





DIPLOMA

NETWORKING

EVENTS PLANNING



**NETWORKING EVENTS
ORGANIZER
MODULE-02**



2. Module 02- Networking events:

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2.1 What is networking?

2.1.1 Networking 101

Networking is the process of making connections with other people in order to exchange information, ideas or talents. Networking is an essential part of today's business landscape. After all, success is not just determined by what you know but who you can share it with.



People use networking to meet contacts. When you are networking, you might be trying to meet:

- Clients
- Partners
- Employers
- Employees
- Contractors
- Leads

The ultimate goal is to make a connection that will help you achieve either a business or a personal goal. The goal may have an imminent deadline or it may be in the future. The idea behind networking is to collect an arsenal of talented people that you can potentially work with.

1) Referrals

Networking gets your name out there which generates more referrals. People in your network are more likely to send their contacts to you because they can trust you.

2) More Business

These referrals translate into a bigger, more profitable business. When you don't have to fight so hard for every single sale, you can focus on building a better business and using your time for other things.

3) Ability to Help Others

The benefits of networking are not just about you. You also get the opportunity to impart your wisdom onto others. Networking provides you with an opportunity to give back socially and professionally.

4) New Friends

At the end of the day, networking helps you make new friends. Because you're connecting with people who have similar interests, it is easier to form natural bonds with them. These bonds often translate into lasting friendships!



Keep all of these benefits in mind throughout the event planning process. A great event will help facilitate all of the benefits that encourage people to attend networking events in the first place!

2.1.2 Meetings vs. Events

Before diving into the concept of a networking event, it is important to understand the difference between a meeting and event.

A meeting is a great way to network. A meeting can happen by chance or it can be pre-arranged. It can be held with people you know or be used as a way to get to know people you don't. Meetings are necessary for organizations and are excellent tools when used appropriately. They primarily serve an educational or business purpose.

Now, every meeting can be considered to be an event; but, not every event is a meeting.

An event is something more than a meeting. It is something to be anticipated, enjoyed and used to further the guests' agenda. It has a theme that does more than set a task. A great event creates an aesthetic, a vibe or something else intangible that allows the guests to do more than just check a box.

This is why the role of a networking event organizer is so important. People sleep through meetings. You are tasked with transforming an otherwise boring activity into a fun and memorable event

2.1.3 The Evolution of Networking

Networking has always been an important part of business because making connections has always been an important part of life. People naturally work within their own networks when they are looking to meet new friends or find new services. Why? Because when someone is within your network, a certain level of trust is inherent in your relationship.

Networking has a lot changed in the last 10 years. The internet broke down the geographical limitations of old networks and allowed people to connect with people they would not have been able to reach only 20 years ago.

Social media networks like LinkedIn have transformed the way people network because they have made them more open to meeting people that they don't know.

Although the internet grants you access to more people than ever before, you still don't have that trust that you so desperately need.

Thus, you still need a good place to meet those people. Since the relationship still requires a kind of trust that the internet cannot provide, people continue to rely on networking events

2.1.4 The Birth of the Networking Event

A networking event is an event that is designed to bring people together in a setting that promotes making connections.



A networking event can often be classed in one of two categories. It is either a formal networking event or an informal networking event.

Formal networking events are primarily hosted by businesses or professional organizations. Although a business hosts them, most events are not designed solely to make sales or market certain products.

An event that focuses only on one businesses' agenda is a marketing event. While marketing events *can* be useful for networking, this is often not the primary goal of the event.

This is not to say that these events leave all marketing by the wayside. While it is improper to push the host's agenda on the guests, their product will often be in the background. Instead, the primary focus needs to be creating an environment for guests to learn, grow and connect.

Informal social networking events are similar to business networking events but they are less formal. A social networking event will rarely mention the client's business or product at all except in passing. If a product is mentioned it is often part of an opening address, a thank you note or on the event's paper materials and it is generally mentioned as a part of a sponsorship deal.

2.2 Formal Events: Business Networking Events

A typical business networking event will feature one host. This host is usually considered to be the organizer of the event, even if they contract you to do the actual organization. The host will often dictate a good portion of the details for the event. The two most popular kinds of business networking events that you will work on include **conferences** and **trade shows**.



A conference is an educational event designed to promote the exchange of information via discussion. Conferences are usually designed to serve as a destination and attract people from several geographic areas.

A trade show is an exhibition for companies within a wider industry to show off their latest products or innovations. Although they have a sales focus, trade shows have a heavy networking emphasis as well.

Trade shows often work on three levels. In most cases, the first day of the trade show allows attendees to network with the press and the media. The second part of the event is often closed to the public and allows participants to meet with each other to make connections. The third part includes opening the event up to the public. This allows members of the public and other members of the industry who are not attending to come in and work

Organizing a conference or a trade show is expensive in terms of time and money. Businesses that organize these will often include only one or two a year depending on their resources. To keep their name in the loop for the rest of the year, businesses will often want to throw smaller, regular events to raise their profile. Some of these events include:

- Breakfasts
- Dinners
- Lunches
- Symposiums
- Parties
- Lectures
- Training days

2.3 Formal Events: Industry- Specific Networking Events

Industry-specific networking events are a popular type of event. Industries often take it upon themselves to bring people within the industry together to foster alliances.

Many of these events are hosted by professional associations. A professional association (otherwise known as a body, organization or society) is an organization that seeks to protect or further a specific profession. Most of these groups are nonprofit organizations that focus on the interests of the individuals who occupy that profession. Professional associations may be national, regional, local or all three.

People in a particular industry are often drawn to professional associations. In some cases, belonging to the association demonstrates a commitment to one's career or serves as a stamp of approval. These groups also provide training and networking events. These networking events are held on a local, regional and national level.



At the local level they may include:

- Happy hours
- Breakfasts
- Dinners
- Local awards
- Speaking engagements
- Training events

At the regional level, they may include:

- Training events
- Regional awards evenings
- Conferences
- Speaking engagements

At the national level, these events include:

- National conferences
- National training events
- National awards evenings

2.3.1 Professional Association Events vs. Business Networking Events

- There is a difference between professional association events and business networking events. First, the kind of people you invite to a professional association event will often already be connected in some way because they work in the same industry. Although they might not know each other, there is some common ground between attendees because they occupy the same industry.



- Another difference lies within the organization of these events. These kinds of events will have a more rigid structure than a business event because they have a captive audience. Rather than trying to attract people from other industries or walks of life, the professional association already has a group of members to invite to the event. Since these members are in the same industry, the event's program or structure will have a narrow focus.

Example:

The American Intellectual Property Law Association is a professional organization for lawyers specializing in intellectual property law. The group hosts a series of events all year including specialist events. Some of these specialist events include the Trademark Bootcamp, the Chemical Practice Boot Camp and the Electronic & Computer Patent Law Summit.

- As you can see, these events are perfect for lawyers practicing in this industry and they are geared towards information and communication. However, the association would not necessarily invite biologists, teachers or administrators to these events because the content would be of little interest to their careers. Thus, this kind of networking event is geared for people who work in the same niche of a specific industry.

2.4 Informal and Social Networking Events

Informal networking and social networking events have increased in popularity partly because of the internet. Because the internet makes it easy to meet, greet and informally organize an event, people without any professional association are able to get together and network at their own events. Some of the most common informal events include:

- Happy hours
- Early morning coffee sessions
- Presentations
- Seasonal gatherings

Informal and social networking events often include groups of people who have one common interest, though it may not necessarily be their profession. The interest might also be a hobby or something the guests are interested in.



These events are particularly popular among freelancers who are looking to meet new clients or collaborators. They are also popular for hosting educational opportunities for both freelancers and people who want to enter a certain industry. The events are also

An informal or social networking event will generally have fewer pieces to put together than a formal, corporate event. This is because there is less money involved. However, it is also because there is rarely a corporate entity involved with an agenda to push. This is not to say that you will not find corporate types here. Many informal networks go after corporate sponsorships to help offset the costs that come with organizing an event of any kind.



2.4.1. Informal Events vs. Formal Events

Organizing an informal event is different from organizing a formal event. You will be trying to create an atmosphere that is relaxed but still encourages an environment conducive to achieving all of the benefits of networking, as highlighted earlier.

Although these events are informal, these events still require an organizer for them to work. As the organizer, you will be responsible for creating a structure and format for these events. However, the level of structure will depend on the kind of event you are organizing. If it is an hour long pre-work coffee meeting, you'll need less structure than if you are organizing a night featuring presentations from the group.

Even if it is a very casual setting, you will still need to encourage the guests to network to ensure that people get something from the event. Ensuring that guests have something positive to take away will keep people coming back and encourage them to bring their friends.

Another difference between informal and formal events is that informal events happen more frequently. Most events happen monthly, though some keen groups will get together weekly.

Finally, informal events will not have the same comprehensive marketing plan that a formal business or industry event might. Instead, the group might be run solely on social media or using a meet-up service.

You'll learn more about the foundations of an informal event in the next section where you learn how to create your own networking group.

2.5 Creating Your Own Group & Online Networking

As an event planner, you might be interested in planning networking events for clients. You may also be interested in creating your own networking group and hosting your own events. Why not? Networking is valuable for everyone.

This section will provide an overview of creating your own networking group. Even if you are not interested in this aspect of networking now; there are lessons that you can apply to the events you create on behalf of your clients, especially for those wanting to organize informal networking events.

What Your Group Needs

Before starting your own group, you need to come up with the four Ps of holding a networking group.

- 1) People – What kind of people do you want to attract to your group? How will you hold them together? What common interests will they have that will help connect them?
- 2) Purpose – Why are you creating the group? What benefit will the group have for your attendees? How will the group foster a common passion that will drive the success of the group? What is the goal of the group?
- 3) Place – Will your group meet in person? Online? Both? Will you establish a regular meeting spot or move the meeting around?
- 4) Promotion – How will you grow your group? How will you promote your group to potential sponsors, collaborators or influencers?

2.5.1 How to Build Your Group

Follow these steps to successfully build your own networking group:

1) Research

Use what you know about other events to see what works and what doesn't. Remember that different groups have different needs and goals and take that into consideration when establishing your founding principles.

Research your own attendees the same way that you critically research attendees for your clients. Remember to get out of the office and establish whether there is a need for your group or event.

2) Get Specific... or Not

Decide whether you want to create a formal, specific business oriented networking group or whether your target audience is looking for something more social. Choose which way you want to go and stick with it. Make sure that it fits the needs and problems of your customers.

3) Build Your Foundation

Use your network to build those key foundation members of the group. Picking these people is important because you want people who not only show up but actively participate in the group. There's no point in having great members if they don't interact with people outside their group.



Choosing foundation members is like choosing friends. You don't want a friend who picks up the phone only when they have nothing else to do. You want one who will answer the phone at 3 AM.

A note on influencers and celebrities: A good way to recruit local or regional celebrities is to ask them to sit on a panel or give a presentation. After they have experienced the event, it is appropriate to ask them to join.

4) Create an Event

Hit the ground running with a small-scale event. Choose an appropriate venue but don't worry about the theme. Just create a goal that you want to meet and a strategy for reaching it. Be sure to set the second date quickly so that there's no question about "next time" when the meeting is over.

5) Grow Slowly

Build a foundation of events before going for a media-blitz. Grow within your network and within the members' networks before worrying about advertising and press. This will help ensure you have a solid foundation of members who are willing and happy to be there. This foundation makes new members feel more welcome.



2.5.2 Online Networking

Even if your networking group meets in person regularly, it is still important to foster an online networking community.

You begin creating your online networking community similarly to the way you begin one that meets in person. Always start with plenty of research and determine what makes your community unique. Again, this unique aspect of your community is what gives your community value.

2.5.3 Where to Host Your Online Community

You have several options for hosting your community. The one you choose will depend on how many people you want involved and what kind of functionality you are interested in.

Forums

A forum is a popular way to host your group. You have both free options and expensive options that include software and open-source alternatives. The one you choose will depend on what kind of features you are interested in.

Custom Networks

You can use social platforms that are designed for building customer social networks. Two of the most popular options are Ning and BuddyPress.

Free Networks



You can also carve out your own section of popular social networks. These are good alternatives for groups that want to network online but also want to grow in the real world, too. Facebook groups and LinkedIn groups are two great places to create your own groups.

You can also get your group set up on Meet Up, which is a global networking service designed to host individual groups. Meet Up is not great for conversation but it is a good way to collect new members and broadcast events.



2.5.4 Moderating Your Community

When you're setting up a networking event, you rely on the interests and concerns of your guests. You need to do the same thing online. Moderating your community is essential to the community's success because it keeps your members happy.

There are a few decisions that you will have to make as the community moderator. One of the most important decisions is based on privacy. You will need to decide if your community will be open, closed or available by invitation only. This decision is important because it allows you to control the size of the group and the kind of people who join the group.

Moderating your community also helps keep the conversation going. It provides the structure that your events rely on. Thus, you need to dedicate time to creating a schedule for the community and engaging with your members. A stagnant group does not encourage new members, even if your events are great.

Remember to listen to your members' concerns online, just as you would in person. This can be difficult because of the sheer number of people in the group. However, do your best to acknowledge any comments or issues that the members have, especially when it comes to the site, rules or other members.

Remember: All of the things that you have learned about creating your own online networking community can also be applied to moderating or hosting a client's networking community!