

Lesson Plan: Personal Networking Part I-Speed Networking

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:
Explain the importance of personal networking and demonstrate how to initiate communication in a one-to-one, face – to-face, professional environment.

College Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Collaboration, Self-Assessment.

Context in the Course: A separate lesson on writing a 30 second elevator pitch might be helpful, but is not required.

Materials Needed:

- A comfortable, open space
- A hand bell, buzzer or other, noise making device (for the facilitator)
- Business Cards (optional)

Instructions:

The purpose of this assignment is to give students the opportunity to practice making professional connections.

1. Have the students form two equal lines, facing each other.
2. Explain to students that they each have three minutes to talk to the person opposite them. They should share their name, their major, and a little bit about themselves. Students should not feel that they have to share anything that is too personal.
3. After six minutes, the bell (or other device) rings, and each student steps to the left and starts the process over again with another person. Those at the ends may have to go the opposite end of the line, in order to have a new person to speak with. **Note:** you may decide to give students a signal after three minutes, so that they know to switch to the other person, or you may not. Students often flow somewhere between a well-organized exchange and a freewheeling conversation when they meet. This is healthy in that it respects different learning styles, and preferences. Experimentation is an important part of the learning process for all students, and perhaps especially so for developmental learners.
4. Repeat as many times as time allows (At three minutes for each person, each conversation should last six minutes, and so five total conversations could be had by each student in 30 minutes, give or take time to shift down the line between conversations.)
5. Following the exercise, gather the class for a group discussion so that students can share what the experience was like for them, what they felt, and what they think they have learned from it.

Assessment: In addition to the group discussion, you may want to assign a reflection paper in which students write about their experience, taking time to think and write the same types of thoughts that were discussed in class (see attached assignment hand out).

Handout: Reflection Paper on the Speed Networking Exercise

After taking part in your speed networking session, you have gained some insight into how to initiate a one-to-one conversation in a professional setting.

Reflection papers are designed to help you formally consider what you have been learning and to organize it through writing. Reflective essay writing will help you take an inventory of the things you learned, and sort through those concepts that were most useful to you, so that you may apply them in the future, should you so choose.

In short, you should reflect upon your experience, and explain what you learned from it. You may want to use the following questions to help prompt your thinking on the experience. You do not have to include all, or any of them, but you may find that they help you to reflect on and explain your experience.

- What did you feel when you started your conversation?
- You spent time listening and speaking in turn. Ask yourself if one was more comfortable than the other, and why?
- Did any of the people you spoke with seem especially comfortable with this exercise? What made you think they were so? How did speaking with this person make you feel?
- Would it help to have more time to speak with each person, or did this amount of time seem appropriate in getting to know them in a professional setting?
- Did you do something especially well? Was there something you think that you could improve on the next time you find yourself in a similar situation?
- What advice would you give to someone who asked you how to introduce themselves in a one-to-one professional setting?

Technical specifications of the assignment:

- Papers must be typed, use 12 point font and be double spaced.
- Papers should be between 300 and 500 words (1.5 to 2 pages long)

While outside sources are not required for this assignment, they should be cited correctly using MLA or APA format, if used. Citing sources is required whenever you use words, writing, or ideas that belong to someone else. Ask your instructor or see the MCC student handbook for more information on academic honesty: <http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/deanofstudents/studhand2.asp>

Lesson Plan: Virtual Communications and the 3D Web

Learning Objectives: After successfully completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Explain what is meant by a “virtual world” and the 3D web
- Be able to discuss the potential for use of these tools, and the potential impact to existing methods of communication on the web (email, Facebook, Twitter, Skype, etc.)

College Student Success Skills Addressed: Communication, Critical Thinking

Context in the Course:

This exercise should take place later in the semester, after the students have had a chance to learn more about the use of traditional media, Interactive Social Media (such as Facebook, Twitter and Instant Messengers) and other web-communication tools such as e-mail, list servers and/or podcasts.

Materials Needed:

- Computer and overhead projector for the instructor
- Paper and pens, tables (rather than individual desks) for the students (if possible). Otherwise, put groups into circles so that they can work together (see below).

Instructions:

Virtual Worlds, Web-hosted Multi-User Gaming Environments and other 3D communications technologies have been steadily increasing in use since about 1993, with the advent of some of the first text-based MUDs (Multi-User Dimensions). In the following exercise, we will show one of these worlds to students and get them to begin asking questions about the potential and possible impact that these tools may have on existing communications tools and on internet based communications, in general. First, show them the following video which discusses the use of the most popular of these platforms, Second Life for business and other group communications: http://youtu.be/_JKf5WNbyk

Ask them to do a think/pair/share exercise in which they ask themselves the following questions:

- Does this platform look like a good way to communicate with others?
- What tools might be the best available on the platform, for group communication? Is it the built in group text chat? Private Instant messaging? Voice chat? The ability to upload PowerPoint slides, word documents, PDFs and video links?
- What might be some of the disadvantages for using one of these platforms?
- Of the chosen, why is that the best feature for this platform for this task?
- Skype has live video chat. Are there advantages to using a 3D virtual environment that are apparently not available within Skype, Google or other video conferencing systems?
- Given the information in the video about the use of these media by children 3 - 9, does it make sense that businesses, schools and other organizations should start ramping up the use of these tools for the next generation of students and workers? Why or Why Not?

- What might the use of these tools do to the usage of other popular social communications media, such as Facebook and LinkedIn? Will there be major impact, or is it a small trend that will pass, leaving the other huge social media present now as the dominant players in the field?

Next, is the Think/Pair/Share exercise: let students have five minutes to **Think** about and write down their answers to these questions (or others you have created, or that they come up with for themselves.)

After students have had time to work through the questions and brainstorm a few possible solutions on their own, ask them to **Pair** up. Alternatively, you may ask them to work in small groups of three or four, depending upon the size of the class and their comfort level with group interaction and this activity.

Lastly, students should be able to **Share** their ideas with the larger group. A good way to break the ice here is to ask students if they found that they and their partners had very similar ideas, or very different ideas about the subject. After that question, you can ask them to share their thoughts (Being specific helps. For example: Could you share the idea that you thought was best from your discussion?)

Assessment: The instructor may want to use the group discussion section of this exercise (the “share”) as a kind of informal assessment, or ask students to follow up with an essay on what they think the future of virtual communications and/or the 3D web will be. Ask them to write a fictionalized account of what the world will be like in ten years, with this technological shift, or ask them to write a longer, formal research paper on the subject.

A suggestion: for explorations students you may want to keep the assignment to two or three pages and no more than three citations if this is not to be a major assignment.