

Networking as Leader & Business Owner

Hate Networking?

Article for [Lynn Scott Coaching](#): June 2014

For the next two weeks I want to share the experiences of a favourite client of mine, Susie Burdekin. Susie was Director of multi-award winning Brand Partnership agency [Cherry London](#) and now runs the niche consultancy business [The Drill Company](#).

Susie is someone who didn't enjoy 'networking' – quite a challenge given the industry she is in. Here's her story in her own words.

'At the start of my career the phrase 'networking' never seemed to be used. As I started out as an account executive in a fast paced digital world we met up for drinks and to be sociable – that was it.

No preconceived notions on how to behave, who you had to talk to, or what to say. It was about meeting up with others to share ideas, nightmare client stories, have a few drinks and a good laugh. It wasn't called networking and it certainly didn't feel like hard work.

Then things changed.

As I progressed through my career, the 'networking' term got banded around more and more. There was a *need* to do it, you were expected to 'mingle' with other industry people and 'raising your profile' became an important point on the agenda if you were going to get on in your career.

Then it got worse.

As partner of a marketing agency and later sole business owner - the pressures of networking increased:

- As a new agency wanting to win high profile clients, we had to get our name out there quickly;
- Our offerings are complex, so standard pitching wasn't effective for us;
- Like any company, we had salaries and bills to pay so securing new business and leads was a must.

Plus;

- As leaders, we had to set the example. If we expected our team to be out there, we had to lead from the front;
- We wanted to be seen in the industry as experts in our field. That wasn't going to



happen without us talking to the right people and being at the right industry events.

The pressures of 'networking' started to mount up for me. I'd had a career of growing client relationships, but never saw myself as a 'sales person'. I considered myself approachable, could facilitate a room of opinionated, difficult clients, but wouldn't have described myself as a 'born networker' or someone who felt they could 'work a room' with ease.

All my pangs of shyness from younger days came hurtling back. What do I say? What do I talk about? Why would they want to talk to me? Do I have any gravitas or presence in these situations? And my biggest fear... what if I don't have ANYTHING interesting to say?

The more I felt I had to 'get out there', the worse these fears became'.

Sound familiar?

Read what Susie did next week...

