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# Speed Networking

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# Project Description

The Halifax Partnership started doing Speed Networking sessions in 2014. We identified a need for this activity with our partner, FUSION Halifax – a networking group for young professionals in Halifax. The aim of this event is to provide a “safe” and highly structured networking event to allow newcomers and new graduates to practice their networking in an event setting. The event itself is free to the public and Eventbrite was used for registration. Fusion and the Partnership split the costs of room rental/food to make it quite affordable.

# Preparation and Delivery Elements

**Structure**

Each event consisted of a welcoming portion, a few key networking tips and then the structured networking. For each event, we invited speakers from Fusion and the Halifax Connector Program to set the context and welcome everyone. Our target was to host 100 participants. Our marketing and communication team played an important role in the messaging and marketing. Invites were sent to Fusion members as well as all past Connectees from the Connector Program. Focus was primarily on new graduates, but the event was open to all. First come, first serve for the guest list.

**Delivery of Event**

* + Welcoming and registering all participants with colour coded name tags
  + Strong facilitator needed to keep structured networking moving and on time
  + Provided a door prize for those in attendance
  + Coordinating networking by: colour coded name tags (blue tags find a green tag to talk to), mandatory conversation topics (favorite food, last place you visited, etc.) now introduce your partner to someone to your left, etc.
  + Administering a survey to participants and receiving less formal feedback regarding participants and the event

**Post Event**

* + Reviewing survey feedback and incorporating into planning
  + Providing the opportunity for interested Fusion members to become part of the formal Connector program as either a Connectee or Connector

**Tips for Attendees**

* **They should set their intentions before the event**
  + The focus should be building relationships instead of getting contacts or leads
  + They should ask themselves, *‘what’s in it for them?’*  to identify how they could add value to the other person
  + Not all the interactions will result in immediate business benefits, but over time networking becomes enjoyable, allowing one to ask for valuable advice from people more successful and further into their careers
* **Connectees should show up as the best version of themselves** 
  + If some of the Connectees feel like they are natural introverts, the green light is to hide in the corner
  + Encourage them to feel relaxed, natural so they’re ready to talk to someone who may be viewed as being ‘above’ them based on title
  + It’s important to recognize that these industry professionals were once new to the industry, so they’re not too different from them, and they understand the nerves that come with attending networking events
* **Diagnose and listen, do not just pitch!**
  + A speed networker must listen and ask questions that help them understand what is important to the other person
    - What are their core values?
    - Are they all about family?
    - Do they love to travel?

These questions may seem odd to ask, but it helps when you can find one thing to relate to the other person about, to build rapport.

* **Emphasize the importance of following up and following through**
  + Integrity is a valuable currency (e.g., Connect a person to someone else, send an email, book a meeting) so if they say they are going to do something, they must do it
  + 24-48 hours is a good time window to follow-up, so the memory of the meeting is still fresh for both parties

**Agenda**

2:00-2:15 pm Participant Registration and Initial Networking

2:15 pm Welcome, Introduce RBC representative

2:17 pm Opening Remarks (RBC representative)

2:20 pm – 2:50 Company Introductions (1 min each)

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2:50 – 3:00 pm **Break** – Coffee & Tea

3:00 – 4:25 pm Speed Interviews (with a 10-minute break halfway through)

4:30 – 5:30 pm Happy Hour Networking