

ESSENTIAL TOOLS NEEDED TO GET RESULTS AND THRIVE FROM YOUR NETWORKING

MODULE SEVEN

Module Seven – Broadcasting Your Message

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The Check-In Desk!

Are you taking in all the information so far?

By now you should feel you have started to develop a strong foundation for your networking strategy. I would actually advise that you go over the modules twice to really grasp it all and complete the action points where available.

Write down the questions that start coming to mind. Check back to ensure you've not skipped or missed anything that may provide you with the answer. If you are certain that the answers are not there, please contact me and get your support via Facebook or email if I can help.

Right, here we go, the part about broadcasting your message!

Broadcasting Your Message – What to Say: Mistakes VAs Make

When it comes to talking about their business in any networking setting, many VAs get tongue-tied and nervous about what to say, not really understanding how to say what they do so that people get it. Then they start to wonder why people are not knocking on their door to give them the business!

The one mistake I find many VAs have made, whether I have listened to them at networking meetings or they've told me about their experiences, is not broadcasting the right message.

- VAs will not always know the best way of telling people the true benefits of using a VA and instead will lead any conversation with "I am a Virtual Assistant" leaving people confused.
- They will then go on to tell people what they can do for them such as "I can do your diary management for you, do your admin for you so you can save money and time to concentrate on the money making activities". I am sorry but that just doesn't cut it for people and they then create negative barriers when it comes to the fees.
- Many VAs will follow what other VAs say or advise. However, if they themselves are not giving an empowering presentation, then it's a case of the blind leading the blind.
- Many VAs will sell to the person who has asked them what they do and don't actually talk about their business in the context of the people they support.

Let's look at ways to ensure you get the best message across so that you attract the right clients.

What to Say?

It is really important that you're making a good first impression in what you say.

What Do You Do?

The number of times people have said to me: "Oh yes I had met a VA in the networking group but when I asked them what they do they said 'I am a Virtual Assistant'. I didn't quite understand." Obviously when people don't quite understand the concept, their imagination just goes wild and they start thinking of things which are totally unrelated. Then they're not really listening to you or they make an assumption about you.

First impressions do count and you only get one opportunity to make a good first impression. Create a clear introduction about who you are, what you do and how you're a benefit to others.

Now, I'm sure you've heard of the eight or 10 second elevator pitch: imagine you're in an elevator or a lift with someone, you've got literally eight seconds to tell them what you do. Eight seconds isn't very much is it? At a networking meeting you will probably have a minute or forty seconds. Think how much you can convey about you and what you do. Let's start with the one minute or 40 seconds and then work back to eight seconds!

What I've heard quite a few times is: "I am a Virtual Assistant and I can do your diary management for you. I can help you manage your work so you've got more time and more money". I've even heard: "I can help you manage your family!"

The response to this is: "Oh my gosh! What is that?" or "What do you charge for that?"

If the VA does have the confidence to talk about their fees and states "I charge £25 per hour", then the response could be, "To do my diary management you will charge me £25 per hour? Gosh that's expensive."

So, by saying this, actually, you're coming across as selling and you're not allowing people the opportunity to understand what you actually do.

So what do you do? You're not aiming the answer to the person who has asked the question of you. You're not saying "I can do your diary management for you, I can do your document management, I can manage your emails for you" because that's making assumptions, how do you know that's the support they want or need?

To the person who said they could help to manage my family, I responded by asking "Where on my name badge does it say I've got children?". You must be very careful about making assumptions.

When someone says “What do you do?” tell them what you do - focus on who you work closely with, what solutions you provide and what outcomes your clients receive.

Very simple! Based on what you do, you may say something slightly different: “I provide business and social media support. Helping my clients to raise their profile, so that they can focus on generating better relationships with their existing clients, which leads on to more business, which leads on to more income”.

You’ve got to think about what’s in it for them. You talk about the benefits.

You can manage someone’s diary? So what! What does that actually mean? It’s amazing how many people haven’t understood the value and have said: “What’s the point of having a VA to do that when I can do it myself”.

Be clear about your introduction and remember people will ask you questions to help them understand more. When you answer those questions you’ve the opportunity to expand on your introduction.

If someone asks: “Well how can you help me?” I would be asking them questions to ascertain how I can support them and will establish what their pain factors are. I would be suggesting solutions and explaining the positive impact on their business.

Be really clear about what you do in terms of focusing on the benefits.

A lot of VAs talk about the benefits being: “you don’t have to employ somebody, you don’t have any overheads, no tax, no National Insurance, no sick pay or holiday pay, no training, no equipment, you only pay for the time that I do your work.” NO!!! These are features or standard benefits. These are the same for all VAs.

These features are not the benefits of working with you!! Be very clear about what’s in it for them by them working with YOU!!!! What makes you different or special? Is it your passion, your experience, your connections... Know it and be able to articulate it to others, without coming across as sleazy!

Be clear about who you support. If you do work with a niche market - tell people that. Don’t suddenly say “I work with everybody” out of fear that you’re going to lose out on an opportunity. You might be talking to an accountant and have made a fantastic connection with them but your niche market are trainers in the widget industry, if the accountant says: “Well I know I am not in the widget industry but I would love to work with you because I love your energy, you’re very clear about the benefits of working with you and that’s what I want for my business.” Then you can take that client on board because you’ve demonstrated those qualities.

When VAs have a clear niche market they are remembered because they work for that niche market. So it means then when you’re telling people who you support and what sort of support you’re seeking for yourself, people will remember that.

By saying what you do, in a clear way, rather than what many VAs will say as a standard response, you're going to be seen as different.

Back to Basics – What Do Your Clients Specifically Want and Need?

For a moment, step into the shoes of your potential clients and think like them.

- What support would you find useful?
- What would you want your VA to know about you?
- If you knew what they wanted to achieve what would it be?

You could also do some research and find out from them what they actually want, what they are struggling with etc, because once you have identified these points you will then create the service that fits as well as an awareness that you are the solution to those needs. This will enable you to talk in the language that your ideal clients use.

Think about your friends or contacts who know of someone who falls into your niche - it is amazing who knows you when you ask! Ask those in the niche you want to work with if you can buy them coffee to identify the issues they face, and type of things their industry peers might work support with. Don't sell to them but instead use it as a getting to know you (the industry).

Look at the websites of your niche and the organisations they are members of. Contact the organisations and ask if you can do a survey or some type of research. When you start networking at events, you will be able to ask for contacts then or even better, you will meet your niche. Although, if you do meet your niche at a networking event, avoid pouncing on them and selling to them, keep it light and just ask if they do not mind you asking questions which will help with your survey.

The types of questions you can ask are the same as the questions as mentioned in module two, when you are simply getting to know a prospective client. Aim your focus on what their pain is, what they are struggling with, what their time is worth to their business, what their important and ideal business outcomes are, and which activities should they be focusing their time on to achieve these important business goals.

Features Versus Benefits

Note that the benefits are not the same as features which are often described by many VAs:

The features include:

- Not having to pay for time other than the time to complete the work, no overheads, no salary, no National Insurance. or tax to pay, not having to provide training or equipment, not having someone onsite etc. These are considered features because they come as standard and ALL VAs will offer this.

A benefit is what YOU are bringing to the relationship and how you add VALUE to their business.

I often take a feature and then add “which means that...” and then add in the unique benefit of working with you.

What do you DO, how does it WORK and what's in it for ME?

Your Mission Statement

A mission statement is about what you are aiming to achieve for your clients.

For example: “Supporting the business of Coaches, Trainers and Consultants, so that they can stay ahead of the industry trends and fulfil their clients’ needs. This will enable them to raise their profile, create and sustain a credible reputation, which will enable them to create excellence in business and in life” – what message does that give you?

Developing a Mission Statement gives purpose and meaning while helping you focus.

If you are to stand out as a VA, you need to be very clear about what you can do for these people. Can you help them where they are struggling? Don't panic if you are reading this in the early stages of your business, it might (and generally will) change as your business develops and grows.

The Benefits You Bring

Earlier, I asked you to put yourself into your client's shoes and imagine asking them some questions, or even better, to conduct some research based on a list of questions.

Based on what answers you have then gained through these exercises, write down their answers. Turn their answers into questions or a statement, so that if this is something they read on your website, blog or brochure etc., they can easily identify with you and you start to stand out.

For example, a question to a business coach might be: What do you find you struggle with? Identify something that really takes up a huge amount of your valuable time and prevents you from being exceptionally productive.

Answer: (Note: Ensure that the answers are specifically related to the niche) I find myself spending too much time checking that my clients have received coaching forms to complete both before and after their sessions and then booking in appointments.

Turning into a question: As a business coach do you find that much of your time is spent sending out the pre and post coaching forms for your clients to complete, booking in their next appointments instead of focusing on planning how you can support them?

If you can do this for at least four to five questions you have asked, then when they speak to you or when they read about you, you sound like the expert with whom they want to work.

Also consider asking which tools/software they use.

NEXT: Identify what the important business goals are and again turn the answers into questions:

Their Answer: I want to know that I can focus on my clients' developments whilst someone else is running my business.

Your Question: Would your ideal situation be that you are focusing on helping to develop your clients' business whilst someone else is running yours?

Their Answer: I need and want to focus on my business ideas so that I can start to write new e-books and new business coaching programmes as otherwise I will halt my income opportunities.

Your Question: Do you want to start turning your business ideas into e-books and new business coaching programmes so that you can create some income opportunities from them now?

Are you starting to get the picture? By finding out what they really want to achieve, you are communicating with them that you understand and, most importantly, you are familiar with what their specific niche wants to achieve.

You also come across as having created a service that has the solution, then they will want you.

Action:

Start to write a statement about you and why someone should choose to work with you as their VA. Include your skills and experience, your passion for your niche, anything that can demonstrate how you in particular can add value to their business. Note what makes you different from other VAs and how you are a pioneer or what your specialist skills are.

Include any information about your team, even though you may not have a team yet, imagine the team you would like to have (these are your associates) and describe what they do, specialist skills that they possess and how they add value to your clients.

At this stage don't worry about trying to make it be one minute in length – just start to capture what you do.

Explaining the Benefits

By telling clients that you can do their admin and secretarial tasks, or that you can help them save time and money, is NOT attractive or a big pull. First of all, they are NOT a secretary. Secondly, what's stopping them from doing their admin in their spare time. Thirdly, you cannot help someone save time as everyone has the same amount of time, it's all about what they focus their time on and self-management.

You must be able to demonstrate how you would solve their problems and how you intend to help them achieve their goals.

So how do you explain the benefits then? Quite simply... by using the phrase “which means that...”

1. By supporting you with the mentioned tasks that are taking up your valuable time and helping you with the running of your business, it will enable you to focus on building on the relationships of your existing clients **which means that you are more likely to gain more business from them and that your marketing becomes more effective and less costly.**
2. By ensuring I am working behind the scenes to support you in writing your e-books and new coaching programmes, it will enable you to focus on the activities that will promote these products **which means that you will significantly raise your profile and increase your income opportunities.**
3. By handling your client coaching processes and putting in place a client relationship management system for you, it will enable you to focus on planning more effectively for your coaching sessions **which means that you**

will be able to help your clients get the best results for their business and your reputation as the expert in your industry will be boosted.

Other results that will be most attractive to them include:

- ... which means that you will have more time to focus on what you do best and earn a fee for;
- ... which means that you will improve your work/life balance;
- ... which means that you will have the focused space to develop new strategic partnerships which means that you will increase your exposure;
- ... which means you have the space in your diary to go networking (play golf, go on holiday).

This sounds much better than 'your admin will be completed, invoices sent out on time and your computer will be more up to date'!

NOTICE: That whatever comes after the words 'which means that...' or you could use 'which enables you to...' **are the benefits.**

When you then think about your experience and your skills you can also bring this into the picture, by you having trained in or gained a qualification in xxx it means that they can focus on or achieve xxx. This enables you to then establish how you can add value quite significantly.

REMEMBER: To keep the benefits focused on their niche! It's not about you!

Action:

Identify your niche market and those industries/types of client within it that you will be focusing on.

To create your message, please complete the following task:

1. Create three profiles of people within your niche market, describing what they do, what their responsibilities are, stating if they are married with children or single, describing their interests, describing how they like to work and communicate etc., so that you can feel familiar with them, even though you will be making this up or this could be based on research you have conducted.
2. Imagine interviewing them, find out what their ideal outcome or goal is in their business, finding out what is so important for them to achieve and by when do they want to achieve it.
3. Now find out what their concerns are, which activities are taking up their valuable time, what prevents them from achieving their

objectives in the timeframe they must achieve them by etc. Take note of their statements that are directly specific to their industry i.e. as a speaker and a coach I struggle to focus on the coaching and then having to think about what I need to do in order to avoid last minute preparation for my seminar talk.

4. Turn these statements into questions i.e. “As a Coach and Speaker, do you find that you are focusing so much time doing the coaching, then have very little preparation time for your speaking opportunities?” Therefore, rather than being generic, you are being specific, “selling” back to them what they identified as being their problem areas. Aim to create at least five questions and ensure that, if your niche were to read these questions, they would be able to clearly identify with you.
5. Now start to write the benefits - ensure you are not focusing on the fact you can help them to save money and time – focus on the tasks which you can do for them, which are the tasks that they have told you that are taking up their valuable time or the tasks that they do not know how to do which can help them grow their business; follow each statement with ‘which means that’ and/or ‘which enables you to’ and what follows are the benefits. .

Get Clear About What You're Offering!

Let's take this back to when promoting your expertise at a networking meeting - you need to be clear about what you offer and why you are unique. Everyone is unique - your personality, skills, experiences, passions will all be different from the next VA's.

You can include certain points in your responses, for instance you can:

- Turn the focus away from you - people like to talk about themselves;
- The services that you offer which are most in demand;
- The end results or outcomes your clients achieve by outsourcing to you.

Most contacts want a clear, direct approach and are not looking for your life history.

Reinforce your keywords because people aren't going to remember long descriptions of what you do, jargon words or even your 15-second introduction. People will, however, remember a few key things about you:

- Your name;

- Your company name;
- Your business/industry (in three words or less);
- Your product;
- Your location.

All of the above forms the basis of your one minute (40 second and even eight second pitch!)

What you want to do is find ways to unobtrusively increase the occurrence of these things in your conversation. For example, is there some kind of story behind your name? Have it ready to use if there's an opportunity. Does your business have an unusual name? What's the story behind it - what does it mean?

Remember, when you introduce yourself. Tell how you help people, who you help and who you are looking for. You'll meet many amazing people and maybe even get an introduction to your dream client.

Action:

Go make a cup of coffee (glass of wine...) and take 10 to 15 minutes to brainstorm 30-50 words to describe you and what you do. This might include your values or it might include your unique skillsets – but spend some time writing the words that describe you.

The One-Minute Pitch

The one-minute pitch is not a sales pitch; you cannot possibly get across everything you do in one minute. In fact, at the 4Networking meetings you have 40 seconds only, so it's worth knowing a one minute, 40 second and a 15 or eight second one!! The reality is, it's about being comfortable to stand up and say what you do.

I always suggest that people use this as a step-by-step weekly or monthly educational guide to what you do and the associated benefits, and to ask for support or connections.

Remember that networking notebook from earlier in the course? I have my networking template at the start of my notebook, so If my brain ever fails me, I have a resource I can tap into quickly.

People can't hear you if you're not speaking clearly. If they can't hear you and if you are speaking too quickly trying to mix as many features in as possible. People only take in 7% of what you say, therefore, your tonality and pace as well as key words are important here.

Aim your focus to be on an overview of one of your services, who you work closely with and how they benefit, as well as the support you're looking for. As mentioned in our previous sections, you have to be clear and let people know how they can support you as otherwise you'll miss out on those opportunities.

Here is an easy formula that will help you to create your pitch. REMEMBER you must relay this within ONE MINUTE:

1. Start with name and company name;
2. Perhaps ask a question which the audience may relate to or focus on one of the features of your business such as your specialist skill(s);
3. Tell them you are the solution and how you assist people (therefore stating the benefits);
4. Tell people who you would like to be referred to or who are your main type of clients (your ideal clients);
5. Name and company name.

You can include answers to other questions such as:

- What is the advantage of using your business specifically?
- Why are you so unique?
- How do you assist people?

- What is your niche?

You must remember to:

- Deliver your pitch with confidence and passion;
- Speak clearly, smoothly and slower than usual – and with a smile;
- Practice in the mirror or ask someone you know to listen to you and ask for their feedback;
- Do it over and over again until you know it off by heart.

Action:

Create three one-minute presentations allowing each one to be a step-by-step education slot on what you do. REMEMBER to tell people what help you need and what type of contacts you are looking for.

(If you'd like my feedback on these please send them over.)

Come back tomorrow and re-visit them, critique yourself and ask whether you have got all of the points in from the formula above. Does your pitch achieve what you set out to achieve? Be honest.

Listen. Listen Carefully

It's OK to talk about yourself, it's absolutely OK to talk about yourself. You're not selling unless you start saying "I can do this for you, I can do that for you" because then you're selling.

All that the person wants to know is: What you do, who do you it for, what are the client's financial benefits? How do you do that?

As this may not be for them, they are asking the question because they want to know how they can help you, who they know to make an introduction to etc. If you start telling them what you can do for them, then you are selling to them and you'll put them off!!

It's OK because you're there to tell people about your business. You're also there to listen and support others. So listen more than you talk. Let the other person feel valued. Create an opportunity where you can offer support, show that you're really listening and you're not thinking "Oh my gosh, they are going to ask me what I do next and I don't know what to say".

You're listening for an opportunity where you can make a connection for them. A referral or perhaps an introduction to someone in the room. Listen out for that opportunity. There might be just that right person you're looking for who could be that future strategic partner or the connector to your niche market.

Listen and ask good questions that will generate good responses. As I said before, you can prepare these questions so think about some non-standard ideas, you want something that's going to get people to talk not just give "yes" or "no" responses. This will start to build their trust in you because you're taking an interest in them.

Active listening skills are worth their weight in gold. It is really important that you listen as by listening you will hear that opportunity and you're making the person feel they want to get to know you as well.

If you are listening intently then you will know immediately the best next question to ask, however, it's always best to be pre-prepared with some great questions in advance:

If they ask you what you do, then use the model shared earlier to get that message across. However, there have been some times when people don't quite understand so I have asked for their permission to ask them some questions to help me to demonstrate what I do and how people benefit.

These are the questions I ask:

- What is an hour of their time worth to their business?
- What did they find, perhaps in the last week, took up a lot of their valuable time and prevented them from actually achieving part of their 90-Day Plan?
- Ask if there is anything in particular they are working on and have they found many interruptions?
- So what are those interruptions? When they are in bed at night what is making them feel anxious about their business for the next day?
- What is keeping them awake at night?

Summary

- Avoid the mistake of following the crowd when it comes to telling people what you do.
- Focus firstly on what people are struggling with, ideally focusing on a niche market. Step into their shoes and imagine what is causing anxiety for them and preventing them from being productive. Create a statement based on how you support them in these areas.
- By having a mission statement, you can start to clarify what you do to help your clients.
- Be clear about how you as an individual benefit your clients and not the feature benefits which all VAs talk about.
- Ensure the people you are talking to at networking meetings are clear about the results your clients achieve by you supporting them and how you are a financial viable option so that they know how to refer business to you.
- Formulate your one-minute/40 second/15 second pitch as an educational guideline and use key words that people will remember.
- Listen more than you talk so that you have the opportunity of asking key questions and show your support.