

Developing Business through Professional Networking

MACE

Mace is one of the world's largest and most diverse management and construction companies, with a reputation for finding the best solutions to complex property and real estate challenges.

One of Mace's challenges, in common with many organisations, is finding new business and developing commercial relationships. As with many professional service businesses, there is a drive to move new business generation from the partners to people such as consultants and project managers who are in daily contact with customers without going to the stage of hiring a dedicated sales force. The personal challenge is therefore how to continue to deliver high quality projects whilst at the same time growing the business.

Excellerate ran a series of bespoke workshops, focusing on the two key areas of developing professional contact networks and gaining client referrals. The construction industry has a large number of networking opportunities, including breakfast clubs, conferences and business networking groups. In general, people don't use these opportunities to their full potential and as a result find them to be an ineffective way of generating new business. Additionally, referrals from existing contacts are vital for any service business which relies on its reputation.

Our workshops were based on an unusual format, a one day workshop followed by a month of live practice with a wrap up workshop at the end. During that month, delegates had to attend at least one networking event and then report on their progress. We have found that this format is by far the best way to embed new behavioural skills into daily working life.

Richard Smedley, one of Mace's senior project managers, said, "In very few examples of training have I been able to see the fruits of the labour appear so quickly. At the recent Sheffield "Last Friday Club", I was a whirling dervish and was exhilarated as opposed to nervous in my attempts to network the whole room. In an hour and a half, I managed 10 people and have subsequently got a contact with Yorkshire Forward which has a possible Project Management opportunity on a Carbon Zero House build project. An opportunity I wouldn't have known about prior to your course."

Richard had previously avoided networking events, and on the few occasions he had forced himself to go had concluded that no business comes from them. By shifting his focus from contracts to contacts, he actually found that he achieved both. Excellerate's ability to take away that fear of networking enabled Richard to benefit personally from the workshop, which led to immediate and measurable benefits for Mace. With an immediate return on investment of around 700%, the program also created a new way to develop Mace's reputation for innovation, creativity and professionalism in new markets.