

# Master these skills—network more *effectively*

by Donna Messer

## CREATIVE VISUALIZATION

This is the process of day dreaming about your future, and turning that dream into reality by using your own skills, tools, and strategies. You can use this process to help create a wish list, set goals, and find ways to achieve them.

For right-brained people, creative visualization and lateral thinking are fairly easy skills to use. Don't type-cast yourself in one hemisphere. Let yourself imagine. Making things happen is within your power. When you dream, write down a description of those dreams.

What do you see when you look in the mirror? You don't always see the whole picture. When you visualize with mind's eye you tend to look at the big picture, where there aren't barriers of colour, oceans, or languages. Often a little sign flashes in your head "You can't do that." The subtle message automatically raises barriers to realizing our visualizations. Refuse to listen to that sort of message. Positive thinking plays a big part in the process. With a little effort you can reject your own negatives.

During this process ignore all the reasons, financial or personal, that will prohibit you from doing something. Eliminate all self-imposed barriers to wishes. These words are not to be used in this exercise—*I can't, but, and if.*

There are several steps to the process. Imagining your life path is only part of the exercise. The challenge is to express, in writing, where you really want to go. With the written description of a mental vision, you develop a target, a goal. It is tangible; you can really make it happen. Try targeting some bite-sized achievements that you can accomplish in a specific time frame along the way to the big goal.

**Quotable Quotes:**  
To know the road ahead ask those coming back – Chinese Proverb

## LATERAL THINKING

Lateral thinking is a term developed by Dr. Edward DeBono in 1967 and is now defined in the dictionary as "seeking to solve problems by unorthodox or apparently illogical methods." You can use pictures to move your thoughts to other levels until you come up with an image you can use. In computer lingo, they call it "fuzzy logic" where there are no limits of right/wrong. Lateral thinking stretches your imagination to see a win in every situation.

In life and in business when something happens, try to think of a way to turn it around. How can you turn a negative into a positive?

By listening to what people tell you, you can make connections that result in mutually beneficial business arrangements. Suggesting that two people contact one another may seem a mismatch to those involved because they don't see the common link. Lateral thinkers broaden the possibilities by looking beyond the obvious and leaping to un-thought of opportunities. Allow yourself to think in pictures. Images will help you to find new ventures. This is an encompassing process.

Focus on one thing. It could be a business issue that needs a resolution, a product for which you are seeking a market, a service that needs a new market or method of delivery. Close your eyes and think. Words pop into your mind and then the pictures appear and the process goes from there. You build up layers of images. This process of lateral thinking gives us imaginative choices. Using images to spark a thought can make it easier for you to make a connection.

## ARTFUL LISTENING

Listening is an art form. At networking sessions, it is important to use the creative art of listening. You need to be able to really hear what fellow networkers are saying if you want to make connections with and for them. Artful listening helps you make the connections in your own mind that help you to remember the person and the message. This essential creative skill helps you to encourage speakers and lateral thinkers. It is important to create an

atmosphere between you and the people you are listening to, that is safe and caring. This creates a situation where ideas and feelings can be expressed freely

## HOW TO BE AN ARTFUL LISTENER

- Prepare to listen. Focus your attention on the speaker. Tune out your surroundings.
- Avoid distraction. Ignore what is going on beside you or outside the window.
- Concentrate on what is being said rather than on what you will say when it is your turn.
- Listen for the tone of voice. What is the person really saying to you?
- Sit or stand properly. Use body language to let the speaker know that you are attentive. Nod, smile, make eye contact to let the speaker know that you are listening.
- Take notes. You know the adage about strong memories and pale ink!
- Ask questions.
- Limit your talking. Show respect for the other's right to speak and be heard. Refrain from talking to your neighbour during a presentation.
- Don't jump to conclusions.
- Listen for ideas and facts.
- React to the ideas and facts PROFESSIONALLY NOT personally. **SBCM**

*Donna Messer is an international speaker, trainer, facilitator, and author. Founder of ConnectUs International, the company designs, develops and delivers business-training programs.*

*Roadmap to Success, is a journey of discovery, teaching participants to think laterally, listen carefully, and use creative visualization to achieve their goals.*

*To participate in an upcoming program go to the Web site below and click on events.*



[WWW.CONNECTUSCANADA.COM](http://WWW.CONNECTUSCANADA.COM)