

YWP Get-Together - Career Skills Session 3: Building Connections Through Networking

21 January 2026





MODERATORS



Francisca Braga
IWA YWP Steering Committee
Denmark



Hayat Raza
IWA YWP Steering Committee
Canada

EVENT INFORMATION

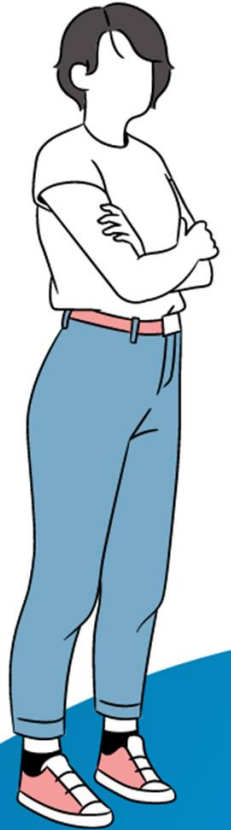
- This event will be **recorded and made available “on-demand”** on the IWA Connect Plus, with presentation slides, and other relevant information.
- The **speakers** are responsible for **securing copyright permissions** for any work that they will present of which they are not the legal copyright holder.
- The opinions, hypothesis, conclusions or recommendations contained in the presentations and other materials are the **sole responsibility of the speaker(s)** and do not necessarily reflect IWA opinion.

EVENT INFORMATION

- Post questions using the chat function and feel free to introduce yourselves briefly to one another! Also, it is okay to share your social media.
- Mute / camera in the bottom left corner
- No need to share screen as slides have been added to this presentation



GETTING INVOLVED AS A YOUNG WATER PROFESSIONAL IN IWA



	I am 35 years old or younger, how can I get involved?	I am 36 years old or older, what happens now?
Connect Plus - YWP Group	Join group and contribute to the discussion	
YWP Steering Committee	Be part of the Steering Committee	Cannot join the Steering Committee
YWP IWA Country Chapters	Join Regional Chapters or create a chapter in your region/country	Engage with YWP Chapters in your region/country, acting as an advisor
IWA Specialist Groups Management Committee (MC)	Join the MC of SG as YWP representative	Join the SG MC (not as YWP representative)
Emerging Water Leaders Forum at WWC&E	Join the Forum and the Programme Committee	Join the Forum as an invited speaker
YWP Conferences and Events	Join events and organising committees	Join events as an invited speaker
IWA YWPs Opportunities	Apply for YWP opportunities	Cannot apply

AGENDA

- Welcome, introduction, and housekeeping
 - *Francisca Braga & Hayat Raza*
- Effective Networking for Professional Growth - Making genuine connections that last
 - *Yang Villa*
- Breakout rooms & Group Discussion
- Q&A
- Final remarks and conclusions
- Upcoming Events
 - *Francisca Braga & Hayat Raza*

Effective Networking for Professional Growth

Making genuine connections that last

Yang Villa, IWA & Grundfos Youth Fellow Alumni / AdB

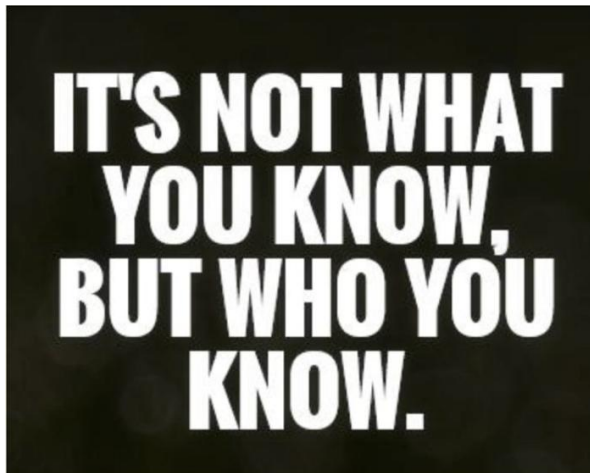


What we'll discuss

- Busting myths about networking
- Connecting vs. Networking
- Why do we need to network?
- Common challenges and barriers
- Mindsets and attitudes
- Get better at 3 skills

Busting myths about networking

✗ "It's who you know."



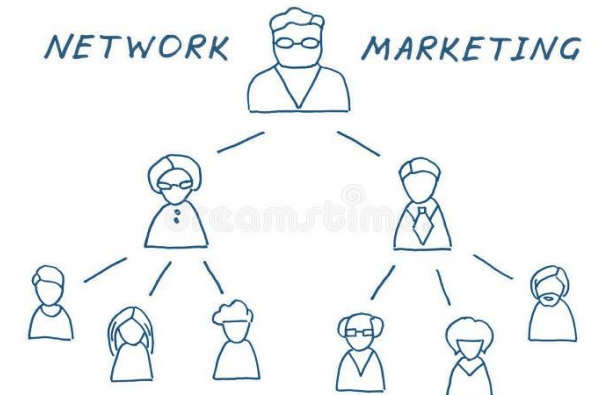
- ✓ Who you know.
- ✓ Who knows you.
- ✓ Who you are and what you do.

✗ "You need to be loud and outgoing."



- ✓ You need to be authentic.

✗ "Networking is only for sleazy sellers."



- ✓ We are all selling something!

Connecting vs. Networking



Transactional networking

- Collecting business cards to call on when I need them
- Success means many people have heard of me or know about me
- Focus on having a large contact base
- Putting on a façade



Meaningful connections

- Making friends regardless of potential utility or future need
- Success means people know when to call me for what
- Focus on quality relationships
- Going beyond *prima facie*

Why do we network?

👍 It's good for you.



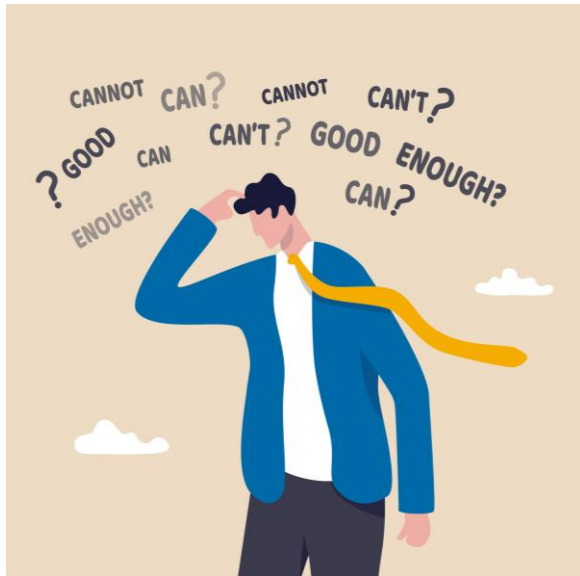
👍 👍 It's also good for the association.



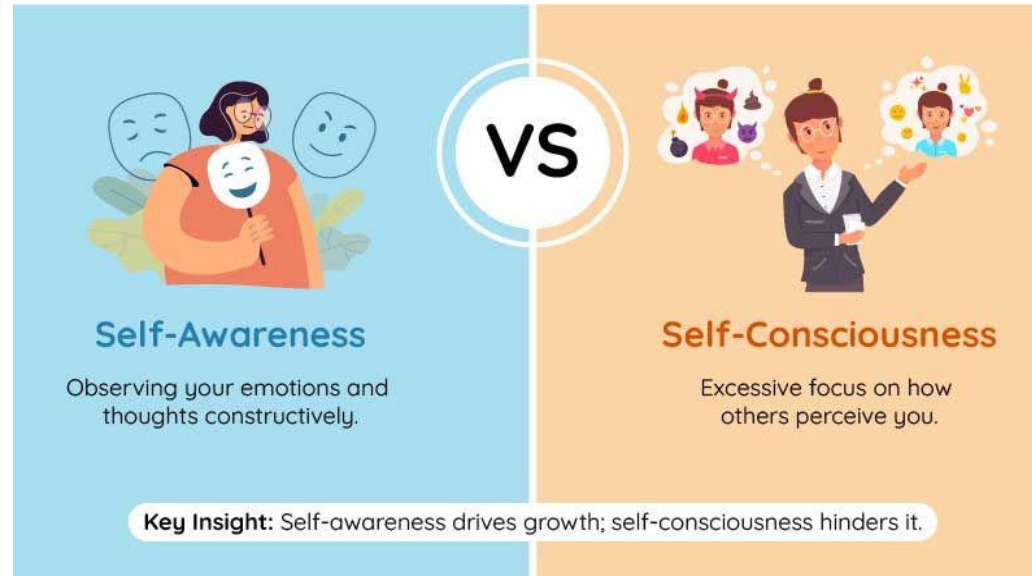
Image © HBR

Common challenges and barriers

Impostor syndrome



Too self-conscious



VS

Self-Awareness
Observing your emotions and thoughts constructively.

Self-Consciousness
Excessive focus on how others perceive you.


Key Insight: Self-awareness drives growth; self-consciousness hinders it.

Infograph © Truworth Wellness

Low energy



Mindsets and attitudes

 **Connection first, business later.**



 **Curiosity wins people's trust.**



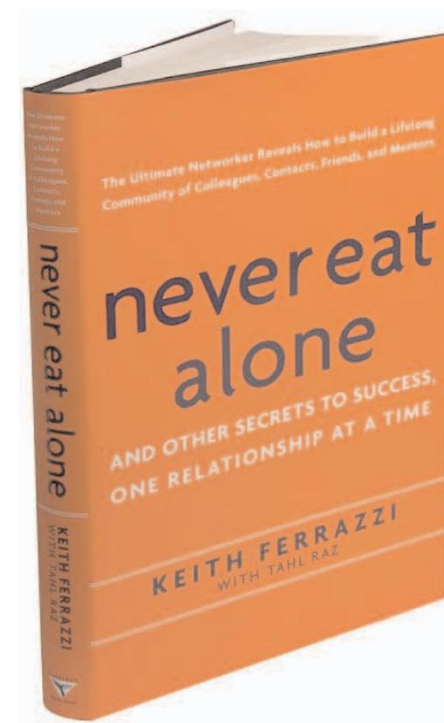
 **People are genuinely nice and have good intentions.**



Get better at 3 skills

#1 - Initiation

- *Never Eat Alone* by Keith Ferrazzi, on being a Conference Commando:
 - ✓ 7 Ps: Proper prior planning prevents piss-poor performance.
 - ✓ Know your targets and gather intel.
 - ✓ Act early. (As in before the conference.)
 - ✓ Use Q&As strategically.
 - ✓ Strike *before* the iron is hot.
 - ✓ Work hard on breaks.
 - ✗ Ankle-hugger
 - ✗ Celebrity hound
 - ✗ Card dispenser / amasser



Get better at 3 skills

#1 - Initiation

- Have your elevator pitch ready.

📌 Rebecca Okamoto's formula:

"I help X (target customers / audience / people)
achieve Y (a benefit they desire)
without Z (negative consequences)."

🤢 Don't word-vomit! Leave room for curiosity.

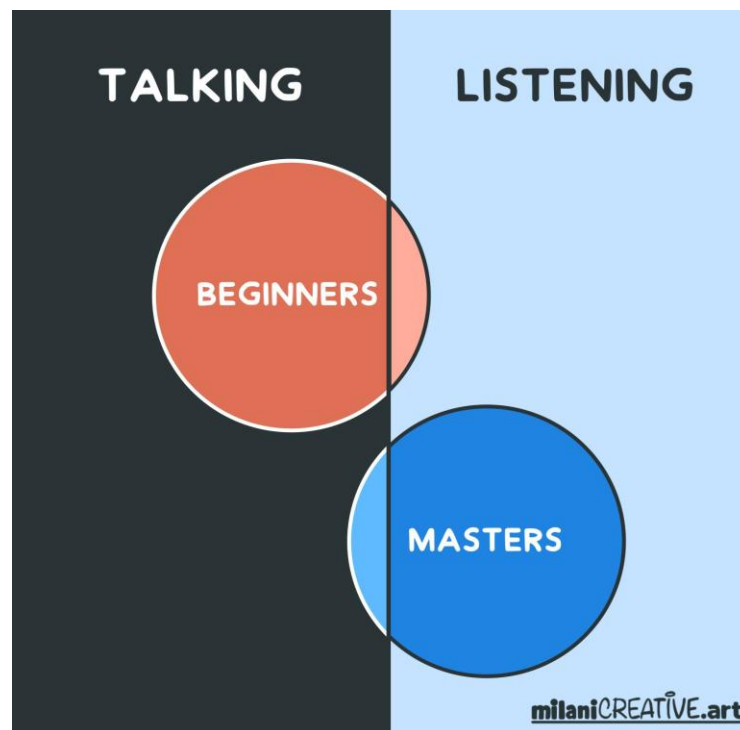
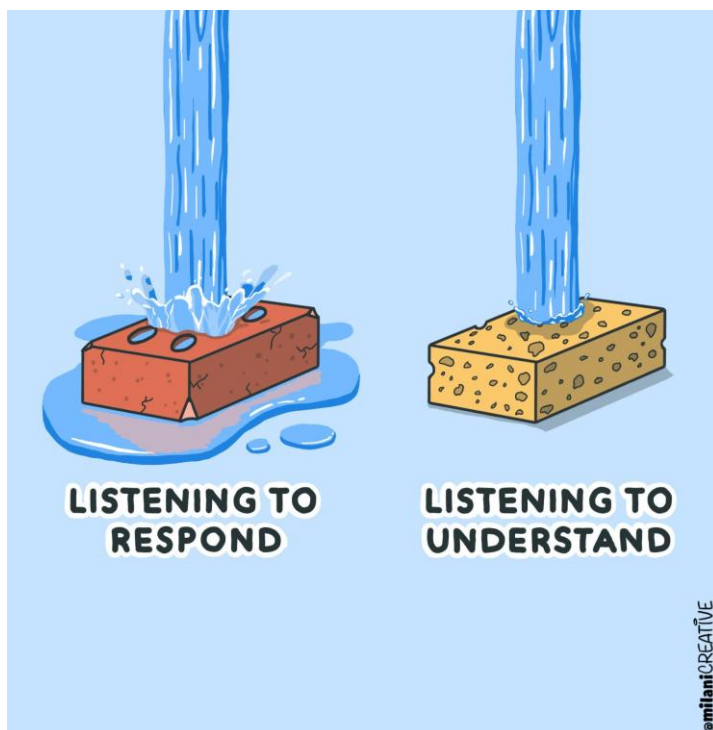
Activity!

- You will be randomly placed in breakout rooms.
- One person will deliver their elevator pitch. Keep it under 10 seconds!
- After the pitch, others can demonstrate curiosity by asking a question. Only one questions per speaker.
- Move on to the next person.

Get better at 3 skills

#1 - Initiation

- Listen to absorb, not to respond.



Adam Grant ✓
@AdamMGrant

Introverts aren't necessarily better listeners than extraverts.

New data: In conversations and meetings, extraverts are at least as likely to show enthusiasm, avoid dominating and interrupting, and focus on others.

Listening is not a personality trait—it's a behavioral skill.

Get better at 3 skills

#1 - Initiation

- The art of the cold call
 - ✓ Mention how you got their contact
 - ✓ Ask help from a wingman
 - ✓ Build rapport – it's about *them*, not you
 - "I saw your post about ____"*
 - "I noticed you manage ____"*
 - "Congratulations on ____"*
 - "Great insights on ____"*
 - "I'm inspired by the work you've done on ____"*
 - ✓ Clearly state your intention – what do you need?
 - ✗ Too verbose. Keep it brief and to the point
 - ✗ Be reasonable with your ask

What Is Cold Calling?



Cold calling is a sales technique where sales reps call potential customers they've never interacted with before in hopes of getting them interested in their product or service.

Get better at 3 skills



#2 - Activation

- Immediate follow-up
 - 😊 Mention something unique to your interaction or experience together.
 - 📁 Provide any information or material that you promised.
 - ❓ End with curiosity.
- For later
 - 👏 "This reminded me of you." (I still remember.)
 - ! "This might be of interest to you." (I am sharing something of value.)

Get better at 3 skills

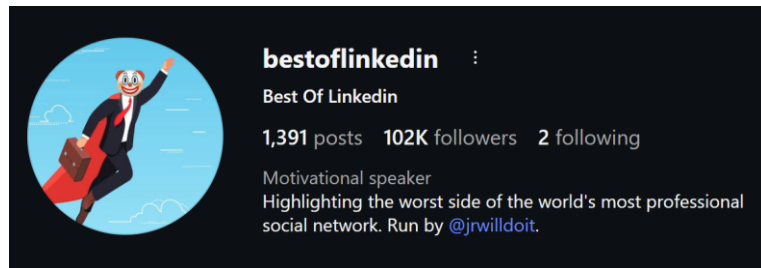
#3 - Signaling

- Use LinkedIn to signal...

👉 What you care about

📄 What you are up to

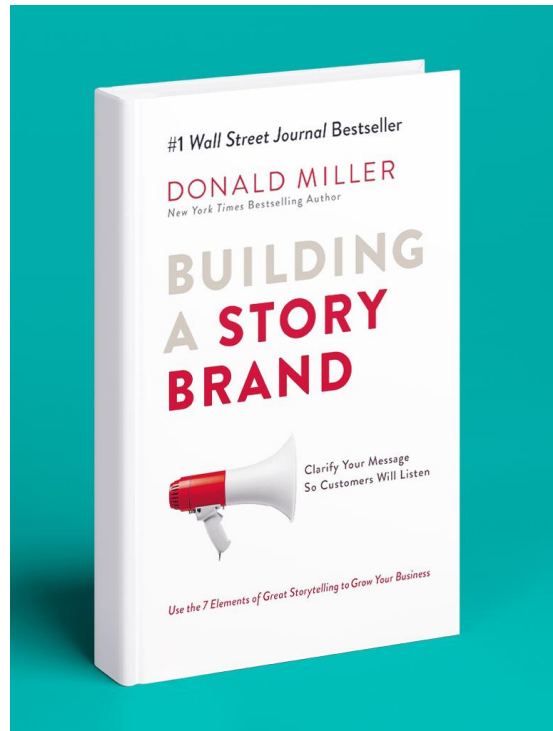
✗ Avoid inauthentic, cringey, inappropriate, attention-seeking posts!



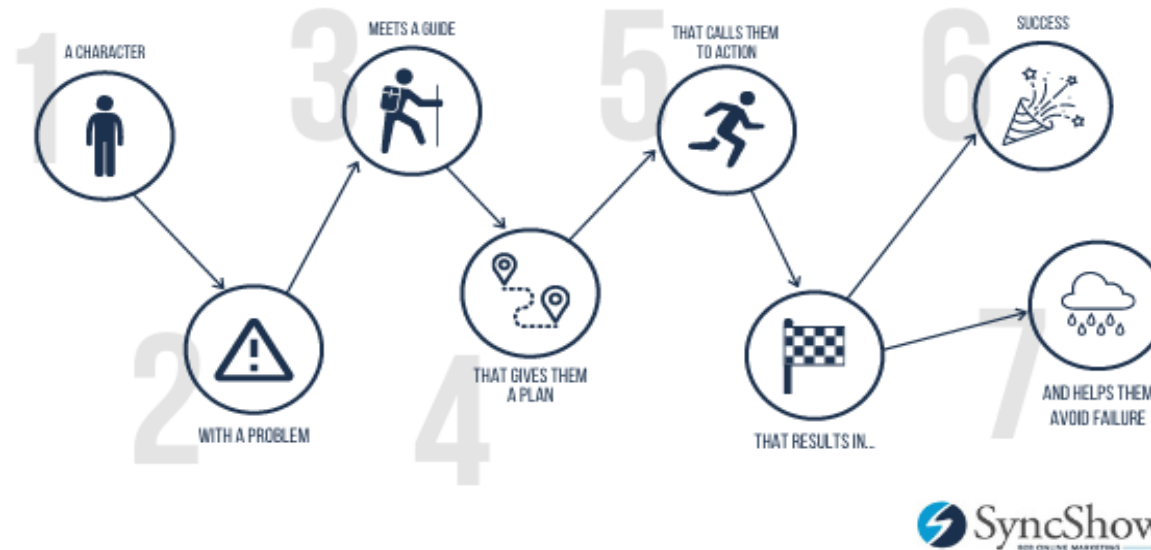
Get better at 3 skills

#3 - Signaling

- Take time to figure out and build your *storybrand*



THE STORYBRAND 7-PART FRAMEWORK



Final thoughts

The best compliments I've received:

"We've never met, but I feel like I **already know you.**"

LinkedIn contact whom I've never met in person

"You are always **totally present** with me."

Colleague turned lifelong friend

Q&A

Hayat Raza & Francisca Braga

UPCOMING IWA EVENTS



**13th Annual
Conference of
IWA YWP China**

IWA the International water association **YOUNG WATER PROFESSIONALS CHINA CHAPTER**

23–25 January 2026
Yixing, Jiangsu, China

Theme

Smart · Interdisciplinary · Integration
Innovative Paradigms and Industry Transformation

About

A three-day gathering and networking for YWP and experts from academia and industry

Highlights

- Keynotes, invited talks & roundtable discussions
- Rising Star Programme meet-up
- Workshop & YWP Tech Showcase
- Water Star Award ceremony
- Technical visit

Join Now!



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UPCOMING IWA EVENTS



the international
water association



11th YWP DK National Conference



 Aarhus, 19-20 March 2026



CALL FOR ABSTRACTS !!!
Open until January 23rd,
2026

Partners



UPCOMING IWA EVENTS

IWA UK YWP CONFERENCE 2026

PRESENT YOUR WORK AND WIN PRIZES!

4 Dec - 31 Jan

Submit your abstract

We would like to invite speakers in the early stages of their industrial or academic careers in the water sector to share their work at the IWA YWP 2026 conference in Birmingham (24 - 25 March).

28 Feb

Abstract success


Find out if you have been successful for a 10 minute presentation slot, a 5 minute poster pitch or a digital poster.

24 - 25 Mar

Attend the conference

This conference is an opportunity to hear and learn from other key industry leaders, to inspire and encourage young professionals to progress in their careers and in the water sector.

APPLY NOW

 Mott MacDonald, Birmingham

 IWA.YWP.UK@gmail.com

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/iwa-uk-ywp>



UPCOMING IWA EVENTS



IWA the international water association
2nd YOUNG WATER PROFESSIONALS EUROPEAN CONFERENCE
14-17 JUNE 2026 MILAN, ITALY

YWPEU 2026 Conference:
Call for Papers

DOWNLOAD THE OFFICIAL ABSTRACT TEMPLATE

The poster features a background image of the Milan skyline, with the Duomo di Milano (Cathedral of Milan) prominently in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the image in white and blue colors.

UPCOMING IWA EVENTS



Shape the future of water at the #WorldWaterCongress 2026 in Glasgow!

From 4–8 October, join 10,000+ global water leaders to drive bold ideas and real-world solutions for a resilient and prosperous future.

Submit your proposal for:

- Technical Presentations
- Interactive Workshops
- Hands-on Training Sessions

Theme: Water Action – The Path to Resilience and Prosperity

JOIN OUR NETWORK OF WATER PROFESSIONALS!



IWA brings professionals from many disciplines together to accelerate the science, innovation and practice that can make a difference in addressing water challenges.

Use code **YWP26IWA** for a **20% discount off** for a new membership.

Join before 31 December 2026 at:

<https://iwa-network.org/join/>

inspiring change

