operation reconnect

TIPS FOR RECONNECTING: PLANNING FOR THE CONVERSATION

The Catch-up Conversation – what should I say & what should I ask?

In preparing for the conversation, always start by asking yourself what would you like the Contact/Client to say about the conversation and catch-up after it's finished.

Obviously we want them to feel positive about the experience and say things like:-

- They really enjoyed the meeting/call;
- They found the conversation interesting and thought provoking;
- They gained some useful insights about their market, sector and what others in their industry might be doing;
- They felt listened to, that we asked them questions and showed a genuine interest in them and their business – that we empathized with them;
- They felt we were open and shared, so we started to build trust;
- And ideally, that they are looking forward to their next meeting with us!

To achieve this, you need to think about what you need to say or do during the call/ catch-up in order to make this happen.

A useful way to prepare is to organise your conversation and questions around the following three key headings:

- Person:
  - This is the personal chit chat at the start of the conversation e.g. weather, family, sports, holidays, what did they do at the weekend etc.
  - If you know them particularly well, you may be able to recall personal details they shared previously and draw on this to ask more specific questions e.g. if they have kids starting school, ask how are they getting on; if they play a certain sport, ask are they playing much of it at present etc.
  - In terms of how much time to spend on talking about the personal stuff, in the current COVID environment, people happy to spend more time on this so double the amount of time you would normally spend on this topic.
- Role:
  - This relates to their job/ role in their organisation.
  - COVID has presented an opportunity to ask questions about the role that we wouldn't have normally asked e.g. how are they managing working from home/ remotely and the work/life balance; how has their role changed due to COVID; how are they managing their teams etc.
  - There is a lot to talk about here due to COVID and this is where people tend to open up more and build trust.
- Business:
  - This centres on talking about their business.
  - Questions could include how has their business been impacted by COVID, what key challenges/ opportunities are they seeing, what's happening in their market etc.

Try to have 3-4 discussion points/questions prepared under each of the headings above that you can dip into during the conversation.

Also, remember to prepare responses on the topics/questions you are asking as at some point you will be asked to share, and if you don't know the contact well, you may have to open up first and lead the conversation.

The objective of this meeting is to get a second and then ultimately a third, fourth, fifth so that you can start to build a rapport before finally mentioning sales/ pitching for work.

And don't wait til after the meeting has ended to start setting up the next call/meeting. As the catch-up comes to a close, try to agree a time/ date and put it in the diary there and then.