

Profiting from pleasure
Overview - Effective social influencing



Only here for the beer?

In recent years most successful organisations have learned to take a smarter approach to their market. The 70s and 80s were the era of spray and pray, large salesforces and an attitude that any business is good business. The 90s have seen increasingly careful targeting of clients and customers offering a high probability of consistent, quality business.

We have developed a new vocabulary of multi-level relationships, bonding, exit barriers and, of course, partnering. And what is the best way to deepen a relationship with an existing client or start bonding with a potential customer? Take them out of the formal, adversarial business environment and put them in a social context where you can relate as human beings. Unsurprisingly, corporate hospitality has been one of the great growth industries of the decade.

For professional firms and most companies involved in high-value business-to-business sales, social contact is now as important a part of the marketing mix as conventional

promotion or selling. But the shift towards cultivating business in a social environment has created a new set of problems unforeseen by most who adopt the strategy:

- The multi-level contact strategy means that a wide range of technical experts, professionals and senior managers are involved in corporate hospitality.
- The vast majority have never received any training in influencing or selling skills.
- Selling techniques, as conventionally taught, are too direct to be appropriate for social gatherings.
- Corporate hospitality events are traditionally arranged by people who are expert in entertaining, not planning, implementing and measuring marketing strategy.
- The combination of direct and indirect costs gives a very high, real cost per contact.

None of these may seem very worrying in isolation, but consider the possible consequences:

- Expensive events could be organised simply because they are good fun, not because they serve the marketing strategy.
- There is no planning of tactical objectives, or how they might be achieved.
- Misinterpreting what is expected of them, some people turn every conversation into a heavy sales pitch.
- Having seen the offence their colleagues are causing, others stick purely to small talk.
- Nobody knows how much progress was made or damage done because there was no system for measuring success.

Bacchanalia *and* business with effective social influencing

We're not saying corporate hospitality should not be fun. But it will be even more fun if you know that you are achieving key strategic objectives while entertaining your

clients. That, quite simply, is what Huthwaite's Effective Social Influencing programme will give you: the confidence, processes and skills to enjoy yourself, and

ensure your customers enjoy themselves, while you progress your business agenda.

Why is effective social influencing different?

Good question, but you can answer it yourself. Think about the many different kinds of social events you have been invited to as a customer (there's an incomplete list below to jog your memory).



What do they all have in common, which makes them different from a meeting you might have with a salesperson visiting your office?

Right! The unwritten ground rules are different. At the meeting in your office both of you understand that the salesperson is there to sell, and you are there to be sold to. But when you attend a corporate hospitality event you have different expectations. Business may be on the

agenda at some point, but the ostensible carrot that brings you there is entertainment, information and social interaction. So the straightforward selling skills that you would accept in your office would be unacceptable at the social event.

That is why Effective Social Influencing is not just another sales training programme. It is different, and, to the best of our knowledge, unique. It answers three vital questions:

- What behaviour is acceptable and effective to influence clients and potential customers in a social context?
- How can we plan to use effective behaviour and link it to our corporate goals?
- How can we measure the success of social events in contributing to our goals?

Why should I trust effective social influencing?

For almost thirty years Huthwaite has had a simple mission: to research what the most effective performers in business interaction do differently from the merely average performers; and then train people to emulate effective performance.

Using the technique of *Behaviour Analysis*, which we pioneered, we have built the world's largest databases on effective behaviour in high-value selling, negotiation and persuasion.

Building on this foundation, the Effective Social Influencing research identified, as usual, what effective performers were doing *differently* in a social context. An overview of the programme is overleaf, followed by insights into a few of the key research findings.

Overview – Effective social influencing

Objectives

By the end of the programme each participant will:

- understand the need to set up social events so that they clearly serve the achievement of corporate goals
- be able to plan and communicate broad objectives and tactics for each event
- have a methodology for measuring the success of an event
- understand the difference between purely social and commercially purposeful conversations and be able to manage the balance between the two
- be able to use different styles of persuasion flexibly and effectively
- know how to 'work a room' to make optimum use of time
- be able to build stronger working relationships with clients.

Target audience

Anyone who regularly attends social events that could or should be opportunities to develop business contacts. The programme is especially valuable for those in corporate entertainment, marketing or sales charged with organising and hosting such events. Typically, delegates would be involved in the professions or high-value business-to-business sales where social contact is often a more important part of the marketing mix than conventional promotion.

Content

Event planning

- Positioning the event in the marketing strategy or account management plan.
- Selecting an event appropriate to business objectives.

Setting objectives and tactics

- Planning topics for discussion and key questions.
- Locating clients in their decision making process.
- Developing needs and commitment to action.

Metrics for success

- Setting appropriate targets.
- Measuring outcomes.

Managing interactions

- Defining 'social' and 'purposeful' behaviour.
- Skills for managing 'social' and 'purposeful' air time.

Key persuasion skills

- 'push' and 'pull' styles defined.
- Appropriate use of 'push' and 'pull' styles.
- Spotting different kinds of need.
- Uncovering and showing you can meet decision criteria.

Working a room

- Selecting appropriate targets.
- Skills for positive 'intros' and 'outros'.

Dealing with clients as people

- Diagnosing clients' work preferences at social events.
- Planning how to build stronger working relationships.

Training design and methodology

The objective of this programme is to teach a mixture of planning processes and skills. A very low trainer : delegate ratio ensures that trainees are given personal attention and encouragement in applying planning concepts to their own real-case scenario.

The training of skills is based on Huthwaite's fundamental principle that *learning is doing*. Participants are given the basic tools of Behaviour Analysis, plan roleplays together, carry out roleplays in simulated social situations and receive accurate and objective feedback on their performance from both colleagues and trainers.

Materials

In addition to a comprehensive library of user-friendly reference material giving explanations of key concepts, delegates also take away from the programme detailed analyses of their performance during the programme with recommendations for further skill improvement.

Roleplay scenarios can be customised to simulate typical social contacts between delegates and their customers.

Duration

Normally three days. Other timing designs can be tailored to suit individual client requirements.

Faculty and group size

The programme will be delivered by two Huthwaite consultants experienced, whenever possible, in the client's industry or profession. To ensure that delegates receive individual attention and feedback, training group size is limited to a maximum of twelve.

Effective social influencing highlights

Obviously we cannot (nor would we want to!) explain the whole programme content in this short brochure. But we have selected some of the key issues and research findings to give you a taste of what you will learn.

Choosing appropriate events

What you enjoy is not necessarily the right kind of event for what you want to achieve. A night at the opera may be ideal as a 'thank you' to a valued client, but sitting in darkness for three hours is not the best way to learn about a new prospect's personal and business needs.

If you want a long, rambling discussion, try a cricket match - even if you don't know the difference between a Chinaperson and a silly mid leg. We'll be exploring a whole range of options to suit your business objectives.

Working a room

It's easy to give offence butting into a conversation or leaving abruptly – so many people don't try; they cluster with colleagues or friendly clients and often become so sociable they have trouble standing!

Skilled operators were observed to have a combination of excellent timing and a variety of verbal ploys to enter and exit conversations graciously.

The secrets of 'intros' and 'outros' are one of the main learning points for many delegates.

To sell or not to sell?

We don't use the word selling, for the simple reason that at social events you are not actually seeking to transact business. What you are trying to do is gain information, extend relationships, maybe give some information about yourself, possibly initiate a future business contact or make some progress in a major deal. So we prefer to use the generic term, Influencing.

But this is a social event. You can't 'influence' all the time, that would be crass, it wasn't in the ground rules, there has to be some fun!

Exactly, and that is why effective performers were seen to make a conscious distinction between 'social' and 'purposeful' conversation. They clearly managed the amount of 'air time' devoted to each and could make a smooth transition between the two modes of conversation.

How? You'll learn on Effective Social Influencing.

So exactly how do you Influence?

Wrong question. There is no single, 'exact' way of influencing. In fact, research revealed that there are two different, but effective, styles of persuading or influencing:

- Push style – based principally on putting forward ideas and giving information.
- Pull Style – based on asking questions, checking understanding and building on others' ideas.

Why two styles? Because skilled influencers recognise that different topics, different situations have to be handled differently. Use the wrong style, about the wrong subject, at the wrong time and you will create resistance or get a response entirely different to the one you wanted.

The problem is that most people only ever use Push style, so they have a very high failure rate in persuading – but don't understand why they succeed or fail.

How and when should you use Pull style? Effective Social Selling has all the answers – and plenty of opportunity to practise the skills.

Measuring success

Before you can measure success you have to define what success is.

Less effective social influencers tend to review what we might call housekeeping issues: what percentage of invitees actually attended; was lunch served on time.

Truly effective operators decided in advance what their business objectives were, what skills and tactics they would use to achieve them and what quantifiable outcomes would indicate how far the objectives had been achieved.

What sort of objectives did they set and what outcomes did they measure? You'll find out when you come to the Effective Social Influencing programme.

Lunch, maybe?

We hope you have enjoyed reading our analysis of the increasing importance of corporate hospitality as a promotional medium.

If you feel that we have identified some key risks and opportunities that apply to your organisation, and that Effective Social Influencing might help you profit from some of the opportunities, we would like to talk with you.

Nothing heavy, you understand; just an informal chat to explore ideas. Lunch on us, maybe. Why not contact one of our consultants to arrange a convenient date.

Your next step...

I need further information

Please have a Huthwaite consultant contact me.

Please send me more information about Huthwaite International and the following skill sets:

- Developing major accounts
- Key account management
- Presentations & proposals
- Sales awareness for marketing
- Winning business from corporate entertaining
- Coaching skills
- Negotiation
- Sales management skills
- Selling skills

How to contact us



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