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Foreword

Networking Know-how is a valuable resource for anyone in business who wants to develop better ways to connect with people in their local business community and I am pleased to lend my support to author Karen Hands in her publishing venture. Although she draws on her experiences of networking in the Ribble Valley and Pennine Lancashire, this book is clearly relevant to the small business community in any setting.

As a multiple high-street retailer myself, I am only too aware that business still revolves around people, and networking provides a powerful opportunity for each of us to showcase our wares as providers of products and services of which we can rightly be proud. We all share a common goal of improving lives and boosting trade.

Whether we sell directly to consumers or trade within the business community, networking provides invaluable support and advice as well as all-important business leads. Who you meet can change what you do and how you do it. The challenge of turning your ideas, your skills and your abilities into a profitable commercial venture should ultimately be financially rewarding but the personal fulfilment you can gain from taking someone through from a chance meeting when out networking to becoming a loyal customer is priceless.

Councillor Kevin Horkin

Clitheroe Town Mayor

Spex Opticians, Ken Varey's Outdoor World, Lady Clitheroe.

1. About this book and how you might use it

Why should I write about networking? I've been delivering speaker training for the last few years and many of the people who have sought my help have included networking as one of their biggest sources of anxiety. They don't know how to introduce themselves or they don't know how to put together a short presentation or they just want help to overcome nerves from the whole experience of walking into a room full of strangers.



Fig 1: Networking Know-how seminars were the genesis of this book.

Photo - Stu Rutter.

However, I'd like to think that you'll get a lot more from this book than just a few ideas about how to introduce yourself - although you will find this kind of practical advice too. I'd like to think that it will help you get into the right mindset, so that you can go out and network and do what you need to do, confident that you can make a good impression whatever the situation.

I will introduce you to my model for successful networking, which splits the problem into two parts: what to do at the next event; and how to make networking a profitable part of your marketing strategy. Get both of these elements right and you might even begin to look forward to going networking!

You'll come to understand the 'networking convention': getting into a positive state of mind before you walk into the room so that others see you as a 'can-do' kind of person who can help them solve their problems.

Underpinning my approach to networking is the Thought into Action System™, my model for helping teams to work effectively together. It's not a big feature of this book but I'll mention some of the stages as we go along.

If you run your own enterprise, you might not feel that networking is about teamwork but we are mutually dependent on winning and delivering work for each other and on helping each other overcome the difficulties we face in commerce. How we each face the challenge of networking depends on our individual approach to balancing 'what's in it for me' with 'what's in it for you'. Becoming more purposeful in your networking would be one of my key aims for you in reading this book.

How you use the book will depend on your needs. If you're going to a networking meeting later this week, dive straight into Chapter 4 and use the exercises to be better prepared for this meeting than you might have been up to now.

If you're not sure whether networking is right for your business, you might prefer to dip into Chapter 6 to consider the bigger picture and then come back to Chapter 4 to prepare, once you've decided to take the plunge.

If you're a regular networker looking for some fresh ideas, you can work your way through or pick and choose from the headings to suit your immediate needs.

However you choose to use this book, it's designed to get you into action. You will only learn by, doing and reviewing - so that you can make it even better next time.