the ways in which you ENJOY helping people**

- **what others often ask you to help them with** **(~3 minutes each)**

Then – **thinking of your own context and situation – generate ideas for turning this information into networking opportunities** **(~5 minutes together)**

Making Friends and Influencing People Activity 2: Get beyond small talk

Research indicates most people don't like small talk – and deeper conversations led to greater happiness and more sense of connection.

For example, instead of

"What do you do?" >>>

"What do you think is the most valuable part of your work?"

Activity 2: Get beyond small talk

Over to you. Instead of these boring, perhaps ill-advised questions and statements, in your **groups generate a bank of** <u>questions</u> **you can ask others - and take with you after today to generate deeper, more satisfying conversations with strangers.**

"What is your current role?/What do you do?"

"That was an interesting talk."

"What sort of jobs are going in your department at the moment?"

"I HATE standing in these long queues for lunch."   (**3 minutes**)

Making Friends and Influencing People
Activity 3: Broaden your network

Whether we want an academic career or move into industry, a real risk is having a network limited to our closest colleagues or only within our institutions.

In your groups – **how would you advise a colleague who wants to move out of academia into an "industry" role on how to broaden their network?**

What questions would you ask them to determine what sort of advice they might need from you? Or where they might need guidance and advice from others?

(**5 minutes in pairs**)

Tips

- Practice in low stakes situations – an event you don't care about with people you'll probably never see again, or shops, the market, wherever

- At a conference (using our bank of curiosity questions) find someone also on their own and start a conversation. Next level: introduce them to someone else

- Online

- Find a partner to learn and develop with; role play networking scenarios

- Prepare before events or opportunities

- Read and research about effective networking

Breaking into a group

- Make eye contact with someone

- "You seem to be having a really interesting conversation…" (or something) – just listen. Don't feel any pressure to add anything unless you want – could be a comment, could be a question (when in doubt…questions are good)

- Find a delegate list if you can

- https://hbr.org/2010/03/breaking-into-a-conversation-g-2

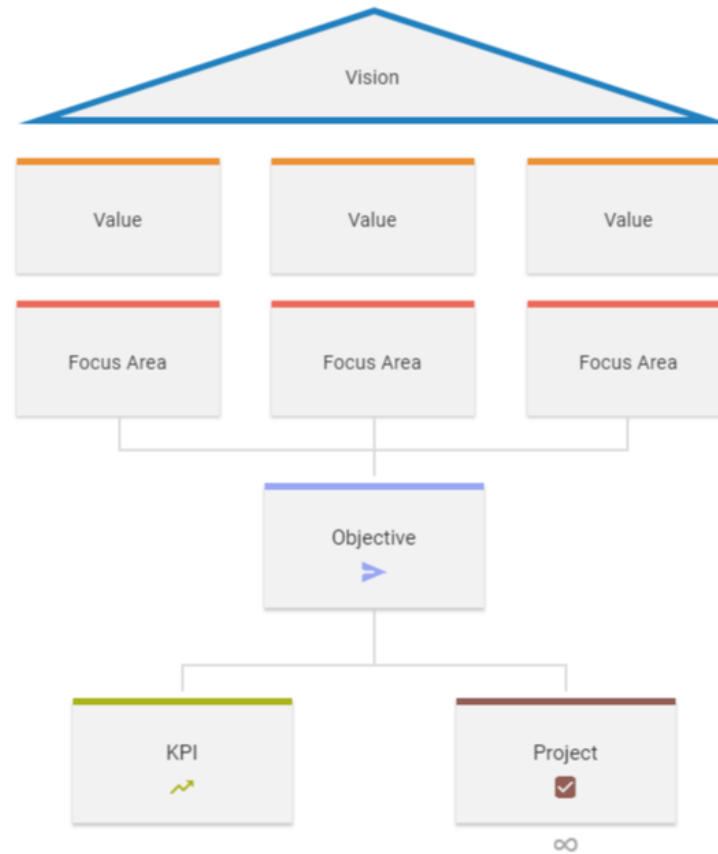- Also…how to leave a conversation…

Open discussion, Q & A, plenary

Cascade Strategy Model

For networking

Cascade Strategy Model

For networking

Vision: (why do I want to network?) I want to "increase my chances of securing X fellowship"

Values: Trust, Authenticity, Empathy

Focus Areas: My university, Learned Societies, Other disciplinary networks, Conferences, Social media…(choose most impactful)

Objective: Gather enough information to evaluate is X realistic, if so, how do I maximise a successful outcome?

KPI: Complete at least 2x informational interviews with people who "obtained X research fellowship" (or whatever your objective)

Project: Action Plan – how you will achieve your KPI and meet your objective? – we'll talk tactics in a minute
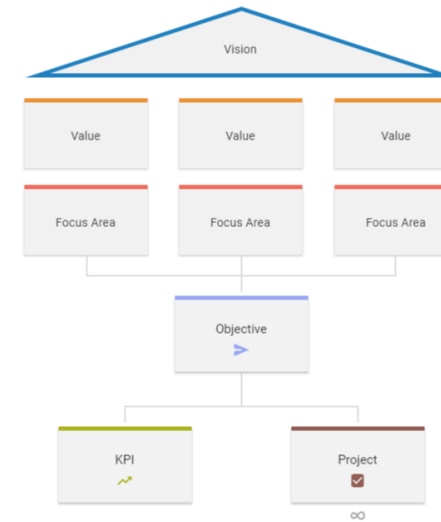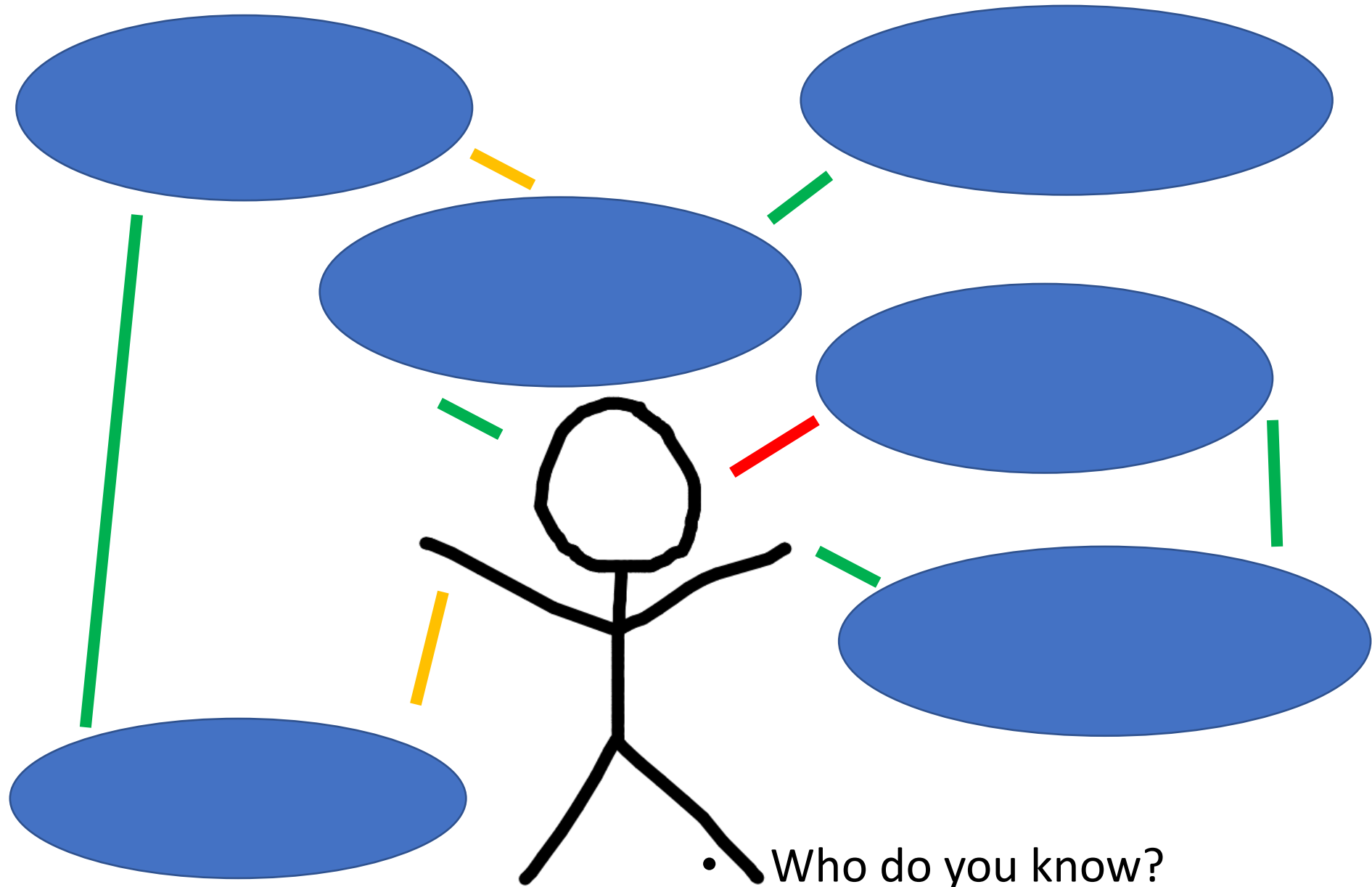
- Who do you know?
- Who do they know?
- Who do you need to know?

Networking

Think about your current network

- Who are the people in your immediate network?
- What is their relationship to you?
- What do they do?

- Think about your current situation.
- What do you need to be able to do or know –
    - **as part of your current work?**
    - **to help you develop your career**?

Be strategic – there are only so many hours in the day

Networking

Reflect on the diversity of your network

- Stage of career (starting out, in the middle, senior, retired...)

- Area of expertise – also – what career support are the best able to give (e.g., fellowship applications, CVs, interview prep, coaching, life experience, career and family, career and health...)

- Geographical location

- Is your network diverse enough? Are you getting new ideas? Exposed to new thinking? If you find Bluesky/FB/Linkedin boring – link to new people?
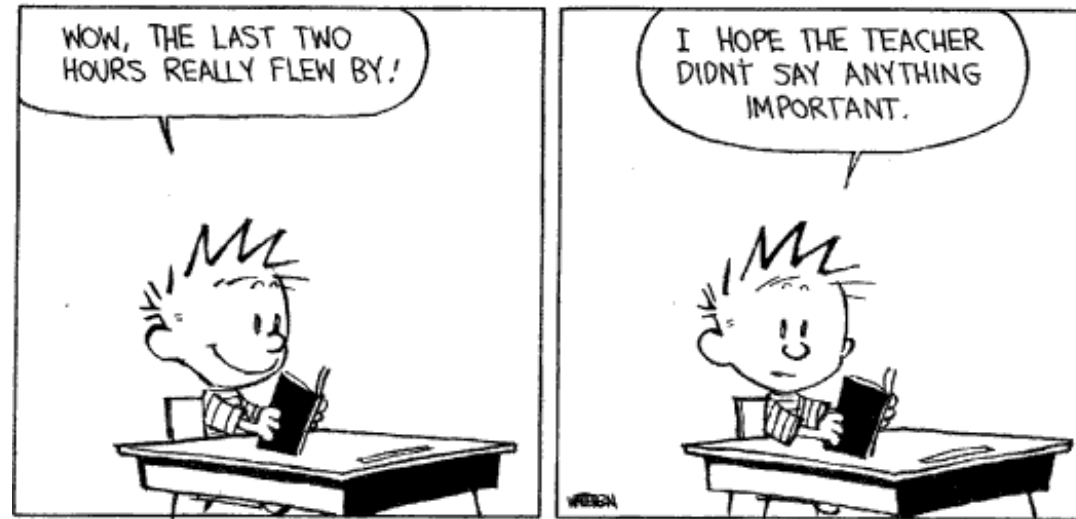
Networking

Are you engaging your network?

- Close triangles – can you introduce people to each other (you do need a clear reason!)
- Share your work through social networks – online and offline
- Convene – get people together
- Using your network to support your learning? Are you actually ever **asking people** stuff?!
- Are you supporting other people's learning?

Networking

After today…where are the gaps?

- Who do you need to know to support your research and your career?

- Find them and integrate them into your network.

Plenary

Thank you!