



Lesson 15: Networking

This lesson is about networking – how people can improve their career prospects by increasing the number of people they know. It also questions the moral nature of networking and presents issues such as whether it is right to exploit other people for your own gain.

Level: Pre-intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B2 and above)

Time: 60-90 mins

How to use this lesson:

This lesson is designed to be done in class, with plenty of opportunities for student discussion

Worksheet A

1. This exercise will help students to better understand the meaning of networking. Allow around five minutes for the task. After they have read the definition, students can work in pairs for questions 1-4 if you prefer, but they should attempt question 5 on their own. You may find it easier to check the answers to questions 1-4 before asking students to write the advantages and disadvantages in question 5.

When checking answers to question 5, elicit as many advantages and disadvantages as possible. Students may not think of many disadvantages but draw attention to any that do come up, as this will be useful in a later discussion.

Suggested answers

1. People who share similar views, interests, etc.
2. (Information/Advice about) job opportunities
3. People can now do it online, rather than attending social events.
4. in person

Advantages:

- ▶ It can help you find a better job.
- ▶ It can increase your self-esteem and confidence.
- ▶ Learning from others' experience and practice saves time, energy and resources.
- ▶ It allows you to meet new people and gain experience of dealing with people from different backgrounds.
- ▶ It is a source of free information.

Disadvantages:

- ▶ It requires mixing business with pleasure.
- ▶ It can feel as though you are bothering people when they might be busy.
- ▶ It can be embarrassing to ask for help or advice.
- ▶ It is not easy to talk to strangers.

2. Use this exercise to help students develop their vocabulary for talking about this subject. It will also help draw attention to the finer differences in usage (such as manage *to*, succeed *in*, connect *with*). Allow 3-4 minutes. Those who finish early can compare with another student while the others finish.

Answers

- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| 1. succeed | 2. exploit | 3. achieve |
| 4. connect | 5. manage | 6. contact |



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3. Allow 3-4 minutes for students to think about the task and make their suggestions. They may benefit from discussing the items in pairs. Explain that, in some cases, more than one answer is possible.

Elicit suggestions. Students might think of a word or phrase that changes the meaning of a statement. Make sure everyone understands the points that are being made. Ask a number of students to say what they think about the statements. However, you should limit the discussion to a few minutes, as they will be discussing similar points on Worksheet B.

Suggested answers

1. who
2. know/realise/understand
3. social/online
4. personality/character/needs
5. work/a job/an opportunity
6. gain/offer

Worksheet B

4. Students will need 10-15 minutes in order to read the texts and choose the correct answers. You may wish to tell early finishers to compare their answers with a partner. Check the answers and ask students to point out which part of the text helped them. Deal with any problems students had in finding the answers before moving on to ask the other questions in the rubric. Students may differ in their opinions, especially about who they think is the most successful/happy. Use this as an opportunity for them to express their views, reminding them that they had some useful vocabulary on Worksheet A which they can use.

Answers

1. Andrew
 2. Danny
 3. Andrew
 4. Andrew
 5. Danny
 6. Danny
5. Point out that when you network, you generally begin a conversation with 'small talk' (it wouldn't be appropriate to begin with something like "So, how can I get a job like yours?" for example). Go through the examples to show the class what you mean. Let students work in pairs if you prefer, and tell them they have several minutes to think up their own examples of the two types of question.

Ask for a variety of answers from both categories and discuss how effective they might be. Elicit or suggest ways of improving sentences that are not quite right and ask students to tell you how soon they think they should introduce the topic of work (e.g. after two social questions, after five minutes of small talk).

6. This is a role-play activity in which students practise turning small talk into useful networking. Put the class in pairs and tell them to decide who is going to be *Student A* first. Allow 2-3 minutes for pairs to decide the job that *Student B* does, as this will help with the role play. When they are ready, they can begin asking and answering questions. These can be taken from exercise 5, but *Student A* can add more questions. Remind them that they will have to use their imagination a little. Students then swap roles. The activity can be repeated by giving each student a different partner.



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Worksheet A

1. Read the definition of networking and answer the questions that follow.

Networking

Networking is the word we use to describe building up our contacts so that we get to know more like-minded people. Usually, we use it in business circles so that people can exchange advice and get information about job opportunities. Traditionally, people would network by going to each other's houses for dinner, or to social events where they would expect to find others from the same profession. Nowadays, although people still network in person, a lot of networking is done online.

1. What do you think 'like-minded' means?
2. What do people usually expect to gain from networking?
3. In your own words, how has networking changed?
4. Which word or phrase in the definition means the opposite of 'online'?
5. In the space below, make a note of at least one advantage and one disadvantage of networking.

Networking	
Advantages	Disadvantages

2. Complete the sentences using these words.

achieve	contact	manage
connect	exploit	succeed

1. If you want to _____ in business, you have to network.
2. Some people think that by networking, you _____ your friends, and this is a bad thing.
3. I believe that if you work hard, you can _____ anything – the sky's the limit!
4. Professionals often use networking as a way to _____ with other professionals.
5. Throughout his career, he could never _____ to rise above the position of Assistant Supervisor.
6. All I did was _____ the manager on a social networking site and the following week, he invited me for an interview!



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3. Complete the opinions about networking. When you have checked the answers, say which ones you agree with.

1 It's not what you know but _____ you know that's important.

2 Before people can offer you a job, they have to _____ that you exist.

3 _____ networking sites, like Facebook, don't really help you to meet people.

4 Networking doesn't suit some people's _____.

5 The whole point of networking is to connect with people who might offer you _____.

6 You should only consider networking if you have something to _____.



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Worksheet B

4. Read the two stories below and complete the table by ticking the boxes. Which of the two people do you agree with most? Who is the most successful? Who do you think is the happiest? Say why. Use words and phrases from Worksheet A.

Two networking success stories

1. Andrew

Even at school, Andrew realised the value of networking. He used it to good effect when he was studying for his exams and he was always talking to older students so that he could find out the important things to study. Later, he took every opportunity he could to discover the best university to study at – attending careers fairs, and meeting students all over the country. He never missed the chance to ask everyone he met where they studied and what it was like.

Networking also led to him getting a good job and, during his early career, Andrew was promoted regularly, quickly reaching a very high position. He put this down to making all the right connections, mainly through attending social events every weekend and sometimes on weeknights too. Networking in this way was hard work, though, and it took up most of his free time, so when online social networking became popular, Andrew welcomed it with open arms. Making connections became easier and Andrew continues his rise to the top, changing jobs every year or so, and each time getting a higher salary. Only now, he can network from the comfort of his desk!

2. Danny

At school and university, Danny had heard the word 'networking' but he hadn't fully understood the meaning. When, years later, someone explained it to him, Danny was not keen on the idea. In fact, he felt quite strongly about keeping his work and social life separate. He was quite disgusted by the idea that people would exploit friendships and social contacts just to improve their own job prospects. Meanwhile, Danny had a reasonable career – but one that he chose not to think about too much during his free time.

As the years passed, times got hard and Danny was keen to change jobs because he felt he was not getting anywhere. Someone suggested registering for an online social networking service which put professionals in contact with each other. At first, Danny was reluctant, but he reasoned that at least it wasn't taking advantage of his friends. When one of these online contacts offered Danny a job, his whole life changed, and so did his attitude to networking. As Danny became secure and successful in his career, he began to enjoy networking. He sees it as a way of giving a helping hand to others who are just starting out or are struggling with their careers, and he is very proud of the number of people he has helped in this way.

Which person ...	Andrew	Danny
1 has used networking the most?		
2 sees networking as a two-way process?		
3 was enthusiastic about online networking from the start?		
4 has benefited the most from networking?		
5 thinks it is wrong to mix work and pleasure?		
6 has given more than he has gained from networking?		

5. When you network in person, it involves having conversations in social situations with people. This includes a combination of social and work-related discussion. Look at the examples below and add more questions to each list.

Social questions	Work-related questions
<i>Do you live near here?</i>	<i>How long have you been working in ... ?</i>
<i>What do you do in your free time?</i>	<i>How did you get started in ... ?</i>



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6. Role play

Student A: Imagine that you have just met Student B at a party and you know that he/she has a job that you would really like to have. Start a conversation with him/her and slowly turn the conversation to the subject of work. Try to get as much information/advice from Student B as possible.

Student B: You are a successful professional and you have just met Student A at a party. Answer Student A's questions and try to be as helpful as possible.