Innovating using Agile Networking: Building collaboration with other management leaders

Abstract: MOBTS has been a conference for many years known for its unique ability to bring academics from all over together to talk, discuss and improve upon a passion – educating students. However, with so many choices in a conference only the span of a few days, it can be difficult to meet people that are in the right field, disciple, geographic location or research area (to name a few). This session endeavors to introduce MOBTS members new and old to others they may never have had the chance to meet otherwise.

Keywords: Networking, Leadership, Collaboration

Quick… how many people did you meet at the last conference you attended? How many of those individuals do you still keep in touch with months... or even years later?

Networking is the set of individual contacts known to a certain person where that person would interact with those contacts based on criteria or activities. (Miller & Choi, 2012). Networking is a science and an art, and for most, it is difficult at best. Still, it must be done at some level by nearly everyone in the academic community for various reasons: research opportunities, career leadership or advancement (Northouse, 2016), career engagement (Lesko, 2018), development of certain skills (Robbins & Judge, 2017), or simply finding others that like doing what you do, so more can be done in that area.

Networking has been seen as a driver for private sector advancement, but it is a critical skill needed in academia as well. Networking for students is importance because it helps them connect to the "outside world" beyond academia or find opportunities for future job positions (Scaffidi & Berman, 2011). It is also important for leaders such as professors and instructors in organizations because it allows them to grow their knowledge base within their research and in areas they are not as familiar (Scaffidi & Berman, 2011), as well as gaining expertise and finding potential funding sources for future research or resources (Lentz, 2013).

This activity will give MOBTS members the opportunity to interact with others during a one-hour session. About 10-15 minutes will be allocated to the importance of networking – and the difference between good and bad networking for your students.

Currently, the activity is normally done with both undergrad and graduate students in OB and leadership courses with the express goal not only of teaching networking but helping them find connections with two to three other students at the beginning of the course. This immediate

connection early in the course helps them find "peer mentors" (Lesko, 2018) they can turn to if for some reason they do not want to ask the professor or TA a question.

The activity could be done for both traditional & non-traditional students; and can be set up as an online activity (method for doing all of these will be presented before the activity begins).

The activity will be adapted to the unique nature of the MOBTS participant… putting them in the student's position but directing the networking event to allowing connections that will continue after the session, with the goal of a continued connection that day, during the conference, and potentially after the conference.

This session contributes to effective teaching & learning in the field of management in two areas. First, it demonstrates the power of agile, flexible networking to professionals, showing a potential lasting impact by directing networking in a short amount of time. Second, it demonstrates an activity that instructors can replicate in the classroom with little to no resources to teach in multiple management areas.

The learning objectives of the session are:

- To understand effective practices for networking with individuals

- To recognize beforehand what information specifically to focus on while networking

- To adapt the networking activity to your class

- To have the opportunity to meet other MOBTS individuals previously not met

- To broaden MOBTS network; potentially find potential research / academic partner

Timeline

Exercise overview (minutes = time elapsed)

- 0-20 minutes: Networking for Academic 101 – High level look at how this activity is normally run, effective practices (also shared as a discussion) and how to adapt to various course sessions. Instructions on how to network with MOBTS members in this setting

- 20-50 minutes: MOBTS 2020 Networking – Individuals will have ~2-4 minutes (depending on number of people in the session) to meet with individuals over shared topics. See Session description for more information on the topics

- 50-60 minutes: Follow up and review of session – feedback and recommended next steps including debriefing guidelines, how students normally respond, any final Q&A and discussion

Session description

The first approximate 1/3 of the session will be a short briefing on what networking is, why it works, and some of the best practices currently available. We will briefly touch upon Agile methods and how a flexible Agile approach to Networking will be used in the "iteration" phase, meaning if, when you the first person and try an approach, it doesn't work – you immediately iterate and try something new the second time. A short discussion on Networking best practices – either in the classroom or outside will follow.

The guidelines for Agile networking will follow. The participants will pick 2-4 "key interests" on a page (example: research opportunities, career opportunities, mentor, etc) and use the questions listed (on the screen or a handout) to begin the networking conversation. Individuals will be given a certain amount of time (depending on the number of people in the

room) and will answer/ discuss as many questions as possible in the time allowed. Once the bell has rang, individuals will move to the next person. This will continue until time is called.

The final time will be spent in a brief discussion and wrap up including lessons learned, feedback, best practices, and how individuals will use this going forward.

References

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