

DUNCAN FISH

# ENGAGE



An Engaging Executive

**A practical guide to understanding, influencing and connecting with people**

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## Chapter 1



# WHY YOU NEED TO ENGAGE

*An Engaging Executive is not a title but a concept, a way of seeing the world, and a methodology for making the kind of impact that gets results.*

If you're reading this book, the chances are you have come to a turning point in your life or career. You have most likely decided that now is the time to invest in balancing your skills as a manager or leader. I wouldn't be surprised if your technical ability to do your job is exceptional and you are a highly intelligent man or woman. You may even be the subject matter expert in your field. Yet there has been something eluding you for a while. Something which, up until now, you may have put in the 'too hard' pile. That something is your ability to understand, influence and connect with people. If this is the case, this book is for you.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT**

Certain professions have evolved to be ultra-reliant on the quality of their acquired knowledge. People entering these professions have been conditioned from an early age to study hard and focus on their grades. Some have been so heavily conditioned that the attainment of

educational prowess became all important, but at a cost. You see, at some point in their careers these people realise that there is a certain kind of person who is making progress in the world: those who can blend technical skills with people skills. These are people who can capture both hearts and minds, and who know that getting ahead is more than just about being able to do the job.

These people are called *Engaging Executives*.

An *Engaging Executive* is not a title but a concept, a way of seeing the world, and a methodology for making the kind of impact that gets results. An *Engaging Executive* is someone who appreciates both tasks and people in equal measure. This could be anybody who is working in a professional capacity and who needs to get results through other people. *Engaging Executives* go by many job titles, such as Accountants, Actuaries, Engineers, Medical Practitioners, Lawyers, Public Servants, Military Officers, General Managers, Partners, Senior Managers and so on.

Why is engagement so important? Because essentially all human beings are social animals. We have evolved over 6 million years to rely on each other and to work as a team. It is hard wired into us, and much of our physiology and neurology is designed to understand human interaction. Yet in a world shifting its focus towards knowledge and technology, we are losing our ability to communicate and connect face to face.

At the very core of every human being is the need for connection, the need to feel understood and the need to feel valued. This book will help you to achieve the intersection of technical or task excellence and interpersonal excellence. This book is a pragmatic guide on how to influence people more effectively by understanding others better, being understood by others better, and by being engaging and interesting to others.

If you are already sold on the need to enhance your interpersonal skills and you are keen to get stuck in then feel free to skip ahead to the next chapter. However, if you are sitting on the fence then allow me to share with you some noteworthy reasons why this is so important.

## *THE TECHNICAL CEILING*

One of my professional services clients once wrote to me about a realisation he had regarding his career. He said, 'People like me have spent much of their education and early career in structured institutions working hard in accordance with rigid rules in order to achieve a promised outcome, much the way you might train an athlete. I've reached a point now where I realise following rules doesn't always lead to the promised outcome. Simply doing what you've been asked to do well isn't enough – in fact it can be counterproductive to advancement. Related to this, I've realised I need to develop the finer skills of personal persuasion and negotiation; that is, "street smarts". I need to learn how to ignore the traditional rules or at least bend them, a skill that other people acquired earlier in life. This means re-programming my approach.'

This is a powerful epiphany for many people who have come up through the technical professions. Many people with a purely task or technical bent tend to hit the 'Technical Ceiling'. They are brilliant at all technical or knowledge based parts of the job, but when it comes to the people side, they struggle.

Let's consider the typical journey I have seen so often. A person initially chooses a profession that lends itself to his logical, rational skills. He studies hard and achieves exceptional results at school and university. Then he gets his first job, which is normally a highly analytical role and one that allows him to flex his academic bent in a real-world setting. However, as the years go on, things start to change. As this person gets further into his career and higher up the corporate ladder, things start to shift. All of a sudden he finds himself in a role or at a level where he does not need to be the technical expert anymore. He needs to be the leader of people. This is the moment of culture shock, the moment when he realises that all the things he has ever practised and enjoyed are not the things that are going to get him success in the higher levels of the organisation. Now he has to deal with the feelings and emotions of others, with abstract concepts that don't have an answer, with other people's values, and with differing personalities. None of these things has he ever before focused on or placed much importance on. This is the Technical Ceiling.

## *THE TYPICAL CHALLENGES*

I have coached over 1000 executives who are brilliant technically but struggle with interpersonal skills. As a result they miss out on promotions, they miss out on developing those all-important connections, and they fail to get cut through when their technical knowhow alone isn't enough. And their peers with more polished interpersonal skills tend to get the promotions, they make the important contacts, and are invited to the 'off the record' conversations where the real decisions are made.

Having coached executives of various levels, professions and corporate structures, I have found some similar themes. So what are the common challenges that these technically or task-minded executives face? These include difficulty in:

- making a great first impression or having a presence in a room
- making small talk with new or less familiar people and being liked
- being part of the in-group where the real decisions are made
- influencing their boss, their peers and subordinates in non-technical matters
- feeling completely out of their depth when having tough conversations or having to manage conflict
- demonstrating empathy with emotional people who do not come across as 'logical'
- being perceived as socially awkward, uninteresting or boring to others when they have to network
- motivating and empowering those around them when they have to manage them.

## *THE FIVE REASONS TO INVEST IN YOUR INTERPERSONAL SKILLS*

Let's explore this issue from a number of angles, starting with the changing nature of the workplace.

## *1. The changing face of work*

As little as 30 years ago people were recruited solely for their technical ability. The more expertise you had in an area the better you were considered to be as an employee.

Technical knowledge continues to be highly valued, but at the same time you need to be able to wield these skills with tact and diplomacy. Having previously had 15 years' experience working in a company that specialises in the science of selection, I can tell you that the blue chip companies and leading government departments place a very heavy weighting on a candidate's ability to display team and leadership behaviours. The recruiting teams will turn over every stone to ensure that a candidate has the correct cultural fit. They have a fine array of tools and processes with which to investigate. This could be a personality questionnaire that is designed to assess your character and give telling information about how and how much you like to interact with people. It might be a behavioural-based interview in which you will be probed to give answers about tough interpersonal situations you've had to manage in the workplace. It could even be a 'day in the life' assessment centre where you are immersed in a virtual world that uses professional actors to test and provoke you to see how you respond. I have used all of these processes on aspiring Senior Managers, General Managers, Partners and C-Suite contenders.

There is one thing that shines through from almost every assessment I have ever completed: it is never the technical skills that lose people the job. Nine times out of ten it is their inability to demonstrate the softer skills of leadership.

If you are thinking to yourself, 'You would say that, being a Psychologist', then let me share how these decisions, of which I have been a part, are frequently made. Typically in large firms there will be a panel of Senior Executives or Partners who review each application. They will have a look to see if there is a business case to support you as a moneymaking or saving entity in your own right. Clearly, your technical ability serves you well here. Then they will look at the corporate values and behaviours that Senior Executives or Partners are supposed to exhibit. I have lost count of the times I have been in a room where an applicant had the right commercial or operational experience but

did not have the leadership and interpersonal skills. What's more, it was the senior corporate stakeholders who were the most adamant about these being at the appropriate level. All of these issues can also apply to promotions within the workplace.

This anecdotal evidence is supported by the work of Zenger and Folkman, two leadership experts who have conducted decades of empirical research. In an article in *Harvard Business Review* they discuss their research on the interaction between task and people skills. Only 14% of leaders who were strong in results but not people focus achieved extraordinary leadership performance, defined as 90% in overall leadership effectiveness. When they looked at it from the opposite angle, only 12% of people-focused leaders achieved extraordinary leadership performance. The magic happened when leaders were at 72nd percentile in both task and people focus. This led to an impressive 90th percentile score on extraordinary leadership.

The need for interpersonal excellence is not going to disappear. This is because of the changing demographics in the workplace.

## *2. Changing workplace demographics*

So if you are reading this book, the chances are you are between 35 and 50 years old. Most of my clients tend to sit within this age group. If you are sitting outside of this age range, don't let my discussions about generational differences deter you. Keep going.

According to the people who categorise us by the date we were born, that would make you a Generation X, like me. That is, you were born between 1963 and 1980. If you were born before that you would be classed as a Baby Boomer, and if you were born after you would be a Gen Y.

So what? Well, you have probably started to notice that there are now more people in your organisation that are younger than you than are older than you. While we cannot and should not generalise too much, we can notice that the younger generation have different ideas about how a workplace should be. In the old days – and I shall refrain from calling them 'good' – we could have expected a teenage or early twenties new employee who started asking about promotions and 'what's

my next job' to get a clip round the ear. However, these days that just won't cut it. Gen Y's have such a strong identity and collective culture that articles are being written about how to manage them every day. Research by Intelligence Group on Gen Y's has found that:

- 64% of them say it's a priority for them to make the world a better place
- 72% would like to be their own boss
- if they do have to work for a boss, 79% of them would want that boss to serve more as a coach or mentor
- 88% prefer a collaborative work culture rather than a competitive one
- 74% want flexible work schedules.

In another study conducted by Ashridge Business School in the UK it was found that over half (56%) of graduates expect to be in a management role within three years of starting work, while 13% of graduates expect a management role within a year. That's a significant change in workplace attitudes. In addition, graduates want their managers to respect and value them (43%); support them with career progression (36%); trust them to get on with things (35%); and communicate well with them (34%). Finally, 75% of managers believe they are fulfilling the role of coach/mentor, but just 26% of graduates agree.

Such statistics confirm the changing nature of workplaces, and why being technically proficient is no longer enough to get you ahead. You also need to be an *Engaging Executive* if you are to connect with the emerging workforce.

### 3. *The importance of connection*

We can see from the exploration of Gen Y's that there is need for connection, mentoring and relationship. However, it is not just Gen Y's who are in need of relationships. Time after time, studies of mental health and wellbeing come back to the importance of social interaction as a key driver of happiness. We all know the story of Scrooge and how he liked to sit on his own and count his money. Was he a fulfilled person though? I think not. So maybe you won't be visited by the ghosts

of Christmas in order for you to reconsider your ways, but perhaps an amazing longitudinal study will suffice.

Robert Waldinger is a Psychiatrist, Psychoanalyst and Zen Priest. In 2015 he delivered a fantastic TEDx lecture which, in my view, made a profound point about the importance of developing soft skills and connecting with others. He talked about a Harvard study which has been running for over 75 years and which he is currently the Director of. At the time of Robert's lecture there were approximately 700 people in the study, and it continues to grow. By just about any standard this is a meaningful sample for a longitudinal study and hence worthy of note. The purpose of the study was to answer the question, 'What leads to ongoing health and happiness?'

The lessons from tens of thousands of research pages were quite surprising if you contrast them with what Western society conditions us to believe will lead to happiness. None of the findings point to wealth or fame or working hard as sources of contentment. The clearest message is that good relationships keep us healthier and happier, period. Now, you are probably not falling off your chair with shock because you know this book is trying to make this very point. However, to summarise the findings of the study, there were three big lessons about relationships.

First, social connections are really good for us and loneliness kills us. People who are more socially connected to friends, family and the community are happier, healthier and live longer than those less connected. The study went on to explain that loneliness leads to less happiness, which leads to a decline in health.

The second big finding from the study was that it is not the *number* of friends you have or whether you are in a relationship, it is the *quality* of the relationships that matters. We can all be lonely in a crowd or in a bad relationship. High-conflict marriages end up being worse for your health and happiness than being alone. The study looked at what predicted the quality of life for subjects from middle age to being an octogenarian. When starting from age 50 it wasn't their cholesterol levels that predicted their quality of life, it was how satisfied they were in their relationships. Those most happy in their relationships at 50 were the healthiest.

The third big lesson learned was that good relationships are better for your brain too. For less connected people, brain function also declines sooner and they live shorter lives. Now think about that for a second. That thing you value the most, your ability to calculate and intellectualise ... diminished. It is a humbling thought.

Robert's final message was that you need to replace screen time with people time. This applies equally to the workplace. This is the goal of an *Engaging Executive*.

#### 4. *The impact on your career*

David Johnson of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities writes that 'the Center for Public Resources published "Basic Skills in the U.S. Workforce," a nationwide survey of businesses, labour unions, and educational institutions. The Center found that 90 percent of the respondents who had been fired from their jobs were fired for poor job attitudes, poor interpersonal relationships, and inappropriate behaviour. Being fired for lack of basic and technical skills was infrequent. Even in high-tech jobs, the ability to work effectively with other personnel is essential, as is the ability to communicate and work with people from other professions to solve interdisciplinary problems.'

When writing this book I interviewed many Senior Managers, Directors and Partners in some of the most prestigious global organisations in both the private and public sectors. I recall one such conversation with a Senior Partner named Bill where he described his turning point. It was a tough pill to swallow for Bill. He was a technically brilliant accountant working his way up in one of the top-tier professional services firms in the world. He always knew the solution to your problem before you even finished telling him about it, and he let you know this through his abrupt communication style. One day, Bill recalls, he was shown into an office by one of the Partners, who said, 'The way you come across is impatient and you just don't listen to others. This is why you are not getting put on the jobs you want.' This moment was so impactful, Bill can still recall the colour of the room and the table he was sitting at as if it were yesterday. He never knew that this was the way he came across to others – he thought he was just being efficient and solution focused. Despite finding this confronting, Bill took on

board the feedback and since that time he has fast tracked to Senior Partner. Bill argues that ‘in today’s professional services, technical skills are a given. You need to be able to create some level of excitement. You need to be able to draw people in through your actions.’ He went on to describe how the best Partners in his firm were those who could collaborate, be inclusive, demonstrate great listening and not show off their technical skills but be there to grow others.

### *5. The impact on your pocket*

How about a financial reason? In each and every type of occupation there is a range of salaries. Let’s look at the difference getting a promotion could make. I was interviewing the Human Resources Director (HRD) of one the world’s top commercial law firms. In the legal profession in Australia, at the time of writing a good Senior Lawyer earned about \$300,000 pa. By most people’s standard that is a pretty good income. However, do you know what the financial difference is at the next level up, being Partner? In year one a Partner could earn a salary of \$400,000 pa. After three years that Partner could be earning in excess of \$1,000,000 pa. Speaking to another HRD of a different law firm, the same message was confirmed. I was told that ‘there has been a paradigm shift in clients. Now they want to build a relationship, not just technical skills.’ She went on to say: ‘A lot of Lawyers can get away with technical skills alone until they hit 35. At that point they will hit a technical ceiling.’ The HRD said in conclusion, ‘I am worried about the issue. It is a huge problem.’

So, are you convinced yet? Whether you are a Lawyer, an Accountant, an Engineer, or any other technical profession, the message is the same.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hopefully this chapter has given you some solid reasons to be motivated to enhance your interpersonal skills. But who am I to tell you these skills can be developed? Well allow me to share with you my story – from social misfit to social coach.

## Chapter 4

# THE ENGAGE MODEL

*My absolute belief is that the greatest leaders are those who are technically brilliant and who have a mastery of connecting with people.*

When coaching people from highly technical and knowledge-based professions I often find that they really like to work with coaching models that have steps. This is where I find the rubber hits the road. So, in the spirit of 'the meaning of your communication is the response you get', I have created an overarching model which is very pragmatic. I call it the ENGAGE model, and it represents, broadly speaking, the order in which I coach executives how to become an *Engaging Executive*. This book is an eclectic collection of powerful tips, each related to a specific stage of the model. Some of the stages may already be a strength for you while others can be used to complement your existing strengths.

Let's have a look at an overview of each stage so I can give you a sense of what each is about.

### *E IS FOR EN-TRANCE*

The first step to being engaging is to make a noticeable entrance, but that alone does not make you engaging. It is, however, a vital first step.

In fact, so much rests on the first 30 seconds that this part alone can make or break an interaction with someone. Therefore, this stage of the model is going to cover everything you need to do when you first meet someone in order to ‘en-trance’ them.

Now here is the interesting part. This first stage does not even touch on what to say. ‘Huh?’ you may be thinking. That’s right, this stage is all about the elements of communication that happen before you even get into the content of your message; in other words, your expressions, your posture, your walk, how you use your voice, your gesticulations and, most importantly, your eyes.

*En-trance* is all about developing your presence.

## *N IS FOR NETWORK*

Once you have a clear understanding of how to hold yourself and how to make use of nature’s most powerful assets, we will move on to a practical application. This stage of the model is about how to network effectively. When I talk about networking, what I am really saying is ‘how to build connection’ with people. This may be in an actual networking event, it could be by the water cooler, it could be one to one with a peer, it could be standing on a train platform talking to a complete stranger. The purpose of this stage is to help you build relationships with just about anyone. This section will have some great tips on how to introduce yourself to strangers, how to master small talk, how to develop meaningful rapport and then how to disengage gracefully.

## *G IS FOR GUIDE*

Once you have learned how to connect with someone you can move to the next stage, which is to guide the conversation.

This stage is often what people want to get to first. The problem is, if you make a bad first impression or fail to develop rapport with someone, the chances of you influencing them without positional power is minimal. In this section you will learn how to marry your physiology with your voice and words to create maximum impact. You will

learn how to influence by asking questions. Yes, questions can be more powerful than statements. You will learn how to insert yourself into conversations dominated by others. You will learn how to use the language of influence artfully by controlling the level of abstraction or specificity used. You will also learn how to resolve conflict and get a win-win outcome.

## *A IS FOR ACKNOWLEDGE*

After you have mastered the art of influence we can start rounding you off with some skills that will make you more approachable and an all round better leader of people. This section is all about how to develop empathy, thereby acknowledging the needs of others. By this I mean really understanding people and what is important to them. If all you ever do is influence people for your own gain, your success will be short lived. You may not want to get 'touchy feely' all the time but being able to go there in appropriate moments is what makes you stand out as a people manager. This section is all about winning hearts and minds.

## *G IS FOR GLOW*

So by this stage you would have learned how to connect with people, influence them more successfully and understand them in a much more meaningful way. You may start getting invited to more networking events, business lunches or social events. How are you going to make sure that you are the person in the room that everyone remembers fondly? Well, this stage is all about lighting up the room and leaving a lasting impression. You will be able to tell engaging stories and use humour appropriately. This stage is about how to add the secret sauce to how you deliver content. It will also ensure you never run out of things to say in social settings.

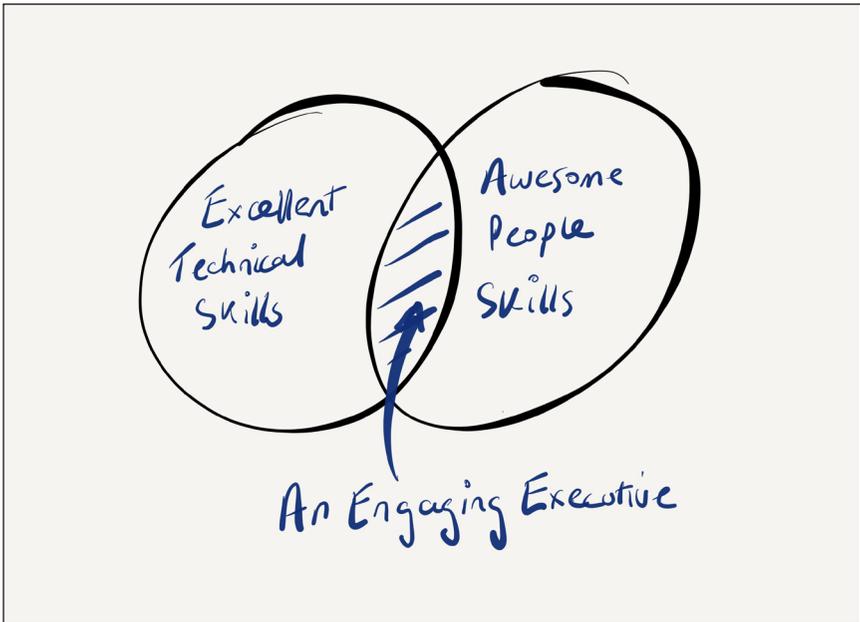
## *E IS FOR ENLIGHTEN*

Having worked on yourself for the majority of this book, in this section we will turn to how to help others flourish. For many technical or

task-focused people their pride and joy is the intellectual knowledge they have in their head. This, however, is the realm of the technical expert and not the *Engaging Executive*. The best people leaders are those who can inspire others to greater heights, who can shape and mould the talent around them in a way that is not teaching but coaching. So this section is dedicated to how you give feedback in a way that is constructive and positively received. Finally, we look at how to coach and mentor others to greatness.

\* \* \* \* \*

The ENGAGE model is all about how to become more interpersonally skilled. My absolute belief is that the greatest leaders are those who are technically brilliant and who have a mastery of connecting with people. My goal for this book is to help you raise your interpersonal skills up to the same level as your technical skills. My goal is for you to become an *Engaging Executive*.



If you would like to get a sense of how you stack up against the ENGAGE Model then take the free questionnaire on our website: [www.engagingexec.com.au](http://www.engagingexec.com.au).

### *HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS BOOK*

This book is best used interactively. It is more like a manual than a novel. Therefore, it is not a 'cover to cover' read. I would suggest you read one chapter at a time and then put the book down and practise the techniques. Some of these sections may be more relevant to your particular goals than others. While the model holds together as a process, you can also dip in and out of specific sections to get what you need immediately.

You'll notice throughout the book that I alternate between using male and female examples. This is to avoid the awkward use of 'he or she' and 'him or her'. Of course, with the exception of just one technique, everything in this book can be applied equally to males and females.

## Chapter 5

# THE EYES HAVE IT

*There is a special connection when you  
look someone directly in the eye.*

It has been appreciated for thousands of years that the eyes are very telling. You have probably heard the expression that 'the eyes are the window to the soul'. According to Dr Paul Ekman, a renowned body language expert, the human face is capable of 10,000 micro expressions. However, ask yourself, which part of the face do you tend to notice first? For most people, when they are talking to someone they tend to look that person in the eye. It would be pretty odd to talk to someone's nose or ear.

There is a connection that is made when you look someone directly in the eye. You can tell so much from looking people in the eye, and that means they can tell just as much when they look at you. So this chapter is dedicated to the power of eye contact. It is right at the beginning of the ENGAGE model as I believe this is a make-or-break communication skill you need to get right in the first five seconds of an interaction.

### *THE POWER OF EYE CONTACT*

There is a joke I have heard about eye contact that has been told to me by people in a number of different professions. Funnily enough, I seem

to hear a different profession mentioned depending on the one I am working with at the time, so I will pick one at random for the purposes of the joke, but feel free to insert your own profession if you think it fits. So after that massive build up, the joke goes, ‘How can you tell if you are dealing with an extroverted Accountant? He looks at *your* shoes as he talks to you.’ Boom, boom.

Okay, it’s a terrible joke, but it has a very serious message. For some professions, and typically the ones that attract the more introverted and technically minded people, eye contact can be a massive issue. Many introverted people feel uncomfortable holding someone else’s gaze. As a consequence, they are not picking up on the other person’s non-verbal communications, and equally they are communicating a lack of confidence or a social awkwardness.

Have you ever met someone who just seemed to hold your gaze? I don’t mean in a leery or manic way but in a way that made you feel you had her undivided attention. As she spoke or listened, you could just feel her presence. There was a weight behind her eye contact that projected certainty and strength. This is most certainly part of the armoury you need to make a powerful impression.

## *PORTRAYING CONFIDENCE*

I once attended a course on presence where we had to do eye gazing exercises; that is, you stood opposite another person and you stared at the person’s left eye. We would do this for up to five minutes without speaking. Why the left eye? Research suggests that about 80% of people have a dominant right eye. This means that when you look at someone, most people will look from their right eye to a person’s left eye, if directly in front of them. We might think we are looking at both eyes but in reality we can only ever look at one. Research has also found that the left side of the face displays slightly more emotion than the right due to lateralisation of brain function. So for most of us, our brains are conditioned to focus more on the left side of the face.

If you want to find out which eye is dominant for you, look at an object in the distance, and point to it with your finger so that your

finger is on the same spot. Close one eye at a time, and whichever eye is lined up with the finger is your dominant eye.

By having a focus on just one eye you are able to have a single point of attention. If you swap between both eyes as you look at someone it breaks the connection momentarily and it looks less solid.

It is actually very challenging to stare at someone in the eye and not laugh or smile or talk. However, what starts to happen is a connection and a calmness develop, where you just look into the person and you start to feel them. I don't mean with your hands but with your connection. This is actually a very powerful exercise to try if you want to increase intimacy and connection with someone. Numerous studies have shown that people who make higher levels of eye contact with others are perceived as being:

- more dominant and powerful
- more warm and personable
- more attractive and likeable
- more qualified, skilled, competent and valuable
- more trustworthy, honest and sincere
- more confident and emotionally stable.

For our purposes though, I am not going to ask you to start staring into the eyes of other people for five minutes without speaking. You might come across as a bit weird.

So how do we use this in a business and social context?

Think for a second about an actor or actress who has presence. Ensure it is a person who projects confidence and authority; for example, Cate Blanchett, George Clooney, Christoph Waltz or Helen Mirren. Find a clip of this person on YouTube and observe how he or she holds someone's gaze.

Yes, it is quite normal for your eyes to move around as you speak (more on that later), but I want you to focus on keeping your gaze on the left eye of whoever you are talking to. Two things will happen

when you do this. First, you will notice so much more about what the other person is saying and how they are reacting to you. Secondly, you will inspire within the other person a sense of confidence and certainty in what you say.

There is more to this, which again we will come back to, but if your eye contact is weak and you cannot hold someone's gaze it is a massive clue to that person that you are not confident.

### *USING YOUR EYES LIKE A SPOTLIGHT*

You can use your eyes in many ways when communicating with others. We have focused on using your eyes to demonstrate strength and confidence, but what if you do not want to be the person who is the focus of attention? Sometimes you need to give the floor to someone else and step out of the limelight. This is particularly important if you are trying to build respect for or raise the profile of someone else in the room.

Let me give you an example. As I have moved through my career and have become one of the more seasoned veterans in my area, I frequently work with more junior colleagues. As I normally open the client sessions, and as many of my clients are more my age than the age of my more junior colleagues, it is not unusual for my clients to mostly speak to me. I really want my colleagues to be valued by our clients, yet sometimes my junior colleagues will ask a brilliant question to the group but the clients will still address their answers to me.

Rather than be rude and ask the client to address my colleague and not me, I use my eyes. So as the client looks at me and starts to speak, I look at them and then deliberately and purposefully turn my eyes and head to my colleague. I hold it there for five seconds, and then I look back to see if the client has followed my direction. Sometimes it will take two or three attempts until the direction is followed.

Think of it like a mirror that is deflecting the sun from one direction to another. Your eyes can be a very powerful tool for diverting attention away from you when you do not want it.

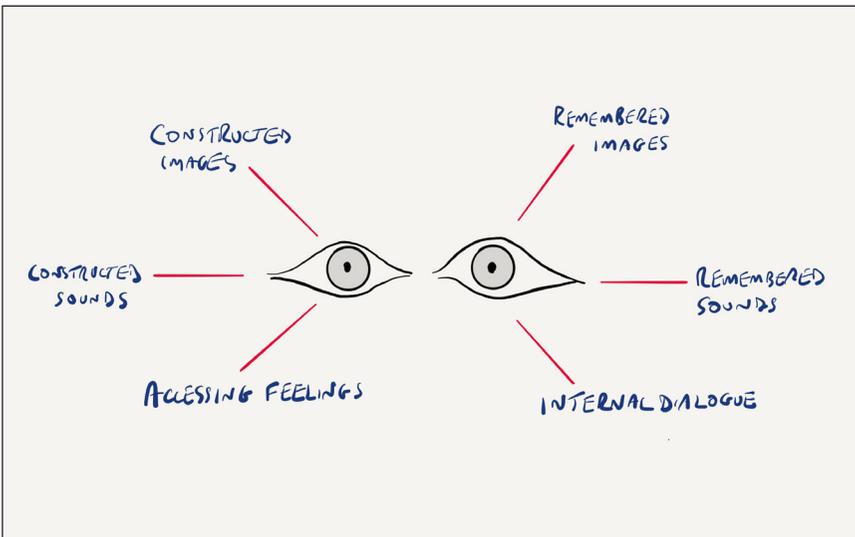
## THE EYES DON'T LIE

I mentioned earlier that people tend to move their eyes around as they talk. Have you ever noticed this? If not, next time you are talking to someone I want you to watch what their eyes do. You will notice that they look up, down or sideways. According to Bandler and Grinder, the founders of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), eye patterns are telling of how someone is processing information at that given moment.

Think about this for a minute. I want you to visualise a cartoon character that is having a bright idea. Imagine what the eyes of the character are doing. What direction are they looking? As you picture this, look away from this book and just imagine it for five seconds. Really, do this exercise ... as a little experiment.

Did you notice your eyes looking upwards? I bet you did. Interesting, eh? What Bandler and Grinder discovered was that each direction has a meaning: each time you look in a particular direction it means you are processing a particular type of information.

Let's look at the diagram below.



It is most important that you use this chart as if you are looking at someone else. In other words, this is not a diagram for yourself, looking out of your own eyes. As I go through the rest of this explanation it is most important you remember I am describing it as you look at someone else. To see how it looks on yourself, do the exercises by using your phone to take a photo or video.

This eye pattern chart holds true if the person you are looking at is 'normally organised'. In other words, this is the most common way that someone is wired. People can also be 'reverse organised', in which case everything on the horizontal axis swaps sides. The up and down order stays the same though.

If someone is looking upwards they are normally imagining some kind of image. According to the eye chart, if someone you are looking at looks up and to the right they are recalling a picture of something they have seen before. So, for example, if you were to ask someone what the colour of her room was when she was a child, you may find her eyes going up to the right.

I was once speaking to a friend who is a brilliant financial guru. I was asking him about the best types of investments. As I asked him a question, he paused, looked up to the right (as I looked at him), and then gave me an answer. I then asked him, 'Did you just imagine a picture of something?' He responded, 'Yes'. So I asked him, 'Was it a graph?' He looked at me astounded, and said, 'How did you know?' Easy. It was written all over his face. Now, I couldn't *really* tell what he was thinking about, but the fact that he was recalling something visual made my educated guess pay off. How did I know he was not thinking of numbers? We will get to that shortly.

So what if someone looks up to the left as you look at them? This means that they are constructing a visual image in their mind. So let's have a go at this. I want you to pull your phone out, switch on the video and record yourself. Then imagine what an elephant would look like wearing a pink tutu and standing on a beach ball. Stop and do this now.

Did your eyes go up and to the left (if you were recording yourself)? Unfortunately, this eye pattern has been misinterpreted by some people

as a lie detector test. There is a rather amusing scene in the movie *The Negotiator*, where Samuel L. Jackson plays a tough cop who is trying to get a confession out of a suspect. He asks the man to tell him exactly what happened. The man looks up and to the left, and Jackson shouts, 'You're lying. The eyes don't lie!' Okay, so could it mean that someone is lying? It is possible. However, what we can really only tell is that someone is constructing a visual image.

What about if someone looks horizontally to their right, as you look at them? This means that they are remembering a sound. It could be a piece of music, a voice or a conversation. Put the book down after you read this next task and have a go. I want you to recall the sound of your pet when you were young. If you had a goldfish then choose another sound from your childhood.

Okay, do this now.

Did you notice your eyes move to the side? If you were looking at someone it would have been their right.

What about if the eyes go to the left as you look at someone? I often notice this eye pattern when I ask a client to imagine a conversation they are going to have. When I ask, 'What exactly would the other person say?', if the eyes go horizontal and to the left as you look at them then they are constructing a sound or a conversation. This would be an external sound and not their own internal dialogue. If I asked you now to imagine what your boss or partner would sound like if they spoke like a pirate, you will probably find your eyes going horizontally to your left, if you were recording yourself.

Stop and do this now.

So then, what about when someone looks downward? This one is slightly more complex as it really does depend on which side the person looks towards. If, as you look at someone, they look down and to the left, they are accessing their feelings. Think about this for a moment. Imagine a scene in a movie where someone is feeling really sad. Where do they look? Always down. This is not to say that a person looking down and to the left is necessarily sad. It is likely to mean that they are feeling some kind of emotion or remembering an emotional

event. Think of a time in which you felt some kind of low energy: mild disappointment, for example. Avoid anything too negative as we only want to test the theory. Try this now.

Did your eyes go down and to your left, if you were recording yourself?

So what about down and to the right, as you look at someone? This normally means that someone is having some kind of internal dialogue or processing something analytical. So if you were to ask someone else to calculate a sum in their head, you would most likely see them looking down and to the right. Try this now; say your 7 times table and observe if your eyes want to go down and to your right, as you recorded yourself. If you remember back, this is how I knew my financial guru wasn't thinking of numbers at the time I asked him as his eyes looked up.

### *TAPPING INTO HOW OTHERS ARE THINKING*

Paying attention to the eyes is a very powerful way of understanding how someone is thinking. Of course, it changes moment to moment and we all look in different directions as we speak, if only for a second. This can be used to tap into how a person is thinking in the moment and therefore help you to adjust your message to that person. From this point on, start observing people as they speak and notice how their eyes move.

Let's get started with some practical exercises.

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

### EXERCISE ONE: FOCUS ON THE LEFT EYE

- Practise focusing on just the left eye of everyone you speak to. If you find your eyes drifting, bring them back to the other person's left eye.

### EXERCISE TWO: REDIRECTING EYE CONTACT

- Practise redirecting the eye contact you are getting onto someone else next time you are in a meeting. See if you can get the other person to shift their gaze from you to another person.

### EXERCISE THREE: OBSERVE PEOPLE'S EYE PATTERNS

- Observe people's eye patterns as they talk. Ask them to imagine an image of something and see if their eyes go up. Ask them to imagine a sound and see if they go sideways. Ask them to imagine how they felt about something and see if they go down.

## Chapter 9

# BREAKING THE ICE

*If you cannot bring yourself to speak to new people then you will only ever be able to influence those you already know or who introduce themselves to you.*

One of the most common nightmare scenarios for my clients is to find themselves in a room where they know absolutely no-one. This could be at a networking event, a social gathering, a formal dinner or even a corporate training event, to list just a few. This is actually a very common fear, and one that used to plague me too. So this chapter is dedicated to 'breaking the ice', getting yourself motivated and on the move towards meeting new people. We'll examine the psychological and practical aspects of getting through the first and most difficult part: first contact. Then we will look at what to do once you get there.

As the old Chinese proverb says, 'a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step'. Never has a saying been so apt to meeting new people.

### ***YOU ARE NOT ALONE***

Let me be clear: *it's not just you*. This is a problem that almost everyone experiences at some time. However, some people are really great at 'faking it'.

There are actually some people who do genuinely enjoy meeting new people. I once dated a very extroverted woman in London; she absolutely adored going to her hip and trendy friends' parties. To her it was heaven. For me, it was a living hell. I always found this a little strange, as when I was at work I would regularly give presentations and run events in front of strangers. Yet, for some reason, when you put me in a room full of people I didn't know and I didn't have a role to perform, I felt naked. On the days of these parties I would start feeling uneasy. I would try to talk my girlfriend out of going, or make 'deals' about how long we would stay so I could control the level of agony I was anticipating.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? If so, you and I are soulmates. And the events were often as bad as I was expecting. My girlfriend normally knew more people at the events than I did. I used to trail behind her and wait for her to introduce me. Then I would fumble my way through a really awkward conversation before the person I was speaking to moved on. I just wanted the floor to open up and swallow me.

I recall a birthday party in Central London. There was a young man there who still sticks out in my mind. I was standing with my girlfriend who was having one of those 'why do you have to be so anti-social' conversations with me when this guy floated over and introduced himself. He didn't know either of us, yet he seemed so comfortable in his own skin. He actually seemed to be enjoying meeting new people. I remember him like it was yesterday, yet that incident was over a decade ago. I thought to myself, 'I wish I could work a room like him'.

So, why couldn't I?

## *THE FEAR OF REJECTION*

It all boils down to the fear of feeling rejected. That's right. At our core we have a little kid who doesn't want to be rejected. So how do you manage this fear?

## *Managing the fear*

There is no tougher place to learn this than in the world of dating. You have to get used to one thing very quickly: rejection.

While coaching hundreds of men and women on how to start a conversation, I have seen a common pattern. Before someone approaches someone else, he is concerned about everything that can go wrong. This person dramatises in his head all the possible terrible outcomes. But believe me: what you imagine is *always* worse than what actually happens. As each person starts to approach other people more they soon realise they won't get screamed at, slapped in the face or laughed at. In fact, they start to become habituated to the feeling of what is called Approach Anxiety. I find that men and women both suffer equally from Approach Anxiety in a business context.

That doesn't mean that everyone will always want to talk to you. Sometimes it will not be the right moment. So what? There are a few million more people you can find to speak to.

## *The barrier*

However, before I was a Dating Coach I was a student on the course. Now, if you remember how concerned I was about chatting to random strangers at a party, you can only imagine how terrified I was about walking up to random women and trying to be interesting. I knew there was a pain barrier I had to pass through. It was the 'Fear of Rejection Barrier'. To do this, for three nights a week, for three months, I had to face my fears and approach women until the act of starting a conversation became the norm.

Not only did it become the norm: it became fun.

At this point you might be thinking, 'Oh, this is interesting, but I have no intention of walking around a nightclub for three months to get over my fear of talking to strangers'. No problem. The great news is, you don't have to. Everything I am talking about can be practised every day, at work and in your social life. It just requires you to do something you don't normally do: talk to strangers. Now, I appreciate

your mum told you not to talk to strangers when you were younger, but you are a grown up now. It is in your best interests.

The homework I give my clients after the first few sessions is always the same: go and talk to strangers. For you, it is going to be no different. At the end of this chapter I will suggest tasks for you. These will more than likely require you to go way outside your comfort zone. However, this is the first step to becoming engaging and influential. If you cannot bring yourself to speak to new people then you will only ever be able to influence those you already know or who introduce themselves to you. If you follow that logic, those people who are already more social than you are likely to be introducing themselves to many other new people and therefore will be able to influence many more people than you can. So it's time to toughen up and get out there.

## *GETTING INTO A SOCIAL MINDSET*

Before I let you loose on the world, I will share with you some techniques for breaking the ice.

### *The inner game of approaching*

Many of the tips in this segment were inspired by my learning from Damien on the dating course. Please remember though, I am not teaching you how to meet a romantic partner. I am teaching you the fundamentals of meeting strangers, male or female. But the skills are universal and can be used socially or for business.

The first thing you have to do before being social is get into a 'social mood'. This is your 'inner game'. This is when you get yourself into the mindset of being social by thinking and behaving in a social way, before going out to a social event. Instead of sitting there feeling the dread creeping up from your feet to your head, you can do the exact opposite and start 'getting in the mood'. Some great techniques to help you do this are:

- uplifting personal soundtrack
- creating a happy button

- chatting on the way
- giving yourself a role or a goal.

We'll look at each of these below.

### *The uplifting personal soundtrack*

Have you ever noticed how music can be like a time machine? A song can take you right back to the past in a heartbeat. Some songs can put a grin on your face as you think back to a time in your life that was sheer magic. Other songs can take you to a sad place and remind you of things you don't wish to remember.

Do you have certain songs that inspire you with different moods? Some that make you feel really happy? Some that make you feel pumped up? Some that make you feel confident? I do, and I'm sure you do too. For example, when I played a lot of tennis I would listen to ... wait for it ... the *Star Wars* theme to get me psyched up. I know, right. But it really helped me get into a positive state and made me feel confident before a match.

What songs get you fired up and feeling social and upbeat? My suggestion would be to create a playlist on your phone and fill it full of those handpicked songs that make you feel motivated and uplifted. Once you have this list on your phone, play it before you have that 'dreaded' social event and get into a great social mood.

### *Creating a happy button*

This is a tool taken from NLP. Technically it is known as resource anchoring and it is a manufactured association between a stimulus and response. In the music playlist above you were asked to find songs that made you feel social and uplifted. These are naturally occurring resource anchors. You didn't need to sit down at the time you heard the song and say, 'Right, I'm going to feel great whenever I hear this song'. It just kinda happened. But in resource anchoring you *do* consciously decide to link a stimulus to the response you desire.

Lots of professional sportspeople have resource anchors that they use at big moments. Tiger Woods always wears a red shirt on the big days of a tournament. Rafa Nadal does a fist pump to get himself going.

These are simple examples of resource anchors. I went to an Anthony Robbins seminar a few years back, and for four days and nights Tony (as he likes to be called) got us to dance around, chant, challenge our own limiting beliefs, and generally keep the energy up over some very intense sessions. Periodically, after getting the audience in a peak state, he would tell us to ‘make our move’. This was a physical, whole-body movement of our own choice, which Tony asked us to create on day one. (Mine, for example, was a fist pump diagonally down across my body, requiring a twist and slight crouching movement.)

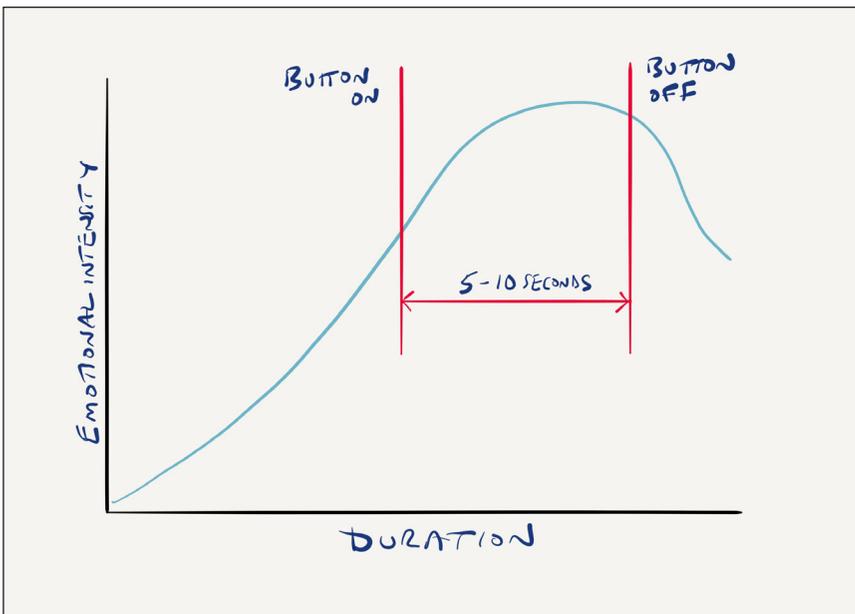
The ‘move’ itself was not important. It was what Tony did with it that was clever. Once the audience was feeling pumped up and the energy in the room was palpable, Tony would shout, ‘Make your move!’ On his command, we would all do our unique move, and he would make us do this three times in a row. We did this multiple times a day, every day. What Tony was actually doing was creating a powerful resource anchor that was being ‘stacked’ every time we repeated the process.

After the four days, whenever I made my ‘move’ I felt unstoppable. This resource anchor lasted for months after the seminar, and each time I needed a ‘pick me up’ I would ‘make my move’. It only faded as I went through a bit of a purple patch in my life and forgot to use it. Resource anchors need constant reinforcement to remain strong.

Does that mean you must spend four days dancing around and being screamed at by a seven-foot-tall American? No, of course not. There is a much simpler way of creating resource anchors, or as I like to call them, ‘happy buttons’:

- 1 **Decide on the emotional state you want to feel** – pick an emotional state or feeling that you would like to feel when socialising; for example, confident, sociable, talkative, curious.
- 2 **Decide on a physical button that will act as your trigger** – for example, pinching your ear, pressing the side of your temple, squeezing a finger. It can be anything you like, as long as it is something that you do not normally do. For example, if you normally pinch your ears then don’t pick that as it will not be unique. Your trigger needs to be distinctive, accurate (you are only touching this specific place), and sensitive (you need to be able to physically feel it).

- 3 **Remember a specific time that you felt the desired emotional state intensely** – this is a key step. Find a time in your life that you can remember vividly the same desired behaviour. For example, there may have been a time at a party when your conversational skills were on fire. Or a moment at work when you were giving the speech of a lifetime and had the crowd in your hand. It needs to be a memory so full and rich that you can take yourself back to that place and time in your head and feel what you felt, see what you saw, and hear what you heard.
- 4 **Associate the button (trigger) to the memory** – once you have this great memory of the desired emotion you want to capture, bring it back as fully as you can. Notice how you start to feel the same emotion that was present in your body. As you sense the feeling is about to peak, but before it has actually peaked, press your button from step 2. Hold this down for as long as it takes to ride the emotional memory to the top of the curve. As soon as you feel it start to reduce in intensity, let go of the trigger (see the diagram below). Generally speaking, the pressing of the button tends to last 5 to 10 seconds.



- 5 **Repeat the above step to strengthen the button** – if you have multiple memories for an emotion you wish to associate with the button then you can use these too. To do this, as soon as step 4 is finished, start immediately again with the new memory and repeat the whole of step 4. Do this for as many memories as you can that get you into that state. If you can come up with five separate memories then this will give you a lot of juice.
- 6 **Test the button** – once you have set it up, you need to test it. Make sure you have a short break between steps 5 and 6, and distract yourself with other thoughts during this time. Once you have done this, settle again, press the button, and observe the positive emotion coming back. As you touch the button the emotion should be instantaneous. For most people you will be surprised at how great you suddenly feel. (If the feeling is not very strong then you may need to come up with some more potent examples in step 3 and repeat the process.) You have now created a ‘happy button’ you can use whenever you need to get into a social mood.
- 7 **Reinforce the button** – this process works best the more times you rehearse it. As I have no doubt you would have heard before: ‘use it or lose it’.

### *Power poses*

I am a firm believer in the power of resource anchors to change your emotional state. While I would strongly recommend putting a ‘happy button’ in place, perhaps you need something more immediate and easier to pull off, while you wait for the event to start. This is where power poses come in. No, I’m not talking about standing like a body builder, but there is something inbuilt in your physiology that can help you. I am a huge fan of TED Talks. If you have not already done so, look up the talk by Associate Professor Amy Cuddy of Harvard Business School called ‘Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are’. In this 20 minutes of excellence she describes how scientific research has proven that adopting a number of power poses can temporarily increase your testosterone and decrease your cortisol, giving you a confidence boost.

While the video describes about five different poses, the easiest to pull off in public is to stand with your hands on your hips. It is as simple as that. Stand up straight, bend your elbows, put your hands on your hips and stick your elbows out sideways. The net effect is your body becomes larger and your brain is fooled into feeling more dominant. Amy's recommended dose is two minutes in this pose before you need the confidence boost.

### *Chatting on the way*

This next step will be a walk in the park. And it could be ... literally.

Let's say you have to go to a networking event. For whatever reason, you didn't have a chance to use the above techniques before you left but you still need to get into a social mood. On your way to the event you will have to pass numerous other people, so you can use this opportunity. The next best thing to the first two techniques is to have random chats with random people. It may be people you pass in the office; stop and shoot the breeze with them for five minutes. It might be the taxi driver; they always like a chat. It might be someone you stand next to at the train station. It could even be the receptionist at the venue you are going to. Who it is doesn't matter – what is important is the act of being social. Once you start chatting you will find you begin to get into a social mood.

### *Give yourself a role or a goal*

One of the toughest parts of social events is that they can take away your comfort zone. For some, wearing business attire is like wearing a suit of armour. It protects us by giving us our workplace identity. Once in it, you put on your, 'I'm an Accountant / Engineer / Lawyer / Whatever' persona. The problem is, when you go to social events you often have to talk about things that sit outside this role, and suddenly you can feel exposed. It's as if you suddenly have to find your identity again.

One trick I have found really helps is to set yourself a role. For example, you could imagine that your role for the event is to help the other uncomfortable people feel more comfortable. You will always find someone standing alone or someone looking a little lost. Be that

person who takes the initiative and goes over and starts a conversation. In this way, you become someone who is doing a public service. This becomes your role.

You can also set yourself a goal. Back in the day, when I was an employee, the company I was working for was acquired by another company. We had our first joint event together in a private function room. If you had been a fly on the wall you would have thought it was hilarious. As soon as a new person walked into the room, they looked around and immediately went over to the people they already knew. Before long we had a scene reminiscent of a school disco, but instead of boys on one side and girls on another, it was the two companies. So in that moment I set myself a goal to meet as many people as I could from the new company. I simply strolled over to the other side of the room and started speaking to the first friendly face I met. From that point on I started to work my way around the room, and before long the two sides started to chat.

## *PRACTICAL TIPS ON HOW TO BREAK THE ICE*

Let's discuss some really hands-on ways of breaking the ice. It does work better if you have already gotten into a social mood by completing the processes above before trying the techniques below. I am going to focus on the context of a networking or business social function, but these methods can be applied in just about any circumstance. (These tips are really only covering the first 30 seconds of an interaction. The deeper conversational tips come in the following chapter, 'The overlooked art of small talk'.)

### *Arrive early*

Have you ever rocked up late to a social function or networking event? What did you notice? That's right: everyone is already talking to each other. This makes your job more daunting, and it also means you will have to interject into other people's conversations. This is not impossible of course, but it is more of a challenge.

Now imagine you arrive early. You might be among the first two or three people. How much easier is it to talk to two or three people who

are all there early and probably looking to get a foot in the door before anyone else? As Australian's like to say, 'Too easy'. As more and more people arrive you will already be in the 'in-group', and the law of social proof will make you look like someone worth talking to.

### *The lost and the lonely*

At any networking event there are going to be other people who are socially uncomfortable. This is a blessing in disguise. These are the sort of people who are desperately hoping someone will save them from being a 'Billy No Mates'. (Clearly they haven't read this book!) That hero could be you.

These people are usually easy to spot. They take a lot of time getting a beverage or looking at the catering. They will be looking at their phone in a quiet corner of the room. They may even be looking around as if to scout out the event. This is your moment to take the conversation to them. You can wander over and use a 'situational opener' by looking at the environment you are in and making a comment or asking a question. For example, if you are standing by the catering, you could ask, 'Have you tried any of the food yet? Do you have any recommendations?' Or if they already have food on their plate, 'That food looks great ... where did you get it?' At this point you will probably get their attention and they will most probably answer your question directly. Whatever you do, don't rush off to grab a sandwich at that point. You have just done the hardest part: opening the conversation. Instead, say something like, 'Thanks, I will go and grab some. Hello, by the way ... My name is ...' Remember, the purpose of the question is to get an introduction.

### *Coffee queue question*

An extension of the above tactic works very well in the coffee queue of a networking event. This is especially easy to do in networking settings that happen in the morning. In Australia, and I am sure where you live, people absolutely adore their coffee in the morning. We will form a massive queue in order to wait for the barista-made coffee rather than the brown water from the flasks. This means you have a few

all-important minutes with someone directly in front and behind you. This is a great chance to introduce yourself by making use of the fact you are already there.

### *Who's who in the zoo*

Depending on the types of events you go to, there may be some high-profile people there or some other types of people you would like to connect with for business purposes. However, if you don't know who they are you are going to have to find out. This is another great excuse to use when starting a conversation with a stranger. You can pick the first person you see or a small group of people and use the following excuse to start a conversation: 'Excuse me, do you happen to know who is running this event? I've just arrived and I am looking for the organiser.' At that point you will either get a 'yes' or 'no' answer. You may even get a pointer in the right direction. Remember, this was not the point of the question in the first place – you just wanted an excuse to start a conversation. So once you get the answer, go straight into your introduction and build on that by saying, 'So, how did you hear about this event?'

### *Something caught my eye*

There may be a time when you notice something about someone that really catches your attention. For example, someone may be wearing a really stunning coat, be carrying a great looking bag or briefcase, or the latest phone or tablet. In fact, any item is a great excuse for you to give that person a compliment or show interest in the item. For example, 'Excuse me. Is that the latest iPad? It looks amazing. What is it like to use?' Most people who have the latest technology love nothing more than explaining it to other enthusiasts. Once you have found out a bit about the item, introduce yourself. For example, 'Thanks for showing me that. By the way, my name is ...'

### *You caught my eye*

You need to remember back to part II of this book, *En-trance*. Keep a half-cocked smile on and be ready to launch as you walk around the

room looking for your next conversation. It really helps if you also use smiling eyes, as mentioned in chapter 6, 'Making everybody your friend'. A half smile and some solid eye contact can be all you need to catch someone else's attention. As you move around the room, smile with an expression like you have just been released from prison after several years and the world is an exciting place to be. This relaxed and positive expression caught by a passer-by is often enough to get a smile coming back at you. Once this happens, seize the moment and ask, 'Hi, how are you? How are you enjoying the event?'

### *Two is company, three is a networking opportunity*

In my experience of networking events I often find there is a magic number when it comes to introducing yourself. We have already talked about how to approach the lost and the lonely. The other magic number is three. Frequently, if two people are speaking they are intensely focused on each other. There may be a good reason why the two of them have broken away from a group. As a simple rule of thumb, two is company so leave them alone. Three, however, is the sweet spot. This number of people is less likely to be having a deep and meaningful and they are already having to spread their eye contact around the group. So adding another person to this gathering is a lot less intrusive. Typically, as people are talking in a group of three there will be one side of the triangle that is more open. In other words, you need to consider where to stand as you approach them. Go for the side of the triangle that has the biggest gap. Once you have identified the gap, move towards it but stop one step away from the gap. Address the group with your eyes, and have your smile half-cocked and ready to go. As the group turns to look at you, go into your introduction by asking, 'Do you mind if I join you?'

### *Name, same and fame*

In the lead up to writing this book I attended a fantastic business acceleration programme called Key Person of Influence (KPI). It was a game-changing experience. One of the first tips we were given was around how to do a social pitch about who you are. The KPI course

have a great system that they call ‘Name, Same and Fame’, which works like this:

- ‘Name’ is your first and second name. For example, ‘Hi, I’m Duncan Fish’.
- ‘Same’ is the generic job title you do which people can relate to. For example, ‘I’m an Executive Coach ...’
- ‘Fame’ is what differentiates you or what you are known for (famous for) in your field. For example, ‘... and I’m known for helping to bring out the people person within’.

The great thing about this form of introduction is that it helps people immediately have something to hook into. I often get, ‘Wow, that sounds interesting. So how does that work?’

Most people just say their name, or at best their name and job title: ‘Hi, I’m Dave and I’m an Accountant’. Unfortunately, when faced with this type of introduction most people are not socially curious enough to dig deeper. By adding the ‘fame’ element you will often find that people do want to know more and it kick starts the conversation.

So, let’s have a look at some exercises that can help your master the first 30 seconds of meeting someone.

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

### EXERCISE ONE: CREATE YOUR OWN UPLIFTING PERSONAL SOUNDTRACK

- Dig through your music collection or trawl the internet and find three to five songs that really get you in a social mood.
- Save them as a playlist on your phone and listen to them before going into any social setting.

### EXERCISE TWO: SET UP A HAPPY BUTTON

- Follow the six steps to create a happy button, listed in this chapter. Consider some social moods or states you would like to be in and create buttons for them. You can stack them – that is, create them – on the same physical spot (button).
- Keep rehearsing these – as in step 7 on page 88 – twice a day for a week until the button becomes instantaneous and powerful.

### EXERCISE THREE: CHATTING TO STRANGERS

- On your way to or from work, or during your break, go and find yourself a complete stranger and start chatting to them. Nothing deep and meaningful, just shoot the breeze or ask how their day is going so far.
- Talk to three new people every day. Do this at least five days a week so that the act of talking to strangers becomes easy. This could be people in the office you have never spoken to before or people you meet out on the street. The goal is to talk to three people you have never met before. Remember to smile with your eyes to project playfulness.

#### EXERCISE FOUR: GIVE YOURSELF A GOAL OR A ROLE

- Next time you go to a social event, be it a networking event or other social gathering, give yourself the role of 'Saviour of the Lost and Lonely'. Walk around the event and find people who are on their own or looking a little socially awkward and introduce yourself.
- Set yourself a goal of meeting a minimum of five new people at the event. These only count if you make the introduction yourself, not if you just stand there like a plum and other people introduce people to you.