

The Killer Introduction Myth or Reality?



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The Killer Introduction – Myth or Reality?

Welcome to Magic's quarterly survey results.

The topic for this survey, "How to do a killer introduction", came about because we are asked this question by hundreds of people each year. People want a magical formula that always works. Wisdom and experience show that there is rarely one formula for all situations - rather a number of formulae which interweave together to work.

To create highly engaging conversations with many different people takes practice and dedication. However those who don't do this are usually the ones who complain about the lack of opportunities.

Those who do make the effort are often those who 'win'. Whilst they may not always be the 'best' or most qualified person at the outset, they do show up and engage. This creates energy and so things progress.

Magic's role is to continually make people and opportunities accessible. We aim to motivate and build an authentic willingness to have a go by overcoming personal inhibitions. Once someone understands the real essence of networking, real transformation takes place and then performance results can be achieved that astound many organisations.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in this short survey as your collective advice will, we hope, influence and motivate many people to step forward and start make connections.

You have our permission to pass this document onto any of your contacts, peer group, talent pool or colleagues who you think would benefit from knowing what our decision makers think about making a career pitch at staff events. The bottom line is that by misreading the situation, careers can be set back. We have heard many stories from senior executives who bear the scars of such past mistakes, so let's pass on what does work.

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Yours sincerely
Heather White & Stephanie Peckham (Directors)
The Magic of Networking Ltd



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Introduction

Do a Google 'Key Word Search' for 'Killer Introduction' and nothing comes up, but talk to a group of junior employees and they all want to know how to do a 'killer introduction' to a senior member of staff.

The term that most people use for this type of introduction is the 60 second or "elevator" pitch. This approach has recently become synonymous with organisations and programmes such as First Tuesday (VC meets entrepreneur), the "milk round", Dragon's Den and speed networking. However most people experience the need for such an introduction when attending events (social or business), either inside or outside their organisation, when asked "*So, what do you do?*"

Ultimately this report is about making a quick and lasting impression by putting across a clear and engaging message.

Does a 'killer introduction' actually exist?

For those who think it does, a whole load of other questions crop up: Is there a right and wrong time to use it? Why is it such a huge challenge for people to say what they do concisely? By doing your pitch, won't most of your colleagues see you as trying to ingratiate yourself with the boss? If you do use it on your boss or senior colleague, won't they know what you are doing and be put off by it? Is a killer introduction only associated with making a "sale"? Or, does your career hang on a thread just because you did or didn't make your pitch at the last staff event you went to?

To look into this complex area we compiled a short survey of 6 questions. Out of the 132 responses we received we have selected only those from people who are in a position to influence the careers of others to formulate this report.

The scenario

We asked our respondents (all people in a position to promote junior colleagues or influence their careers) to picture themselves attending a busy and rather noisy staff event. They are enjoying a conversation with two colleagues when a third person joins the group - a junior colleague hoping to make a positive and lasting impression on them...

The Executive Summary

“What is the best way to make a positive lasting impression with key decision makers?”

The bottom line is that 60% said they don't think making your career pitch at a staff event is the right place to do it. But this group strongly felt that what makes a lasting impression includes:

1. Be open and interested/ing
2. Engage with the group's discussion
3. Be aware of your verbal and non-verbal skills
4. Be well groomed
5. Be sensitive with others yet able to take charge in a group situation
6. Have firm opinions on current issues
7. Be able to talk about yourself in a compelling way

40% said they do think making a career pitch at a staff event **is appropriate**, but they were clear that you shouldn't take longer than 2 minutes and your content should include things like:

1. Understanding the current issues
2. Articulating your expertise/ specialism
3. What you want to do next (or be considered for)
4. Your performance/results

However our respondents said it takes them only 60 seconds to make a judgement of you. So the pressure is on.

Whilst we recognise that the comments above apply to many scenarios, readers should take into account the subliminal messages which their organisation sends to it's staff. The two scenarios below are very real examples of how different the seemingly same situation can be in reality:

Scenario A:

This is a global organisation with many senior executives travelling the world or with off shore or client-based teams. They meet their team face-to-face twice yearly otherwise communications are via emails and webinars and are mainly sales focused. You could easily argue that when you attend one of these events, you should use this window of opportunity to make an impression. The VP would expect this.

Scenario B:

This is a global business with an executive based in the UK who see their teams weekly and use other communication methods. Perhaps here it would be better to use events to reinforce your 'message' and thus strengthen relationships.

This report will now show you in detail what our respondents thought



Should you make a career pitch at an event?

To start with we asked:

'Do you regard this as an appropriate time and place for what could be seen as a 'career pitch'?'

60% said NO!

Magic's comments:

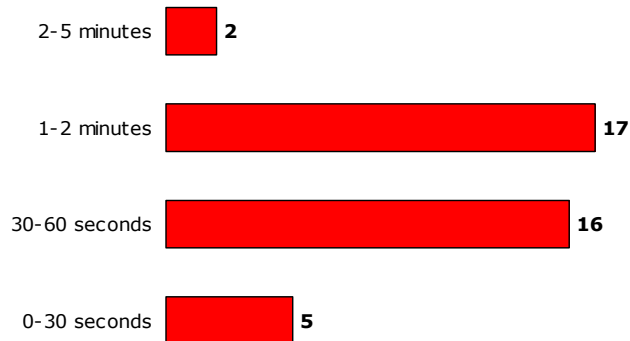
Is 60% enough of a tipping point to be conclusive that you should NEVER make a career pitch at a staff event? Well it certainly tips the scales in the direction of 'no', however we would always recommend that you use your observational skills to judge if the timing and situation is appropriate and act accordingly. Let's say you are working for a global company that has a sales culture and you only see your VP twice a year, then in essence this would be the best time to make your move. BUT if they are heavily engaged in a conversation about business, then switching the topic to you would NOT be appropriate.

40% said YES!

So we asked these 40 people:

'In these circumstances, how long do you think such a pitch should be?'

They thought:



Magic's comments

40% felt making your pitch at a staff event was appropriate but will only give you a max of 2 minutes in which to do it. When you get to page 14 you will also note that 58% of people will be forming an opinion about you in 30 seconds or less. No pressure then.



What keeps the attention of decision makers?

We asked the same 40 people:

'Given the limited time available, which of the following would you be most interested in?'

We asked them to grade a list of topics and selected their top 5 interests.

They thought the **content** of your pitch should include:



Additional comments

Participants were also given the opportunity to add anything else they would be interested in. **Their three overriding themes were:**

- 1. Coming across as a well-rounded person i.e. Having a life outside their work, being personable and learning more about what's behind the face*
- 2. Really good social and interpersonal skills (also see page 10)*
- 3. Linking their pitch to how they might help the senior person they are talking to*

Magic's comments

What is vital is doing your homework before attending an event like this. Senior executives expect you to be well versed in the bigger picture, their world and able to enjoy what you are saying to them.



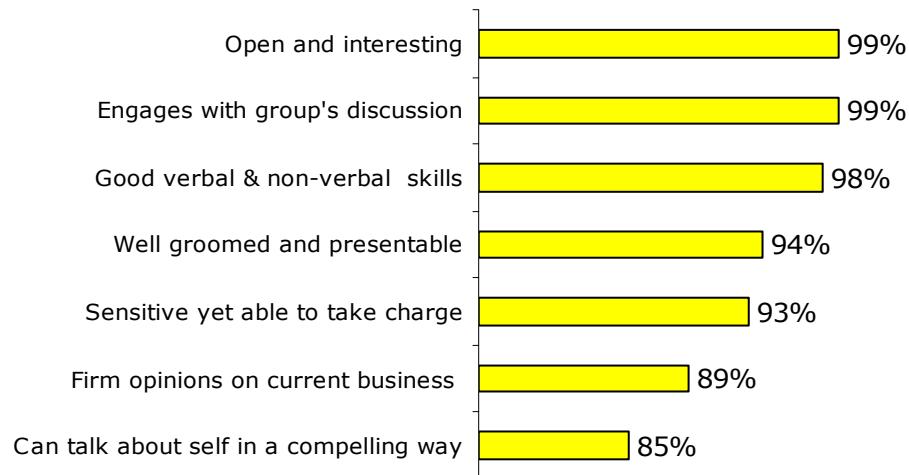
Just how important were the soft skills?

Going back to the whole group we asked:

'Aside from the direct career pitch, which of the following do you think are important for someone trying to make a good, lasting impression at such an event?'

We asked them to grade a list of attributes and show their top 7 priorities:

They thought the following attributes **'stick'** in people's minds:



Replies from the men and women:

When looked at separately males and females had the same top 2 attributes but the females considered 'Being well groomed and presentable' as important as 'Good verbal and non-verbal skills'.

Additional comments:

Participants were also given the opportunity to add anything else they thought was relevant.

Their two overriding themes were:

- 1. The ability to actively listen and show interest*
- 2. To fully engage in the conversation*



Mars & Venus – light years apart?

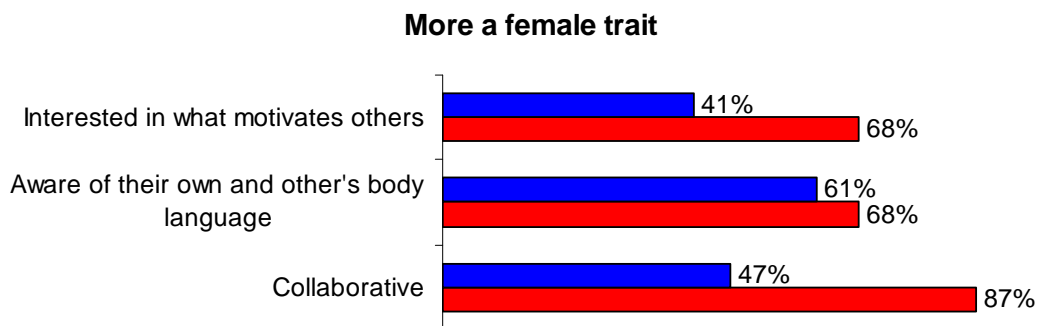
We asked the whole group (59 male and 41 female):

'Have you encountered any notable differences in the ways that men and women seek to make a good impression at this sort of event?'

We asked them to select whether they thought various traits were either 'A Female Trait', 'A Male Trait' or 'Little / No difference'.

We have shown the results in these 3 groups but have only have included the traits where 60% or more of our males or females respondents agreed. **Female replies are shown in red** and **male replies are shown in blue**.

The more female traits: Our female respondents experienced these 3 traits being definitely more 'female' however the males only agreed on one.



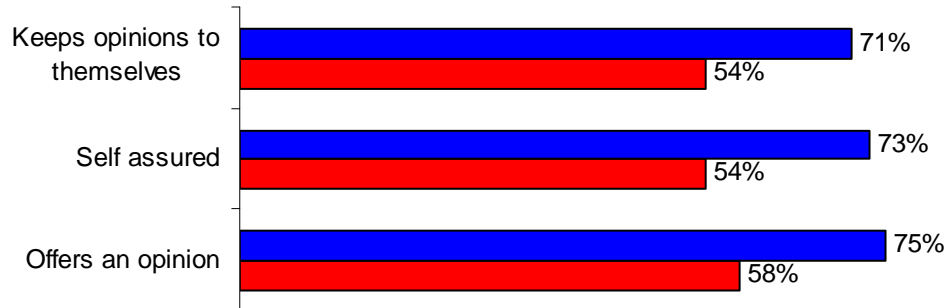
The more male traits: Our female respondents selected Competitiveness as being the only definitely a more 'male' trait. Whilst the males replies did not highlight any of the traits as being definitely more 'male'!





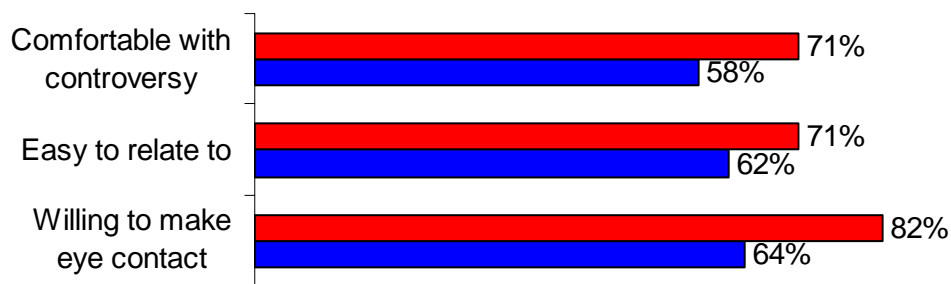
Little or No difference - the male view: Our male respondents selected 3 traits as 'little or no difference' between the genders:

Males thoughts on top 3 traits where 'little or no difference'



Little or No difference - the female view: Our female respondents selected a different 3 traits as 'little or no difference' between the genders. Bizarrely enough one of the biggest complaints we hear from women is that men don't make enough eye contact when engaged in conversation.

Female thoughts on top 3 traits where 'little or no difference'



Additional comments

Participants were also given the opportunity to comment on this issue and the overriding theme was:

- Ultimately it depends on the person and being careful not to stereotype

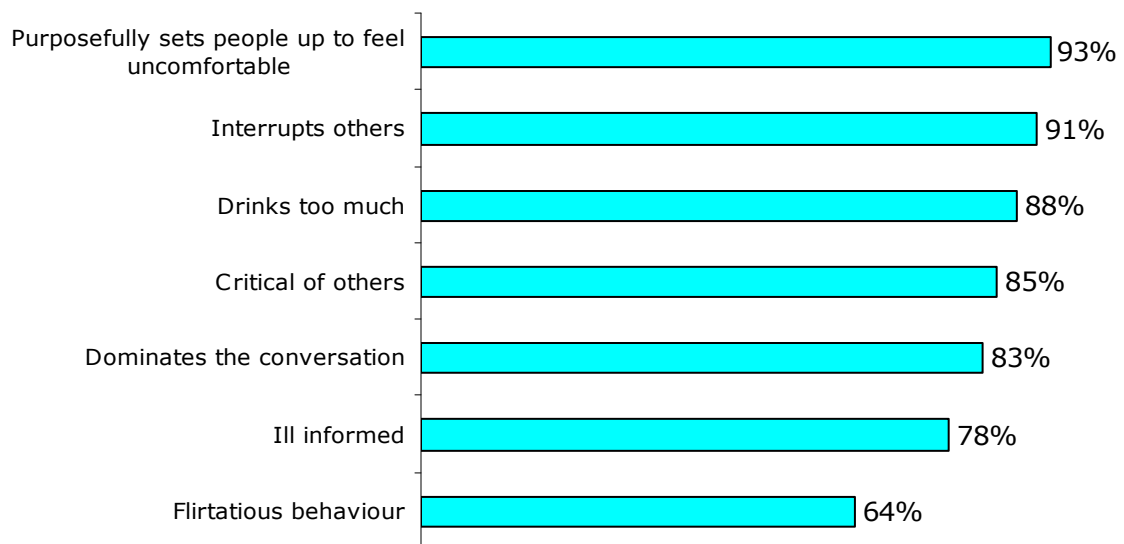


7 ways to ruin a good night out with the boss

We asked the whole group:

'Would you consider any of the following unprofessional or irritating in someone who is trying to make a good impression at such an event?'

When asked to grade a list of characteristics over 60% considered the following 'Unprofessional':



“As I was saying before I was cut off....?”

Magic's comments

Difficult one this, as everything listed above would be considered by most as being inappropriate behaviour, however it was interesting to see what was considered the worst – and that the figures suggest that 36% thought that flirtatious behaviour is okay! Remember always use observational appropriateness and flirtatiousness can be appropriate at times from both men and women.

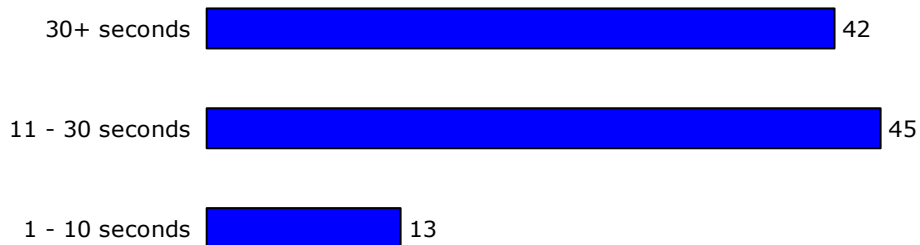


How quickly are you being assessed?

When asked:

'In these circumstances how long does it generally take you to form an opinion of a person?'

The group replied:



So 58% will give you less than 30 seconds

Magic's comments

This assessment is happening on three levels.

Impact: clothes, voice, smile, aura, body language
Contact: handshake, interaction, breath
Opening sentence: how you get going with a conversation



Top tips

We asked:

'What is one piece of advice you would offer a talented individual seeking to make an impact on senior people?'

We have summarised the most commonly used expressions or words from the 95 replies our decision makers gave:

Most commonly used expressions or words



Other common expressions included: *listen, ask questions, be confident, have a brand and smile.* But there is nothing like reading the actual words of decision makers so here is a selection representing the majority of views:

'Have an opinion. Don't engage in "the emperor's new clothes" theory of building a relationship. Be honest.'

'Make the most of your opportunities, chase any leads, and use your situation to drive forward. Make the most of what you have.'

'Know where you want to go and how this is aligned with the objectives of the senior person.'

'Be themselves; talent endures and sticks out from the crowd of mediocrity, there is no need to force the issue. Remember that talented senior people recognise that it is their responsibility to draw-out and nurture talent within their teams and will be looking for the deeper signs rather than the fast-food, lip-gloss packaged approach!'

'Take your time, consider your brand and how you wish to position yourself, and then interact in a meaningful way presenting yourself in line with the position that is desirable to you/ your brand.'

'Be confident, articulate and arrange a meeting to discuss further and in more details any advice you want from that senior person that may help your career. Do not try to monopolise that senior person at a networking event - arrange a separate meeting.'

'Be liked as an individual so that senior people want to talk to you when they see you.'



What to do with this document and contents?

A critical factor when developing relationships with people across your organisation is to add value when possible. This value is often something that will save someone time, effort, might even help their career. You will find that all natural networkers (or those who “get it” and are disciplined) pass forward something they think is useful to their contacts. In Magic we call it “our daily P.i.F” (pass it forward).

You have our permission to pass this document onto any of your contacts, peer group, talent pool or colleagues who you think would benefit from knowing what our decision makers think about making a career pitch at staff events. The bottom line is that by misreading the situation careers can be set back. We have heard many stories from senior executives who bear the scars of such past mistakes, so let’s pass on what does work.

The premise under which we coach people on this is how to use “observational appropriateness” or **assess the environment you are in and act appropriately, taking into account those around you in terms of personality, their focus and current issues**. If it all stacks up – go for it.

However we want to leave you with a few thoughts:

- Practice and experience make perfect – only by trying out an introduction or “pitch” as often as possible, in as many different environments as possible will it become familiar and feel natural.
- “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” – including your introduction - it needs to be tailored to suit the receiver and the environment.
- Manage your expectations of the impact of your introduction – remember, 60% of our respondents said a “pitch” would be inappropriate – rather their impressions need time to build up. Even if your introduction is perfect, how you continue the conversation and follow through afterwards are as, if not more, important.
- Much of our feedback was about the content. Remember, **how** you say it makes as much impact. If you don’t sound interested and positive about what you are saying, why should they be? You need to like your intro so that you want to and enjoy saying it.
- Your career will ultimately be influenced by:
 - your rounded skill set
 - your performance
 - your line of expertise and therefore how you fit into the new role
 - your personality
 - the companies’ competencies and
 - do you ‘feel’ right for the post

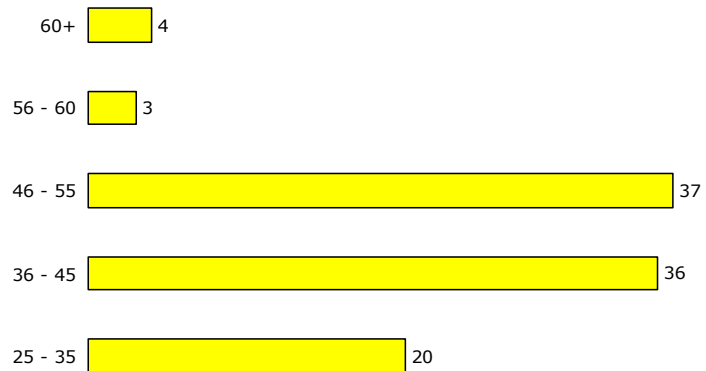


Appendix 1 – Our respondents

Male	59
Female	41
Total	100

British / English / UK	86
Other European	8
US	4
Australian / New Zealand	2
Total	100

The age range being:





About The Magic of Networking Ltd

Effective networking needs a touch of Magic...

Talk to any business guru and they'll tell you good networking is the key to business success. Within organisations it solves the age-old problem of poor communication, and converts divergent, inward-looking departments into a connected, thriving, and motivated organisation. On the marketing side, it can deliver a switched-on, clued up contact base ready and willing to tell others about their experiences with you and your company.

The benefits

Staff trained in networking skills will develop deeper, more positive relationships both inside and outside the organisation. They'll be better at collaborating, and more willing to share their knowledge. They'll be more confident, and more courageous, both at work and at networking events. And they'll have a better understanding of body language and non-verbal communication that will serve them well in everything they do.

Of course, effective networking is a skill – and one that takes time to learn. It's also an *individual* skill, because it depends on each person's particular personality, focus and approach.

And that's what makes Magic different. Because Magic is totally committed to meeting each person's individual needs – by drawing on a wealth of skill and experience in real-world networking.

The methods are tried, tested – and unique. The commitment is absolute. And the results? Every single team member gets full value from their training – and *delivers* full value for your organisation.

What our clients say

"In the networking master class we talked through the techniques and tips that make it easier to 'work a room' with purpose. The sessions encouraged me to helicopter out and begin to strategically examine my networks and sync with my goals and objectives. My approach to making business contacts has fundamentally changed, especially on nurturing long term relationships and I am beginning to see the fruits of the new approach." Denica Lundberg, Project Manager, Safer Business, London First

"I was at your presentation last week – a very useful session, which has shifted our approach to how we network and market. The only thing missing was a time machine so we could have heard it 18 months ago when we started up!" David Brook, Director, Turnstone Services Ltd



About the authors

Heather White

Heather White is the founder and CEO of The Magic of Networking Ltd. Prior to starting up Magic she worked within sales, marketing and operations across 5 sectors including: leisure, medical, retail, insurance and transportation.

Her expertise is setting up new departments, cross departmental communications and breaking into new sectors. Unsurprisingly, Heather is passionate about finding and developing new business, increasing visibly within a company and breaking into new sectors.

She sees effective networking as a driving force for business growth, knowledge and opportunities. Based upon her understanding that for many people networking is a difficult concept to grasp, her breadth of experience means she can tailor her delivery to the needs of any audience – and show them precisely how networking can meet their own very specific needs.

If it seems difficult, we will make it easy. If it seems complex, we will explain it in simple terms. And if it seems challenging, we can motivate people to meet that challenge – and enjoy themselves in the process.

Over the past ten years, Heather has used her networking skills to build Magic into a leading provider of networking training – an achievement based largely on her own ability, and reputation, as a networker *par excellence*. We do exactly what we talk about with business growth coming from referrals, networking and word-of-mouth marketing.

Stephanie Peckham

Following a long career in the banking sector primarily focused on learning and development, Stephanie became a career coach in 2001, starting her own business and becoming a lead consultant for a global career consultancy.

She met Heather White, founder of the Magic of Networking, (via networking!) in 2004 and joined Magic in 2005, since when she has delivered many successful coaching and training programmes across a wide range of organisations, across the public and private sectors, aimed at providing and enhancing both strategic and practical networking skills.

She has a particular interest in all aspects of diversity and how diverse networks can bring benefits for individuals, organisations and communities by harnessing innovation, fresh ideas and different perspectives.

In addition to the core business of networking, Stephanie runs many other “soft” skills programmes including leadership, self-awareness, personal brand, influencing, negotiating and presentations and continues to work in the fields of career and performance coaching. Her style is engaging and inspiring and her programmes are interactive and practical - aimed at providing participants with tool and ideas they can go away and do something with. Stephanie is a Chartered Fellow of the CIPD and holds an MSc in HR; she is a qualified performance coach, mediator and an enthusiastic and experienced administrator for a range of personality tools (MBTI, MBTI Step II, 16PF).