

“Superb” “A real boost” “Empowered”

Client Testimonials

Powerful Networking Skills



MATTHEW DAVIES

Top London Public Speaking Coach & BBC Award Winning Presenter

TEN TIPS TO IMPACT & INFLUENCE EFFECTIVELY

Description:

POWERFUL NETWORKING SKILLS is a practical and concise guide for professionals who want to shine at networking events. Written for busy business people who need a fast and effective way to maximise confidence and minimise concerns at a networking event.

Matthew Davies is a successful London based Public Speaking Coach and has helped many professionals to communicate with confidence. His corporate clients include the BBC, Towers Watson and Vodafone as well as delivering private one to one sessions for hundreds of individuals.

Discover ten top tips from Matthew that can be applied instantly to really improve your networking skills.

About the Author:

Matthew Davies is a successful Coach, Writer and Broadcaster. He runs his own coaching practice in London, England called *Power the Change*.

Matthew has worked with many companies, helping staff communicate with confidence as well as hundreds of his individual clients. He has contributed to various newspaper and magazine articles, which have appeared in, More Magazine, FHM, Woman, Zest, Elysium, Gulf News, and many other publications.

Matthew is an outstanding Voice Coach having achieved Grade 8 in 'Speech' from the Royal School of Music as well as being personally trained by the great Cicely Berry (Royal Shakespeare Company). He has studied Psychology as well as Psychotherapy and Counselling Skills.

He is a member of the Association of Coaching and is an award winning BBC Presenter combining years of presentation experience with coaching expertise.

What his clients say:

"I just want to say a big thank you. I have really enjoyed learning your approach. I found my perspective has changed and life is a lot more exciting. I've had a real boost to my confidence. Thanks again!" by Mr S. One to one client.

"I really enjoyed this seminar! Matthew is very entertaining and charismatic. The talk was really interesting, I plan to put the tips and suggestions that I have learnt into practice." by K Ellis - Seminar attendee

“My time spent with Matthew has really changed my whole perception on things. I can now say I have a different outlook on life. The techniques and approaches he used were quite remarkable. His understanding is outstanding. Aside from that Matthew is a fantastic guy who I thoroughly enjoyed having my sessions with! I couldn't possibly thank him enough!!” by Oliver H - Executive Client

“After my initial consultation with Matthew the relief was overwhelming. It was such a release to have someone who was friendly, funny and motivated. Matthew offered me more than 'tea and sympathy'; he gave me solutions, simple solutions. I felt empowered to do something, I stopped making excuses and I put his plan into action. It works! Thanks Matthew.” by Melissa D

“Some very good easy-to-implement tips that can be used in any area of your life.”
by Hannah Charlotte

“Matthew is a genius! I was looking for a goal for years and with Matthew it took us 20 minutes to find one; He's a professional coach. As a bonus, he is a genuinely nice person and I enjoy spending time with him.” by Amin

Find more at: www.powerthechange.com/testimonials

Introduction:

Most of us enjoy meeting new people but fear the process, especially at something like a business networking event. You worry about aimlessly wandering around the room, unable to break into a group and ending up feeling like the last one to be picked for the sports team. Or you're concerned that once you've met someone, the conversation will quickly dry up and be replaced by an awkward, deathly silence. The many worries I hear from clients are very real and can cause anxiety, which then creates a compelling desire to avoid networking events at all costs.

Well it's time to become the warrior not the worrier (cheesy I know, but still a great line). Fear in its many forms; from feeling judged to the fear of forgetting, freezing or downright failure, can be overwhelming. This book will arm you with effective and practical strategies to positively handle business networking events. And be assured this is not just for rookie networkers; even experienced hand-shakers can have reservations about the next session.

It's set out to be as clear and concise as possible. Sometimes in our lives we can have days when we've done lots of things and actually achieved very little. It's the difference between meaningless motion and purposeful action. That can happen at networking events as well. You may shake many hands and swap a deck full of business cards but if you haven't made a genuine connection, the chances are you'll soon be forgotten.

The whole point of networking is to build relationships. To gather a genuine group of professionals who you can learn from, trust and perhaps do business with. Let me show you how.

Before you turn up

If you're anything like the majority of us, you'll think of lots of reasons why you shouldn't go to a networking event. Past experience may tell you they're a complete waste of time and just not worth the hassle; either mentally or physically. And you're probably right because, in the past, your frame of mind for going to these events wasn't necessarily in the right place. There's a great saying I use in training and in life:

When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.

So before you attend the next event let's look at some positive reasons why you should turn up. There's no need to write down the negatives - you've had plenty of practice in that department. It's time for some balance. If you can jot these positive reasons down, please do. So here goes, give your head a shake, think positively and answer this simple question:

What are the benefits for me attending a networking event?

Let me give you a hand:

- Get referrals
- Recruit talent
- Find suppliers
- Meet the competition
- Gain strategic alliances
- Undertake market research
- Develop your marketing message
- Expose yourself to new ideas and insights
- Connect with key influencers in your industry
- To increase your visibility by building your industry profile

By the way, referral marketing (that's the posh term) is seen by many as the most cost effective way to get more business. And that often stems from networking events.

These are some of the reasons why you'll collect your badge in the foyer and head into the next networking event. So if you focus on the positive reasons, you'll walk through the door, pumped with the answers you gave to the question I just posed, rather than a head full of excuses as to how you should leave as soon as possible. And guess what? Your experience is going to be *very* different next time because your mind-set is going to be *very* different. THINK IT – BELIEVE IT- BECOME IT.

Tip 1: Setting out your stall

It's important that you have your pitch sorted before you attend an event. And when I say pitch I'm talking about a short introduction pitch rather than a sales pitch. As you'll discover later, when you're at a networking event, do not sell!

This pitch should be no longer than about ten seconds and must include your name, job and the company you work for. Please, please, please make sure that your title is something that most people understand. I'm not impressed by Digital Architects, Ergonomics Specialists or as Kat from Coventry generously shared on a BBC Internet comment board; she's a 'Group TSR Undertakings UKB Migrations Roadmap Lead.' You've got to smile. I have no idea what Kat does. She's probably an absolute delight but the job title does make me consider the possibility she may be hard to deal with. You may have a title that you're impressed with but we're not, so just say it as it is. Remember networking is about building trust. If fellow networkers don't understand what you do, you'll have little chance building any sort of relationship. If you suffer from 'silly job title syndrome' then go and talk to your boss and decide on a title that people can understand, because first impressions do count. Entrepreneurs in one-person businesses, don't call yourself the CEO, it's embarrassing. Say what you do and not just what you are. KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Next step is to practice your pitch. Can you say it in 10 seconds? If not, why not? Keep it short and simple and once you've got the content right I want you to stand in front of the mirror, trying it out. I know your eyes have just hit heaven and you've sighed like a lion that's just been outrun by another gazelle but you're going to have to see what the other networkers see. Please, just do it. This is literally 'show business' so smile (unless you're a Mortician), speak slowly, clearly and look yourself in the eyes. This exercise will show you how you come across and is absolutely invaluable. Promise me you'll give it a go and I promise you, you'll be a better networker.

This may well highlight how dull you come across. Imagine you're meeting you, what would your first impression be? My background is in broadcasting and I know it's vital to be genuine but it's also important to raise my game when I'm presenting a show. No-one wants to hear me drone on in some apathetic monotone, they'd turn off. Why would you think it's different when you meet folks at a networking event? I've seen it at every one I've been to. Miserable suits with a face that could make an onion cry! Sort it out. Smile, be warm, welcoming and open.

Tip 2: **Do not sell**

Networking is NOT selling so do not sell. Got it? Really, I mean it, don't sell.... now have you got it? Good. Networking is about meeting other people and finding out about them to simply expand your network, hence the name networking. So ditch the sales pitch! Once you've build the relationships the sales will come.

I actually find it moderately offensive when a stranger thrusts a business card in my face and asks me something like 'who does your SEO?' It's a bit like those chuggers (charity muggers) with their charity tabard on, clipboard at the ready and a determination to speak to you at all costs. FAIL. I find the whole affair distasteful and it's the same at a networking event.

But let's not take it to the other extreme and forget that this is business. The route to a sale has several steps and building a trusted relationship can't be leapfrogged. So take

it easy and be gentle. Many of your fellow networkers won't know you and will not want to know you if you're overwhelming, aggressive and basically cold calling. Let them ask you about what you do. It's your role to be interested in them and not the other way around. So remember and apply these two basic principles when networking:

1. DO NOT SELL
2. BE INTERESTED INSTEAD OF INTERESTING

Being interested instead of interesting is a great relief to many of my clients. No longer do they feel in the spotlight. Suddenly their role changes and the pressure is off. The way you become interested is simply to actively listen.

Tip 3: **Learn to Listen. Listen to Learn**

The art of listening is very important at a networking event.

Marlon Brando once said, "An actor's a guy who, if you ain't talkin' about him, ain't listening." We all know that attitude isn't limited solely to the acting community. It seems the higher people get in an organisation the less time they have to listen, I mean *really* listen. For some it's work pressures, for others it's a power thing – big egos have little ears!

However the first rule in life is to listen and it's no less important at a networking event. We listen to learn, to understand and to respond appropriately.

Now before you smack me with a wet trout and shout 'tell me something I don't know.' Listening is simple, yes, but it's not easy. The overwhelming purpose of any business is simple: To be re-active to the customers needs or put more simply, to solve their problem. So how come we fail so many times? Maybe our success rate would be higher if we listened more actively.

Active listening is about making a conscious decision to concentrate on what the other person is saying. To dismiss distraction whether externally or any internal dialogue and mindfully listen to the information they are imparting.

If we agree it's important to actively listen at networking events, what do we do with that information? Does listening require action? Or can the act of just listening really build trust or even solve a problem?

My mate Ed, a computer consultant for a large organisation, is often called to the office floor to fix a problem. He tells me that as the person explains the problem, they tap away at the keyboard to show Ed what they did to land them in techno trouble. As the story unfolds the person invariably hits a key that actually resolves the issue. All Ed did was stand alongside and listen. In counselling (especially in what's known as person centred counselling) listening and clarifying what someone says is the primary role of the counsellor. It can be incredibly powerful. In fact a Turkish proverb says "If

speaking is silver, then listening is gold.” So listening can be cathartic and it displays empathy. It’s also an important trust builder in any relationship.

Here are my five tips for listening:

1. Be present and don’t distract
2. Don’t interrupt or pre-empt
3. Confirm and clarify
4. Stay focussed and be fascinated
5. Don’t assume they need your experience or advice

The last point is worthy of note. Sometimes people don’t need your opinion, they just need a good listener. If you feel the need to rescue people, think again. They say the worst vice is advice so the way to share with others is through experience “I worked with a client and...” People will respond way more positively to the power of example rather than an example of power!

And remember people love to be listened to. You are giving of your time and if the ‘givers gain’ principle is true, you’ll be in a more favourable position to receive. After all the ancients were right when they said “A good listener is a silent flatterer”.

Tip 4: Don’t take it personally

When people are nervous or in an unfamiliar setting they may act differently to the norm. If you are actually snubbed when trying to get into a group to network, don’t take it personally. Forgive them and forgive yourself. They’ve either met someone they know (which allows them not to network) or they’ve just found their little safe space and are defending their newly found ‘friends’.

There’s a great book by Don Miguel Ruiz called ‘The Four Agreements’. One of the agreements is to not take anything personally - a challenge but wise advice.

In networking environments most people have an agenda. These vary from the length of time they intend to stay to being ‘forced’ to turn up by their boss. Because you’re unaware of their back-story you may fall in with someone who either is about to leave or doesn’t really want to be there. The question is, why would *you* take that personally? Maybe they really want to speak to potential suppliers and your line of business would never supply to them. Why would you take that personally? Maybe they are really bad listeners. Why take their lack of listening skills personally?

Let’s be honest. Most of the time other people’s behaviour has got little or nothing to do with you, so don’t take it personally. Most people are kind and generous, so go find them.

Tip 5: Become the host and bring in stragglers

This is my little trick. I become an unofficial networking host. If I see stragglers passing by, I pull them in, introduce them to the assembled group and take the reins of working them around the people I've just met.

This will put you in the driving seat and done right, can make you instantly popular. Be inclusive and more importantly have some fun with the whole exercise. Fear hates fun. When you're really worried you don't tend to be at your most amusing so instilling some fun into the networking event removes the fear and also makes you far more appealing.

However many of my clients are worried that they won't have enough to say.

Remember be interested instead of interesting. So become inquisitive but beware you don't step over the line and become an interrogator. Here are some questions to ask:

1. Why did you come along tonight?
2. What is it that you love about your business?
3. What sort of projects are you working on at the moment?
4. What's your latest success?
5. What areas of your industry will offer the greatest opportunity in the coming years?

Some events provide a delegates list before the event. Do a little research into the business of those attending. This will give you a head start and show those you're speaking with that you have a little insight into their business.

Tip 6: **Remembering their names**

I'm just as bad as anyone else when it comes to remembering names. I can ask and by the time you've told me I've already forgotten. However, if I take my own advice I don't forget. So remember to use these tips and you'll remember people's names.

When you find out their name, consciously commit to remembering it. As you ask their name or read their badge mindfully think to yourself to commit it to memory. Or you could find a trigger. If you're talking to someone called Barry who has a big belly, think – Barry Belly (don't say it out loud, Barry Belly might not appreciate his new name).

Another way is to ask how they spell their name. You could tell your new found friend a story about someone you know with the same name as theirs or, in your mind, associate them with someone famous with the same name.

People love to hear their own name said out loud. So repeat it. They'll like you more and you'll have a better chance of remembering it.

There's also a business card etiquette that should be adhered to. By all means ask for a business card but don't thrust yours in front of others until asked. Usually they'll ask for yours when you've asked for theirs. Another tip is to write memo notes on

their business cards so you remember them better and next time you contact them or meet, you'll be able to refer to the conversation you previously had in more detail. Always a winner!

Tip 7: **Connect as well as Engage**

I'm a Public Speaking/Presentations Coach but my real currency is in connection. Helping people to connect with clients and colleagues in an authentic and meaningful way is where my practice truly resides.

Let me be clear. I split confident communication into two different areas. *Engagement* and *Connection*. Engagement is head based - knowledge of the product, price, processes etc. Connection is quite different and is heart based. The themes that dominate connection are trust, belief, courage, empathy and passion. If you can connect with someone at a networking event, I promise you, you'll stand out from the crowd.

The differentiation between engagement and connection is often starkly seen in presentations and pitches. Why does your competitor win the work when your engagement was great or indeed better than theirs? It's simple in a lot of cases – you didn't connect. *Remember: it's not what you say, it's what they believe!*

Think about it. If we only required engagement why do we invite prospective employees in for a face-to-face interview? Because we need to double check that what they wrote in their CV is true (engagement) and then see if they fit into the team and (let's be honest) discover if we like them (connection). That balance of engagement and connection makes for a great communicator. However many employers hire 'engaged' employees who find it difficult to genuinely connect at the likes of networking events.

If you think engagement is enough then you and I aren't going to see eye to eye. *I fundamentally believe that disconnection is a huge friction on any business.* The problem is many are left failing to connect, convince and compel and business is lost. Go to any Expo and see the thousands of pounds spent on the stands and staff (one friend told me his company spent £300,000 on a two-day event in London recently). Then simply observe as hundreds of prospective clients walk past while the staff on the stand, talk to themselves, play with their branded pens and basically do anything other than network effectively.

So how do I connect then? Well if you don't go within you'll go without. This is an inside job. Write down what puts you off networking and stops you from opening up to people, like you would in a pub.

My clients cite many reasons, like the fear of being judged, looking foolish, being snubbed etc. However the general theme is centred around the notion that they don't feel good enough. They may have the experience, the skills and other colleagues admire them but they still don't feel good enough. The more clients I talk to about this issue, the more I'm convinced to substitute the word 'good' for 'professional'.

When professionals make presentations or network, that lack of belief or that feeling of not being good enough is masked by the idea that if they're 'professional' enough then all will be well. You know and I know that just doesn't work. You feel like a phoney and somewhere deep down reckon you've been rumbled.

Yes you have to be professional but that doesn't mean being wooden, insincere or cold. When training, I always clarify what 'professional' means because some folk pretend, people please, plot and procrastinate instead of living up to the five essentials for being a stand out professional:

1. Fit for purpose (qualifications and experience to do the job)
2. Focussed (the ability to pay attention to the job in hand)
3. Fastened in (passionate about your job)
4. Friendly (approachable, empathic)
5. Fun (able to self deprecate and enjoy rather than endure your day)

So don't hide behind old perceptions of what professional once meant to you. Find the genuine passion you have for your job and wallow in it. That passion is contagious and will help you connect. Be kind and treat others as you'd like to be treated and enjoy rather than endure your day. All these little tweaks to your approach will encourage connection.

Another way to connect with someone is to add value or become a resource. Before you attend a networking event check out an article that might be of general interest to most people at the event. Then talk about it and offer to send it on to those you meet. A great way to connect and engage!

Tip 8: 'I know someone who knows somebody' principle

This tip changed the way I approached potential leads and really took the pressure off any inner desire to seal the deal. It also taught me that someone you could easily initially dismiss may well hold the key to some juicy business.

The principle is simple. Most people want to be helpful but it's usually a step too far for them to open up their offices to you at your first meeting. However many are keen to introduce you to someone they know. For example, I was at a networking event and I was talking to a chap who ran his own business managing office space. I recommended him to one of my clients and he did the same for me and we both got business. The likes of the BNI (Business Network International) are masters at this and I'd highly recommend checking them out. We still haven't done any business directly with each other. I could have easily dismissed him as a dead end and moved on networking. I didn't because he was an interesting person and naturally understood this principle.

LinkedIn is another classic example of this with 1st, 2nd and 3rd connections depending on how well we know a person. 'I know someone who knows somebody' allows you to dig a little around your fellow networkers contacts. Get them thinking about who

they know that may benefit from your products or services. Do a swap? I'll introduce you to 'A' if you introduce me to 'B'.

So I never think I'm going to do business with the person I'm talking to. Honestly! I genuinely put the notion of gaining direct sign-ups from those present at a networking event to one side and focus on building relationships and finding out who they are and who they know.

Tip 9: Follow Up

This is a classic. We go to the effort of attending a networking event, gather up a stack of business cards and then get on with our lives. By the time we come to sift through the cards the effervescence of the night has flattened and we've forgotten who most of the people they are.

Consider the follow-up *as* important as the event itself. Diary out 30 minutes the following day to Link-In or email those you wish to develop relationships with. I use an electronic diary and I set an event in a week's time to re-connect with those individuals. Send them some content they may find interesting, share a contact with them or invite them out for a drink. And remember DO NOT SELL.

One easy way to manage the follow up is to have an email template set up. Something along these lines:

Subject Line: Good to meet you at the (INSERT EVENT)

Hi (INSERT NAME),

It was a pleasure meeting you last night at the (INSERT EVENT).

I've sent you a LinkedIn request to connect and here is that article I was talking about (INSERT HYPERLINK)

Let's stay in touch and it'd be great to meet up sometime soon.

Kind Regards,

Matthew

If you have a delegate list be careful you don't send it to all delegates. It's a cheap trick that can backfire. This is what my friend Russell said happened to him once:

"I was booked to go to a networking event and had to cancel the night before (not ideal but it happens). They must have issued a delegate list as I received 15 Emails saying something like it was great to meet you, we sell widgets and you need one. I wasn't even there!"

Tip 10: **Just Do it**

If there is one mantra I want you to take away with you it is JUST DO IT. I hope you've enjoyed reading this little book. Maybe you've nodded in agreement at some parts. What I don't want is for you to find yourself at a future event reverting to old behaviours. As Leonardo da Vinci said:

"I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do."

So take these tips and roadtest them at the next networking event you attend. Some will work for you better than others but the more you apply them the better you'll become. In the end you won't endure these events you'll enjoy them.

Finally when you 'just do it' don't try too hard. It is tempting to try to be very impressive or be the funny one. I know, I've done it myself but people will recoil. Wear life loosely and be gentle and generous to others.

Also recognise what your business is and what it isn't. You can't be all things to all men/women. If it's not your specialism, refer, as it will build trust.

Thanks for reading this book and successful networking!

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