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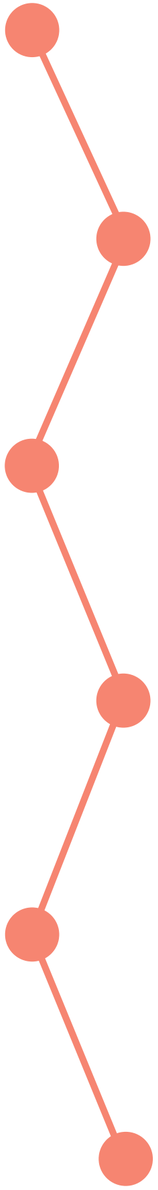
Network with the community

Session #4: How to lead meaningful discussions when networking online



The Network with the Communities Programme:

6 sessions from May to September 2021



May 2021
Introducing yourself to new people

May 2021
Reaching out to people online

June 2021
Working on worthiness

July 2021
Leading meaningful discussions

August 2021
Identifying opportunities to collaborate

September 2021
Building your network over time

Today's Session

How to lead meaningful discussions



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Leading meaningful discussions online

Once you have reached out to someone new and decided to meet virtually, your next step is to lead an engaging conversation with this person, where you explore any possible alignments and get to know them better as a human being.

There are a thousand ways to lead a conversation so it's important to practise making the most of being in the same virtual room together!

But what do you understand by "a meaningful conversation"?

Tell us in the chat or unmute yourself!



A few ways you can do this...

1 Use active listening to be an engaging conversationalist

- Be present and avoid distractions (like mobile phones!)
- Focus your attention on what the other person is saying
- Encourage the other person to expand on their thoughts

2 Embrace variety in the questions you ask

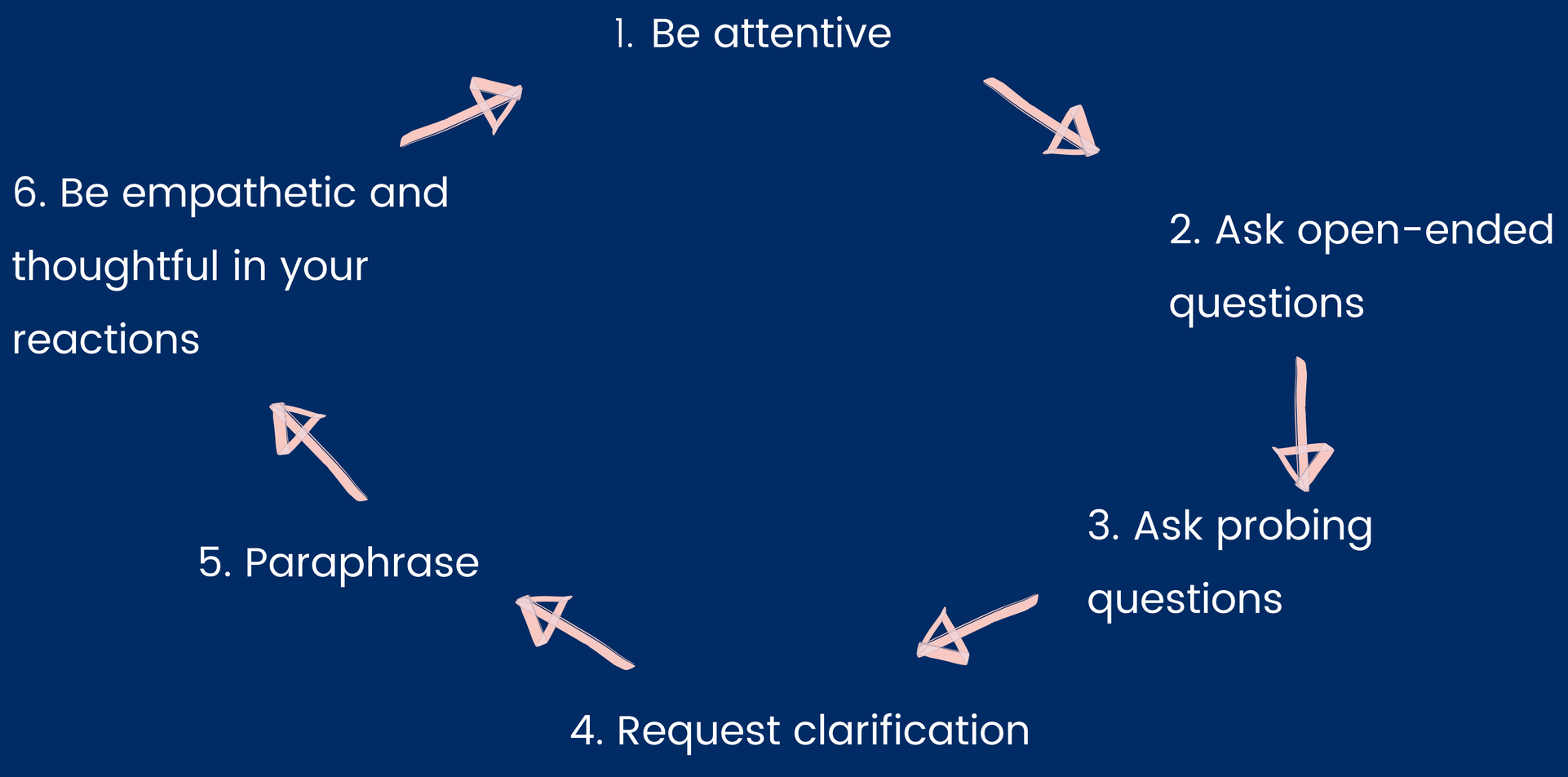
- Ask a mix of open-ended questions and probing questions
- Open-question: "Where do you live?", "What do you do for a living"?
- Probing q: "Tell me more about...", "What do you enjoy the most about...?"

3 Come from a place of curiosity

- Be aware that every culture has different communication styles
- Try approaching new conversations with a 'learner's mindset', as though each conversation will teach you something new
- Actively educate yourself and develop your own individual perspective



Key active listening skills



What that looks like...

When reaching out

- **Share a thoughtful introductory message** that touches on what led you to reach out to them:
  - Shared online community
  - Mutual Facebook group
  - A workshop you both attended
  - An online resource of theirs

- **Put the other person at ease**, by showing your human side and adopting a more 'informal' tonality (not "Dear sir, Madam"!)

During the call

- **Avoid unnecessary distractions** and stay focused on the discussion
- **Maintain eye contact** & put your video on where possible
- **Read the room:** Give others a chance to speak but when you have the floor give yourself an opportunity to speak up
- **Listen deeply** to the other person
- **Identify mutual alignments**, friends, hobbies and passions!

Continue the conversation

- **During the call might want to agree on a next step** (e.g. attend an event together, have a follow-up call, etc)
- **Keep in touch**!
  - Send them a note when you're thinking of them
  - Forward them a resource you think they'll enjoy
  - Send a timely introduction.

Let's practice!



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Let's start practising!

Let's go into breakout rooms to...

1. Introduce yourself

2. Practise your conversation skills using the 6 techniques we discussed!

3. If it makes sense, set a next step with your buddy

Now try again with someone new!

Remember the 6 techniques!

1. Be attentive
2. Ask open-ended questions
3. Ask probing questions
4. Request clarification
5. Paraphrase
6. Be attuned to and reflect feelings

2 Golden tips from Celeste Headlee



CELESTE HEADLEE
10 WAYS TO HAVE A BETTER CONVERSATION

TED

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Thanks!

See you on ecomConnect for session #5 on "Identifying opportunities to collaborate"

