

# Accelerate your networking performance

Driving business, lead generation and creating allies is vital to business, and investment in networking is a key factor to success. Caitlin O'Connor, founder and director of Accelerating Performance, specialists in lead generation and effective networking, speaks to Fingal Dublin Chamber.



**N**etworking is a measurable and effective marketing tool, making it an obvious time and monetary investment for companies. "It is with networking that leads are developed. Through effective networking we develop synergies," says Caitlin. "Networking is the life-blood of business – it is like an insurance policy."

As director of Accelerating Performance and Manager of the Fingal Business Network, which facilitates networking amongst owners and managers of newly established businesses in the Fingal area, Caitlin knows just how effective networking can be. "65 per cent of jobs are sourced through networking and 80 per cent of a CEO's time is spent networking; internally, externally, with funders, collaborating and more."

### It's science

For many, though, the thought of walking into a room full of strangers to forge new bonds can make them break into a cold sweat. Isn't this just for those with the gift of the gab? Not so, according to Caitlin. "Networking is personal marketing.

marketing is a science and a science can be learned. Networking is a methodology." Individuals must learn to 'work the room', perfect their pitch and ensure they know their market.

Extroverts and introverts are both effective networkers, just in different ways. "An introvert may meet three or four people at an event and network with them in detail with collaboration and exploration. An extravert will meet perhaps 20 people at the same event but will follow through effectively with a smaller number. If these two groups were assessed three months later they will probably achieve the same results. Therefore both are equally successful. Personality disposition is not a precursor to success."

### Keep confident

Although personality may not predispose individuals to success; confidence does. It takes confidence to network, and confidence can also be learned. "Confidence is key," says Caitlin. "You will engage with people who have a passion for what they do. They are optimistic. They are solutions-driven rather

than problem-driven. They have positive emotional intelligence.

"It is important that as networkers we develop our inner confidence as well as our outer confidence and radiate belief in the networking concept, the network we are part of as well as our product and company we are representing as either an owner manager or as an employee, senior manager or director."

For those companies who haven't begun using networking as a business tool, it is time to start. Embark on developing the competency and you will reap the rewards. In all walks of life it is vital.

"Dedication is key. It is not sufficient to dip your toe in the water. Like any other relationship we will have good days and bad days but we must preserve and believe in the relationship with our networking club or association. If we attend events in the right frame of mind and follow the networking methodology we will reap the rewards. Remember networking is simple but not easy!"

## About Caitlin O'Connor – [www.acceleratingperformance.ie](http://www.acceleratingperformance.ie)

Caitlin is widely recognised as one of the leading experts in lead generation and marketing. Caitlin has a passion for empowering people to take control and action through learning. Her programs are exhilarating, energy charged and results orientated. Caitlin trains and mentors individuals, teams and organisations in effective performance, lead generation through networking and leading and selling with emotional intelligence. She is also a consultant to small right through to large companies on their marketing

strategy including social media. Customer acquisition is a core area where Caitlin accelerates teams. In early 2010 Caitlin launched a learning CDROM and book called Engage Lead Generation through networking. The program is a resource and also contains a confirmation of learning through Institute of Professional selling.

