

TRANSCRIPT – THE WORDWISE COACHING PODCAST

SERIES 2 EPISODE 4: Networking – How It Can Boost Your Career and Personal Growth WITH JANI RUBERY

Rachel Goodwin

00:00:05

Hello and welcome to the Wordwise Coaching podcast. I'm Rachel Goodwin, an executive coach, and for this series, I've chosen some of the common areas I focus on with clients and have invited fellow coaches and experts to explore them with me. In my work with clients, I aim to help them improve their performance in the workplace. It's really rewarding to see the difference coaching can make, and I'm now excited about reaching a wider audience, sharing experience and advice, and hearing your thoughts. So please do visit Rachel Goodwin UK where you'll find suggested reading around today's podcast, the top tip summary and all the other episodes.

Today I'm joined by Jane Rubery, a highly experienced executive coach. In this episode, Jenny and I are going to be discussing Networking. We'll consider what we mean by this, how it can help you and give you practical advice and tools. As ever, we'll share examples of how we've worked with clients to support them in this area.

Jani Rubery

00:01:15

You don't know what impact it might have on the thinking for your part of the business.

Jani Rubery

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You're part of the organization, for your team, whatever it might be. So it's so helpful to remember it's not just about you.

Rachel Goodwin

00:01:31

It is just about finding a way of engaging with another human being at the end of the day.

Jani Rubery

00:01:43

So, you know, I hope this podcast actually helps people enjoy it more.

Rachel Goodwin

00:01:51

And I think it can be very energising as well to get different perspectives, meet different people.

Hi, Jani, thanks so much for joining me again. It's great to be back on the podcast roll.

Jani Rubery

00:02:13

Yes it is. Hi, Rachel. Yeah, it is good. I'm really pleased to be here.

Rachel Goodwin

00:02:18

Fantastic. The topic that we're covering today, we were talking about it quite recently, and that's what popped into our heads to make us think. Well, that could be really useful for people listening to the podcast, because it's something we've found that we're covering more now, that there's more need for it, which is really interesting.

Jani Rubery

00:02:35

I agree, it feels like it's a topic that comes up well, actually, it emerges from our clients.

It's not like something I tend to bring up myself. It seems to be something they're bringing up. So I always like to pay attention to that and notice that and realize it might be an important area for us to focus on.

Rachel Goodwin

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And also it is an area that you can make quite a lot of progress with clients. You can really help them come up with some strategies that are effective and maybe not as painful as they might be expecting.

Jani Rubery

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Yeah, that is so true. And I was thinking about this the other day, going back years and thinking, oh, there's been lots of learning and development programs about all kinds of skills and topics, but I don't know that I've ever seen a module on networking or I'm sure they're out there, but I just find that really interesting. But it is something that can be so crucial to help people build their confidence even, and just learn more. And it does help career progression as well. But I think it just serves a whole host of different needs.

Rachel Goodwin

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I think we found that people often have quite a strong mindset or set of beliefs around networking, so even the mention of the word can have people recoiling.

And I have to say I identify with that because until I really started exploring it and thinking about it more widely, my instinct would have been quite negative around it.

Jani Rubery

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Why is that? Have you been able to discern what you know, what that was for you.

Rachel Goodwin

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I think when I originally would think about networking, what would come into my head would be a huge room full of people that I didn't know, maybe with a glass of wine, and it just felt like an impenetrable group, and not one that I really felt terribly drawn to engaging with. But of course, that is one aspect of networking, it is far broader than that. And so I think now I

having an understanding of there are many, many ways to go about networking and finding a way that suits you. Now, I would say even that the idea of the big room with lots of people would faze me. Less than a few years ago, when I probably had a different understanding and experience of networking.

Jani Rubery

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And I think that's such a great testimony of just pausing and noticing that that was a challenge for you, and then recognizing there were things you could do about it.

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And the difference it's made. So, you know, hopefully, you know, what we're talking about today will help others. Because for me, being a natural networker, I didn't realise that it was a challenge for people. It's really interesting. So and I don't know why it's not a problem for me, but it is definitely part of my personality type, so I've never found that difficult. But I have to say still, I have had to develop different ways of doing it in order to make sure that I was using the appropriate technique for the right person and the right circumstance.

Rachel Goodwin

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Exactly. And it's about really being clear about what you're trying to achieve.

Jani Rubery

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Yes. And I don't think I was very good at that at the because I was just very happy to, you know, burst into a group and start a conversation or whatever that might be. But I don't think I was as purposeful. And I definitely think I've learned about becoming more purposeful. And I think that's helpful for me as well as the people I'm networking with. I think it's a win win for both parties.

Rachel Goodwin

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And I have to say, quite a while ago I remember going to a network event with a colleague who is a natural networker. And I mean, you could see she was excited at the prospect of it, really looking forward to it. And I remember thinking how extraordinary. But to be with her and to see how she approached it and to see how she came across, it did demystify it a bit, actually. So watching people who enjoy it or who are good at it, who are very experienced at it can be very helpful. And that's just one of the many ways and many techniques that we talk about when trying to help clients with this. So what do you think are the benefits of networking?

Jani Rubery

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I think definitely one of the benefits is it does help us grow as an individual, because I think through networking you learn from others. I think there is this unhelpful belief that, oh, it's about me trying to promote myself, but I'm not so sure it is so much about that. That might be a side benefit. And yes, it does help because then people get to know you and your work because you end up in conversation with them. But I do think it's a personal growth opportunity, but not just for you.

I also think it benefits your team because it helps maybe your team get more profile, your organization. I think that's one of the helpful things, is to get it beyond it's not just about self-promotion, but can actually have a benefit on others around you or what you're trying to achieve. Or maybe not even just in the present. Maybe something in the future that you've got thoughts about or ideas.

Rachel Goodwin

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And I think it can be very energising as well to get different perspectives, meet different people, and forces you to think more broadly, and also to be able to articulate what you do, to be able to talk about yourself in a way that makes it clear to people what you do, why you do it, what the benefits are of what you do.

So it gives you a clear focus and a sense of who you are, and a sense of identity and the impact that you're having.

Jani Rubery

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What you have to offer as well.

Rachel Goodwin

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And I think often when I talk to clients, sometimes there can be a need for more internal networking in an organization. If it's a large organization, they might be really good at going out and networking externally, or they might not have a huge need to network externally. But in order to progress in their careers, they do have to build a stronger network internally. And there's quite a lot of clients, I think, whose attitude is, look, I just want to get the job done. It's very time consuming. I don't really want to be going around doing all of that stuff, and they're quite dismissive of it. But once we talk about it, we come up with a plan. We come up with a strategy that identify who they're going to go and talk to. I'm always surprised and pleased when they come back and say, oh, I had a really good conversation, actually.

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And it turns out we used to work with the same people, or we're actually working on a similar project. And so I put them in touch with so-and-so. And so it turned out to be a very productive conversation, and not one that would have happened without just putting it in place and going with a very open mind just to get to know somebody. And when people are busy, they've got a lot to do. They're careful about how they use their time. Yes. And they want the reward from spending time. Yeah. Yes. And with networking you can't guarantee the reward.

Jani Rubery

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No you can't, but you never know as well. Maybe in the moment you think, oh, not sure what progress of that was, but I've also had so many examples of clients coming back and going, gosh, do you remember two years ago, you know, I stepped out, had that conversation with that person? Well, they've now come back to me with an interesting project. It didn't happen immediately. And I think probably they were a little bit disappointed, you know, thinking, oh, it wasn't worth it and then like, oh look, it was in the end, I think.

Rachel Goodwin

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One of the key things is you have to let go of, well, I want instant returns on this because it just doesn't work like that. You never know what's going to come of it, but you have to invest fully in it to have any chance of anything coming of it.

Jani Rubery

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I think there's two ways that you said investment and I think intention, recognizing that you have to be intentional about it.

Rachel Goodwin

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What are some of the common attitudes you come across when you talk to clients about networking?

Jani Rubery

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Yeah, I think one of the first ones and maybe even talking, you know, us sharing our stories is that you have to be an extrovert. Yeah, but we're both introverts, so it doesn't necessarily mean that you are better if you're an extrovert, you might do it differently, but it doesn't mean that you might. You don't have to be an extrovert to like networking because there's lots of different ways of networking. There is this, oh, I'm going to waste somebody's time always concerned about that.

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Or oh, it's just about my own self-promotion. I don't feel very good or it's political. We get those kind of comments or some people just have an unhelpful belief. I'm not good at it. They may not have even tried it.

Rachel Goodwin

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Absolutely. And I think people it's almost like they've talked themselves out of doing it. So they have to come up with reasons. And it's I'm not good at small talk, and they maybe have examples of people that they feel do it a lot, and they're not that genuine, and they're just trying to work their way up and without any true talent or experience, etc.. But I think it's really helpful because these are often beliefs that haven't actually been voiced. They're

not that conscious. But when you start talking about it, that kind of comes out and it's just helpful to explore it and to put it on the table and to not dismiss it because they're perfectly valid beliefs. But are they getting in the way, possibly of some really positive outcomes?

Jani Rubery

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Yeah, absolutely and it's just so encouraging when somebody does have a look at one of their beliefs and go, oh, maybe that's not so helpful, maybe it's not even valid, and switch that around and then start practising and having a go. And they're amazed at the results, even if they're small steps. And it's just such a delight to see.

Rachel Goodwin

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Because often it can be they've had an experience where they went to something and they felt uncomfortable, or they were pressured into doing something that really wasn't their thing at all. So they've kind of dipped their toe in, it wasn't very positive and they've retreated and they don't particularly want to do it again. And also the classic line, which is, you know, one hears so often is I'm too busy.

Jani Rubery

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Yes, I get that every time, almost every time when I start having this conversation, it's like, yeah, but I've got all these priorities. How am I going to fit that in?

Rachel Goodwin

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And I mean you know, there are going to be times when you are too busy. It's not going to be the AI priority. But that's an excuse that's always going to be valid.

Jani Rubery

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It is. Yes. Yeah. But once I start doing it, they change that idea and realize that it doesn't have to be that time consuming.

Rachel Goodwin

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And so when you start to kind of, you know, you talk through the beliefs, you get a sense of what the attitudes are and what the potential benefits are for clients. What advice do you give them around? Networking?

Jani Rubery

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I think the first step is helping them to recognize that they already have it available to them, and start thinking about who already is important to them, who are the key stakeholders that they already know, maybe have kind of look at warm and cold like selling. But you know, who do they already have easy connections with? Yeah, doesn't mean they know them that well. But who do they already have easy connections with? Who could be significant to either what they're trying to achieve or something they're thinking about in the future, or might just be somebody that they find really interesting and what they're doing, they can do that in so many ways now as well. With all the different social media platforms, with LinkedIn, it's not that complicated to reach out to people. So it's a first tip is just see what's available to you already and start small.

Rachel Goodwin

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Also, I think, you know, another benefit in many ways of lockdown is that people had to do virtual networking. So virtual coffees became a really big thing, didn't they? It's so much easier, especially from a geographical perspective and a time saving perspective. Being face to face is great, but it is an option and it can be really effective. And also it can be a very kind of comfortable way of starting to engage.

Jani Rubery

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In fact, I just had a client literally on Friday who has people all over the country and she's like key stakeholders. She says, I'm never going to get

face to face with them properly. Yeah. And she said, I have learned that if I ask them for a 20 minute virtual coffee conversation, they say, yes, yeah.

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She said, I have had nobody say no. So I don't ask them for an hour to just say, can we just have a virtual chat for coffee for 20 minutes? And I think that's such a good example.

Rachel Goodwin

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Yes. And I think one can get into a state of thinking, well, they're really busy and they won't have time. I think you referred to that before, and I had an experience last week where I had wanted to reach out and meet up with somebody. And as I was writing the email, I was thinking, I'm not even going to get a response to this. Anyway, I did get a response and we set up a time but the meeting didn't happen. So I thought, oh, well, that's gone. You know, that's not going to happen. And then we rescheduled it and it happened. And they were really pleased. I'd reached out and said, oh, really pleased that you wanted to connect. And, you know, it wasn't a specific request. It was just a general getting to know. Yeah. And I was really surprised because my attitude was, I don't really even know why I'm doing this.

Jani Rubery

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Right. Interesting. Yeah.

Rachel Goodwin

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But it was so worthwhile. Not massively time consuming. And if it hadn't worked and, you know, it hadn't been that successful or it had kept being cancelled, it wouldn't be the end of the world. But it really did make me think, okay, you really need to do more of this.

Jani Rubery

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Something that's struck me in your story is even though you were a little bit unsure about why am I doing this? And I'm not sure of the outcome, but I

felt a genuine intent around I'm interested in this person and I think people can pick that up. And I would say that is a really good tip as well. If you have a genuine. don't do it. If you don't have a genuine intention for some reason, and people will feel that if it's a genuine intent, whether that's a it is one of those big conferences and you need to step in and, you know, there's somebody there that you are interested in and you need to step into like a group to talk to them.

People will feel it if it's genuine and you're not just doing it for your own self-promotion or if it's the email or whatever it might be on that point.

Rachel Goodwin

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I think that's so true that if you're genuinely interested and curious about people and there is someone specific, if you're going to a conference or you go into a large meeting, or even if you're going to try and set up a 1 to 1 with them, that it's worth doing a little bit of research or having something that, you know, if you say, I saw you speak at such and such, and I really like the point you made about that is a brilliant opener for a conversation. It's small. It's not that difficult. If it's genuine and authentic, you'll have a really positive interaction out of that.

Jani Rubery

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I had somebody share a really good story just this morning, funny enough. And he was at an event where there were some very, very high profile people, and he saw one of these high profile people. Nobody was talking to that person, maybe because they're so high profile and he just thought he's sitting on his own.

He went up to this person and just said, oh, hello, would you like somebody to chat to? Interestingly enough. And this person said, yes. And he said, I only know one person that we might have in common.

Rachel Goodwin

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Yes.

Jani Rubery

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Yeah. And that was it. And that set them off on a conversation. But, you know, just so in that moment, he thought in advance he didn't just go, you know, he just thought, what could I start with? And it was as simple as, oh, I think there is one person that we probably have in common. Yeah. And started the conversation like that because.

Rachel Goodwin

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It's about making people feel comfortable. If you make people feel comfortable and approach it in a relaxed way, then you're setting yourself up for having a positive interaction.

Jani Rubery

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And I'm also thinking about when you said about having something very specific. And so sometimes it can take a little bit of preparation, and I can think of somebody that was on one of the programs we ran, and she really appreciated something the CEO had said.

And I think it was like one of these public speaking engagements where he's trying to get everybody's attention, you know, to to the vision and the strategy. But there was one specific thing that she really appreciated that she knew was going to impact her role. And so she took that moment to write him an email and, you know, just say, you know, thank you very much. really resonated. Whatever language you used, I can't remember, but specifically to that. And then she ended up being invited to, have a 1 to 1 coffee chat with him. Yeah. So that was networking.

Rachel Goodwin

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Yes, exactly. I think it's bringing in all of the interactions that you might not think of as networking, but recognizing it. And the other thing is that even if one feels, oh, I'm only a junior person or I don't have much experience in that field, everybody has something to bring and to think about what you bring, and it's incredibly important for senior people to get that sense of what's landing, what's working, what's not, what is the experience of more junior people in the organization? Because how else are they going to know? So understanding that you don't have to be the absolute expert or

the person that's been doing this for years, or the person who knows everybody in the field, you have a unique perspective to bring.

Jani Rubery

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It could be a fresh perspective as well. Yeah. So I think that is really, really important. I think one of the other really helpful tips, and we picked this up from a Harvard Business Review article by Hermione Ibarra and Mark Hunter, and they've done a lot of research on networking and what was working for leaders and what wasn't. And they highlighted that there's three specific areas.

If you looked at networking in three different spheres, I guess. So there's the operational, which is people that have something to do with your day to day, what you're trying to achieve. Then there's your personal network, which is helping you develop as a person that could be internal or external, but probably more of your external network where your interests, you know, where you're getting that fed. And then there's the strategic, which are the more future looking like who might be having an impact, you know, on either the future of what I'm looking to do in what I'm doing or maybe my career, whatever it might be.

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And what they noticed is that we're pretty good at the operational one, because that's the day to day and kind of make sense of why we would be networking with somebody. The personal, some of us are better than others, but we seem to be more at ease with that as well, like following our interests and networking in that way. But we can leave the strategic a little bit behind, is what I would say. And going back to I think what you were saying about, oh, I'm just too busy to be thinking strategically. But again, once we get our clients thinking about that, yeah, the energy that they end up getting from thinking about the strategic networking and then doing some of it is really quite transformational. Yes.

Rachel Goodwin

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Because it it's kind of forcing you to think bigger picture, to think future, to recognize what draws your interest and where you might want to be

developing your career in the future, and then to take some action around it. Those interactions can be so, so significant, can't they?

Jani Rubery

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Yes, absolutely and again, not just for yourself. I think it's important to bring that back. You don't know what impact it might have on the thinking for your part of the business. You're part of the organisation for your team whatever it might be. So yeah, it's so helpful to remember it's not just about you, but it could actually impact further along the line as well.

Rachel Goodwin

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And also, I think people as we say, it's not just about going around asking people for things, but sometimes it might be that you do want somebody's insight, you want to hear about someone's experience. And on the whole, people are quite happy to share that.

Jani Rubery

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Yeah, they absolutely are. Yeah.

Rachel Goodwin

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I mean, I think that's what clients find really surprising that somebody so busy and senior will take some time to share their experience or to give a bit of advice. And as long as you're specific about what you ask for.

Jani Rubery

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That's so important.

Rachel Goodwin

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Yeah. So to not just say, it'd be great to hear about your experience, but to say it would be great if you have 20 minutes to spare to have a coffee, or to have a quick call to be clear about what you want to hear about.

Yes. And then if they can't, they can't. And if you don't hear back, that's fine. But that's your best bet.

Jani Rubery

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Absolutely. And again, it's doable. Just going back to, you know, what we were saying from the very beginning, it helps us get over some of those unhelpful beliefs.

Rachel Goodwin

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Yeah. And then of course, you know, you can pay that back. If you've had that experience yourself, you're going to be more open when people might approach you, or you might even be more proactive about offering advice and support. So it sort of goes around.

Jani Rubery

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And if you can get into that habit of being, you said, curious. I think you used that word earlier on and asking questions. People love talking about themselves or what they're doing, or they love the fact that somebody's interested. Yeah. And it still be specific and purposeful around it.

Rachel Goodwin

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Yes, exactly.

Jani Rubery

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So you still have to do some planning. And the reality is not every networking opportunity is going to be able to be planned.

Jani Rubery

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Sometimes once you start thinking about networking, you'll see an opportunity like, oh gosh, there's so-and-so where you get coffee or something like that. I've really been interested in that. Take a moment, you start to plan for a moment and still be purposeful and ask a specific question.

Rachel Goodwin

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It's about that openness to engage, isn't it? And to not let any negative thinking or get in the way. And then once you start doing it, it just becomes more natural.

Jani Rubery

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And I think one of the things I've learned, because I'm, I think I'm quite good at the initial moments, you know, and noticing them and taking them and maybe even preparing them in advance if I'm going to a big conference or something. But I think I had to get better at following up.

Rachel Goodwin

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Yes.

Jani Rubery

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Yeah, I was a bit lazy about that. I think there's moments definitely. And, I would just say because I don't think it's just about career because some of my networking, you know, is about more life in general, but that I've missed opportunities that I could have built up a really positive connection by not following up.

Rachel Goodwin

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I do think following up is really important, just to consolidate the contact and just test out what the potential of it is.

Jani Rubery

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Yeah, especially if it's important. And I and I think for me, the strategic ones are probably the ones I've missed out on because the other ones are a little bit easier maybe to naturally follow up on. But I think I was a bit lazy in the strategic space myself, so that's something I always encourage people to remember to do, is to do that following up as well.

Rachel Goodwin

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And also you're not committed to it. You haven't had a networking chat and then committed to some sort of major investment or major piece of work, or if it's not really interesting or you're not that bothered about it. Yes, it's very easy to just let it drift. Yeah.

Jani Rubery

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Which is a good thing to remember, isn't it.

Rachel Goodwin

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It's it's about doing it in the moment. And then you've got time to go away and reflect and think, okay, is this a good investment of time for me? And is there a kind of a synergy there.

And if there isn't, then it's fine. You just let it go. Sometimes we talk to people quite specifically around, you know, if it is quite a large group of people and how do you get in and out of conversation?

Jani Rubery

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Yes. that's been another barrier, hasn't it? Yeah. People fearful that they're going to be stuck there. Yeah.

Rachel Goodwin

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Yes. Yeah yeah yeah. So kind of how do you break in and how do you get out. Even the prospect of that can be offputting can't it. Yes.

Jani Rubery

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And again when you really notice people that do it well you'll notice that it's not really that difficult. No. Because you'll notice people will say oh I'm just going to go get a drink or oh, I've noticed, you know, Mark's over there and he was somebody I wanted to connect with. You might hear somebody, well, I have had to use this before when I have felt a little bit stuck. I'm just going to go use the ladies. Yes. You know, which is fine.

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Nobody thinks anything bad about any of those. Actually, nobody notices. And I think we think people are noticing and they really aren't. This is the other thing about joining a group. Some people talk about that oh, there's three people talking. I'm standing there on my own. There is somebody there that I'd be interested in talking to, and they feel like people are really going to notice if they enter the group and people really don't. If you just find your way to step into that group, people normally just look at you, smile and welcome you.

Rachel Goodwin

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As long as you. I mean, if you make eye contact, you don't have to dive in and immediately monopolize the conversation. And also, do you know what? If you're not welcomed in, then you move off and you, you know, you find another group. Yes. Sometimes I noticed I went to a conference and what was really felt incredibly natural. I didn't even really notice I was doing it. But if you go to one of the events that are part of the conference and you meet somebody there, inevitably it's very natural to say, what did you think of it?

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You know, I was a bit disappointed. I expected more of that or, oh, I was going to go to this thing this afternoon, but I'm not so sure now. And what would you recommend? So drawing on the common experience you're having even with. Oh, this coffee's awful. Yes. because that is your connection at that moment in time, isn't it? And again, it's about just making people feel comfortable, and it's an easy way to get a conversation going. So you don't have to march up to a group and say, hello, I'm Rachel Goodwin, I'm an executive coach. And,

Jani Rubery

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It is filling out your leadership brand.

Rachel Goodwin

00:26:51

Exactly. It is just about finding a way of engaging with another human being. At the end of the day.

Jani Rubery

00:26:59

I know, and you know what? It's so interesting you just landed there because that's what was going through my mind is what this conversation is reminding me of, is it really is about doing basic relationship skills with somebody. Yeah, yeah.

That genuine intent of I'm curious about you, maybe I have something to offer you, but, you know, it's just respectful. There's nothing really scientific. I think we make it more complicated. Maybe that's what I'm thinking.

Rachel Goodwin

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I think we definitely make it more complicated, and I think we feel we're being judged far more than we are being judged. If you're at a big event, it's highly likely you're never going to see anybody from there again. So there's not a lot to lose.

Jani Rubery

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Yes and going back to what we were saying about all the different social media platforms, it's actually a lot easier anyway without some of the fears we've been talking about. But, you know, I read something recently again about which I thought was really interesting. It was somebody that gets networked themselves a lot, but they were saying, you know, some people are fearful of networking with me because this person was like saying, I love people to network with me, but I know some people are fearful of it.

Rachel Goodwin

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Also, it's respectful, isn't it, because I know it's taken me a long time to warm into LinkedIn, and it's a journey and I'm getting there. For a long time I just thought, oh, I'm too busy and I don't want to do that. But when I started spending a bit of time on LinkedIn, I was astonished about how much I was learning. There was really interesting material on there, really good content and you quickly identify – oh yes, they always have something interesting to say. And you do get to know people and you get to know what their interests are so it's far easier then to engage with them. And if you engage and say, I've seen you post a lot about this, and that's an area that I do quite a lot of work in, I'm interested. You'll get an incredibly positive response.

Jani Rubery

00:28:43

I know, it's so encouraging, isn't it? Yeah.

Rachel Goodwin

00:28:45

You do get quite a lot of contact on LinkedIn from people who are trying to sell you something.

So when you get something that is more thoughtful, more genuine, and they've taken the time to see what you do and what you're interested in, I think people are very positive about it, and I think that's what we need to remember

Jani Rubery

00:29:01

And hopefully that will help us get rid of some of those unhelpful beliefs.

Rachel Goodwin

00:29:11

Jani, you've talked quite a lot about intent and being clear why you're networking. So do you have any tools that you use with clients to help them around that?

Jani Rubery

00:29:22

Yes, and people do it in different ways. And one of the most effective tools is called network mapping. You know, there's lots of different models out there. I think the most important thing is, is that you get an image on a bit of paper, but one of the simplest tools I would use is literally just drawing some concentric circles. So you've got me in the middle, there's me, and then maybe 5 or 6 circles on the outside of that, and think about who your key stakeholders are at all different levels.

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It could be internal external peers. You could have people that are working for you, that are key stakeholders, and put those that you see most often closest in the next circle, then the people you don't see very often in the next one, and the people you hardly see at all in the further out circle or circles, however many you want to present. And then notice how important those people are. And so like if somebody really important, I would say, oh, draw a really solid line to that person. If they're not so important, like a dotted line, and the number of times people, once they see that image and they're going, oh my gosh, I'm spending time with people that don't really matter now. Yeah. And I'm saying now because I think the recognition is, oh, these probably people were important before, but now for where I am and where I'm trying to get to, interestingly enough, one of my key stakeholders, I'm not really getting any time with, or here's one I don't even know, but I think some people like to do it more as a mind map, you know, and they have different circles around the page or whatever with different colours of important people and how often they meet them.

00:30:45

But I think doing something that is visual is really, really helpful. Then from that going, okay, what are you going to do about that? Then here comes the deliberate intention of, okay, who do you need to meet and how are you going to go about that? Start reaching out and getting dates in the diary. In fact, I just interestingly enough, did this with a client who's just transitioned into a more complicated political role, I would say, in an organisation. And we just spent some time in this session doing it, and then afterwards she was like going, gosh, it's really made me notice where I need to be spending my time and where I have been spending my time and who the key relationships are for the future, who are going to be the the people that are going to be my allies and the lobbyists for me. And it

really did switch. So she looked towards the end of the year, you know, so she was like, okay, I want to have met with only like 3 or 4.

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You know, it was realistic. It wasn't like she was going to meet with everybody. But who are the key people that I must make sure that by the end of this year I've met with and it just helped her so much unlock a whole different strategy. Yeah. And it only took us about 20 minutes in a session. You know, it wasn't it, It didn't take forever.

Rachel Goodwin

00:31:45

But it's those small pockets of time that can have such a big, big impact. And they're the things that don't happen when you're busy. You're doing your day to day, you've got your habits, and you don't take the time to step back and just spend a bit of time reflecting and coming up with some actions that that are going to have much more significant strategic results. It just makes me think about coaching in general, that that's just such a common theme, isn't it?

Jani Rubery

00:32:13

It really is.

Rachel Goodwin

00:32:14

It's about that forced time to really reflect, really think about what you're trying to do and are you doing the things that are going to get you there, and to have someone else to sort of reflect that back and ask some questions that are going to prompt the thinking that will get you to spend time on the most important things.

Jani Rubery

00:32:32

Yeah. And that's just reminded me, another client, that this was just a few weeks ago, who's been on secondment in a different part of the organisation. It's not going to be appropriate for him to go back to where he was, and he's realising, I guess it would be six months to eight months that he'll have to think about where he's going. So we did the map in the

session, and then he is going to set aside a time at the end of every month. He's going to put it in his diary to say, and who do I need to network now? Because he just realised without networking, well, it's limiting his career actually.

Rachel Goodwin

00:32:56

And I think that is true, that when clients are a bit resistant or they come up with the excuses, I think it's always helpful to ask the question, well, what happens if you don't? Yes. What are the risks here? Because often I have clients who come into coaching because they've seen people who they consider to be less able than themselves, moving up the ranks and overtaking them.

00:33:19

And when one looks at that and thinks about what might be going on, it can be because they've got a strong network and they're aware of the opportunities and they're being told about what's going on, it might feel a bit annoying and you might feel aggrieved about it because you know how hard you've been working, what results you've been getting. But the fact is, unless you're aware of the bigger picture and what's going on, then you do run the risk of missing out on opportunities.

Jani Rubery

00:33:46

Absolutely. And again, you know, think of somebody that's been in one of the programs we ran. And because she increased her networking, somebody thought of her when an opportunity came up.

Rachel Goodwin

00:33:57

Because you're there, you're on people's radar. You and you know, we talk about that in the episode we did in season one together about managing your career. That whole thing about visibility and networking is a very important part of being visible. And you do have to take responsibility for that.

Jani Rubery

00:34:15

And I hope overall just thinking about, you know, everything we've said and there are some techniques that are involved and there are some unhelpful beliefs to get over, but you use the word energy I think really early on, and it can be energising.

Jani Rubery

00:34:26

And I just want people to remember that and have some fun with it. But it doesn't. It doesn't have to be really difficult. It doesn't have to be getting over big hurdles. It does take some attention and some intention. As we said and some investment, I hope this podcast actually helps people enjoy it more.

Rachel Goodwin

00:34:43

Absolutely, I think you're so right. And I think coming from the perspective of a reluctant networker.

Jani Rubery

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And feels like the title for a book, Rachel.

Rachel Goodwin

00:34:52

And one who has gone at her own pace slowly, slowly. But my perspective on it has shifted massively and I can see the benefit of it. And I know it's something I have to keep pushing myself to do, but it can be incredibly energising. Yeah, so I think that is a really nice positive note to conclude with, because I do think everybody can find a way of doing this.

Jani Rubery

00:35:16

Yeah, they absolutely can. They really can.

Rachel Goodwin

00:35:24

And just to summarise what we've been talking about today, the top tips are:

- Explore your attitude towards networking, thinking about what might be getting in the way for you, and also consider what the benefits could be if you increased your networking.
- Think about who's already in your network and how would you categorise your network, so you can be clear about where the gaps are thinking about network planning.
- Start small in a way that's comfortable for you. Plan it, seek out opportunities and get it in the diary.
- Networking isn't the sort of thing that tends to happen spontaneously. You do have to put a bit of effort into it and also be very ready to seize opportunities when they arise.
- Be realistic about networking. Don't expect instant results – if you think it would help you, enlist support. If there's people that you feel would be interested in attending some of the same events, or if there's someone you think networks really effectively, maybe enlist their support.
- Be curious, maybe do some preparation before you meet somebody or before you attend an event.
- Ask questions and also consider what you have to offer because you will have something to offer.
- So important to follow up after you have met somebody.
- Keep going at networking. The more you do, the easier it gets and the better the results.
- Congratulate yourself even when you make the smallest of efforts.
- Notice results as this will energise you to continue on the journey.

Rachel Goodwin

00:37:14

So huge thanks. I've really enjoyed the conversation.

Jani Rubery

00:37:18

Me too. And it's helped me have some like new insights as well.

Rachel Goodwin

00:37:21

So yeah. Thank you. Yeah. No, it's been fantastic and I really hope that people find it interesting and are inspired to act on it in a way that feels comfortable for them. And there'll be more material, the article that you mentioned, I'll put on the website so that people can find that and some other material that will be helpful around this.

Remember, you can find a transcript of this episode and all the support materials at RachelGoodwin.uk. If you've enjoyed this episode, please do spread the word. You could leave a review where you're listening, post on LinkedIn, or just recommend to a colleague or friend. I really appreciate your support.